English language teachers' conceptualizations of language awareness and its use in English language teaching in Finnish basic education grades 7-9

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Abstract

This pro gradu thesis investigates English language teachers' conceptualizations of language awareness (LA), which is a concept introduced in the Finnish national core curriculum for basic education 2014 update. The aim of the research was to determine how English language teachers describe language awareness and how they utilize it in teaching. The LA research field has a variety of contexts and definitions of LA, which has also been evident in the previous research in Finland. However, the amount of research on LA in Finnish education context is scarce. The limited previous research has revealed that teachers have divergent conceptions of LA and confusion in interpreting the aim and goals of LA in the National core curriculum. This thesis aimed at contributing to the limited research on teachers' LA within Finland.

The research was conducted by interviewing four English language teachers teaching in basic education grades 7-9. The interviews were semi-structured and were held individually, after which the interview data was transcribed and subjected to content analysis. The analysis resulted in six themes depicting the LA conceptualizations of the participant teachers. The analysis revealed diverse LA conceptualizations and teaching methods. The teachers' conceptualizations differed in the opinions on LA's importance and prevalence, context of LA, and in teaching methods. Although there were also similarities in the LA descriptions, some of the teachers' methods and experiences differed drastically from each other. For example, one of the teachers emphasized LA in the way of which the teacher provides speech, e.g., instructions and explaining terminology, whereas one discussed LA with a focus on English subject culture contents. In addition, there were drastically opposing opinions on the importance of LA. The nature of LA in teaching was also determined teacher dependent based on the teachers' opinions and was also evident in the teaching method examples.

Tiivistelmä

Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma tarkastelee englannin kielen opettajien käsityksiä kielitietoisuudesta, joka on viimeisimmän Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteiden (2014) käyttöön ottama käsite. Tarkoituksena oli määritellä kuinka englannin kielen opettajat käsittävät kielitietoisuuden käsitteen ja kuinka he toteuttavat kielitietoista opetusta. Kielitietoisuuden tutkimuskenttä sisältää erilaisia asiayhteyksiä sekä kielitietoisuuden määritelmiä, mikä on ilmennyt myös aiemmissa suomalaisissa tutkimuksissa. Aiempi tutkimus kielitietoisuudesta suomalaisen koulutuksen yhteydessä on kuitenkin vähäistä. Tästä rajallisesta tutkimuksesta on selvinnyt, että opettajilla on moninaisia käsityksiä kielitietoisuudesta sekä epäselvyyttä opetussuunnitelman kielitietoisuutta käsittelevien tavoitteiden hahmottamisessa. Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli täydentää aiempaa rajallista tutkimustietoa opettajien kielitietoisuudesta suomalaisen koulutusjärjestelmän sisällä.

Tutkimus toteutettiin haastattelemalla neljää yläkoulun englannin kielen opettajaa. Nämä puolistrukturoidut haastattelut järjestettiin yksilöllisesti, minkä jälkeen haastatteluaineisto litteroitiin ja käsiteltiin sisällönanalyysillä. Analyysissa rakentui kuusi opettajien kielitietoisuuden käsityksiä määrittelevää teemaa. Analyysin perusteella opettajien käsitykset kielitietoisuudesta sekä kielitietoiset opetustavat olivat moninaisia. Eroavaisuuksia oli mielipiteissä kielitietoisuuden tärkeydestä, esiintymisestä, kielitietoisuuden asiayhteyksistä sekä opetusmetodeista. Vaikka kielitietoisuuden määritelmissä oli myös yhtäläisyyksiä, osa opettajien menetelmistä ja kokemuksista poikkesivat huomattavasti toisistaan. Esimerkiksi yksi opettajista painotti kielitietoisuutta opettajan tuottamaan puheeseen liittyen, esimerkiksi ohjeistuksissa, ja toinen kuvaili kielitietoisuutta englannin oppiaineen kulttuurisisältöjen kautta. Lisäksi mielipiteet kielitietoisuuden tärkeydestä poikkesivat suuresti toisistaan. Kielitietoisuuden luonne määriteltiin myös opettajasta riippuvaksi tutkimukseen osallistuneiden opettajien mielipiteiden perusteella, mikä havainnollistui myös opetusmenetelmäesimerkeissä.

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1. Introduction

The Finnish National Agency of Education published an updated version for the National core curriculum for basic education (NCCBE) in 2014, which was applied in the basic education grades 7-9 gradually during 2017-2019. The new curriculum update introduced two new concepts to the key principles guiding the development of school culture: language awareness and multiliteracy. Language awareness (LA) is emphasized as an important part of the whole education process and school culture, inside and outside the classrooms. (The Finnish National Agency for Education [EDUFI], n.d.y). Thus, language awareness was established as a key topic in Finnish basic education. Despite the significance in Finnish education, previous research has demonstrated that the NCCBE description of LA is superficial, and teachers have interpreted its meaning in various ways (Tukeva, 2020; Päivinen, 2017; Gök & Rajala, 2017; Minkkinen, 2021). Superficiality in this case is used to refer to the way in which LA is presented as an ideal and goal without practical guidance on implementing it in teaching. Neither does NCCBE specify theoretical orientation for LA. Furthermore, LA is introduced in combination with other concepts such as cultural diversity and multilingualism, which inevitably complicates delineation of terminology. Therefore, LA in Finland education circles is an important area to investigate – especially now when the current core curriculum has been implemented for a few years – to determine how LA has been understood and put into action in schools. This thesis investigates how English language teachers in basic education grades 7-9 conceptualize language awareness and how they have adopted it into their subject's teaching.

Language awareness has been a topic of discussion in the European educational circles for more than 40 years, especially in the United Kingdom, but has only recently been applied to the Finnish education guidelines and to the core curriculum. Suuriniemi (2019) examined the latest research on LA in Finland and stated that teachers' conceptions on language awareness have not been researched, as most of the research on LA has focused on multilingualism and language ideals. The situation abroad appears to be similar: research on teachers' conceptions of LA is scarce (van den Broek et al., 2018). In fact, the only research with the aim of examining teachers' conceptions of language awareness, other than the articles by Suuriniemi and van den Broek et al., were Finnish master's theses. However, the limited research on the topic revealed that teachers' descriptions on the nature of LA were divergent and partial (Suuriniemi, 2019; van den Broek et al., 2018). The same phenomenon was identified in the master's theses: The participant teachers considered language awareness important but were either unable to define what it fundamentally means, or the definitions were divergent between the research participants. Thus, this thesis aspires to contribute to the limited research on teachers' opinions and experiences of LA. The focus is on how teachers conceptualize

LA, hence the selected term used in the thesis is conceptualizations. The conceptualizations are examined focusing on teaching, so the aim is to determine both the conceptualizations and the methods the teachers' have adopted to pursue the core curriculum guidelines. Therefore, the research questions are:

1. How do English teachers describe language awareness?
2. How do English teachers utilize language awareness in their teaching?

In addition to the limited amount of research despite its relevance in the Finnish education system the core curriculum update is not very recent anymore, i.e., the update is almost ten years old at the time of writing this thesis. Some of the previous research has called for more clarity and concreteness to the LA contents of the NCCBE and more workplace training on LA teaching, which places interest on the current LA conceptualizations and experiences.

The Finnish education system and the National core curriculum for basic education (2014) reflects sociocultural method to learning, which is also adopted as theoretical framework for understanding learning in the thesis. Definitions of language awareness and previous research within the field are discussed, and the terminology of the research field and topics that arise from the interview data are described in the theoretical background section. National core curriculum is utilized as a reference point for examining the concept of LA in the context of Finnish basic education and in relation to the definitions in LA research. The research of the thesis is conducted with semi-structured interviews and the data is analyzed with content analysis to categorize and conceptualize the descriptions the teachers provide for language awareness.

2. Theoretical background

This section consists of theoretical background for the thesis. The section begins with introducing sociocultural theory, which is used to understand learning and teaching in the research context. The second subsection introduces the Finnish national core curriculum for basic education and the contents concerning language awareness. The latter sections contain summary on the history and definition of LA and then lastly the recent LA research relevant for the topic.

2.1. Sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory (SCT) is one of the most influential theories in the field of second language learning (van Lier, 2012). Although it is not explicitly stated in the National core curriculum for basic education, it can be argued that SCT is also visible in the Finnish education principles and in the conception of learning. This connection is explained in the section (see 2.2) introducing the NCCBE.

The origins of SCT date back to 1980s, when the term appeared for the first time in research, but the idea itself had already been discussed in the educational circles and language teaching contexts long before then (van Lier, 2012). The orientation of sociocultural theory is constructivism (Yoon & Kim, 2012): Constructivism views learning as interpreting new content based on the person's prior knowledge and thus constructing an understanding, which is stored in human memory (O'Shea & Howes, 2014). One of the key figures in developing SCT is Lev Vygotsky (Yoon & Kim, 2012), who studied influential theories in the fields of constructivism, behaviorism, and psychoanalysis and reacted to them with his own perspectives on development and learning processes. He saw human mind as tool for thought processes and considered language as main mediational tool in mental development in humans. In his work Vygotsky positioned education between human individual and the culture (Panhwar et al., 2016). Even though Vygotsky did not address second language learning specifically in his theory other researchers and scholars have interpreted and expanded his original perspectives on learning to also cover second language learning (Yoon & Kim, 2012).

Two of the main concepts in sociocultural theory are Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and the concept of language as a mediation. According to Yoon and Kim (2012) ZPD is a concept which is widely discussed in the educational field. The features of ZPD can also be detected in the Finnish education system. The zone of proximal development refers to the distance in between a person's actual developmental level, in which they are capable of independent problem solving, and the level of potential development, in which problem solving is accomplished with guidance from an adult or a more capable peer (Yoon & Kim, 2012). Thus, learning and development in school context

are seen as a continuous and interactive process between teacher and pupil (Yoon & Kim, 2012). To utilize ZPD effectively, Yoon and Kim (2012) emphasize that it is important for the teacher to understand each pupil's current independent achievement level so the teacher can assist their learning. In addition, every pupil is different, with their individual backgrounds, which requires that the teacher uses differentiated and personalized guidance (Yoon & Kim, 2012).

The second main concept of SCT is language as a mediation. It refers to Vygotsky's idea that humans' mental and social activities are formed by different tools and signs, which are linguistically, culturally, socially, and historically situated entities (Wertsch, 2007, as cited in Yoon & Kim, 2012). The implication is that humans interact with the outside social world through mediational signs and tools, but also construct the human consciousness (Panhwar et al., 2016). Language is seen as one of the mediation tools, which in school context can deliver information and guidance from the teacher to pupils and from pupils to each other. Moreover, the teacher can also be regarded a mediator with the role of helping pupils from assisted performance to independent achievement (Yoon & Kim, 2012), which then links mediation to the zone of proximal development.

2.2. Finnish national core curriculum and sociocultural theory

The Finnish National Agency for Education publishes National core curriculum for basic education (NCCBE), which provides a uniform foundation and support for local education providers in planning of education (EDUFI, n.d.y). As a foundation for the local curricula the National Core Curriculum enhances equality in education within Finland, as it establishes a quality basis onto which the national education providers can draw upon when planning locally. The NCCBE consists of the objectives and policies on underlying values as well as the conception of learning of school culture in Finland. In addition, each school subject in basic education is described and connected to the underlying values and policies. In short, the NCCBE is a guidebook for how education should be organized in Finland to ensure education is organized equally throughout the country. The latest updated version of NCCBE was published in 2014 and applied gradually in schools during 2017–2019 (EDUFI, n.d.y).

Some of the key goals of the current National core curriculum describing Finnish school culture are pupil participation, increasing the meaningfulness of learning and enabling every pupil to feel successful in their learning, while also encouraging pupils to take more responsibility of their own schoolwork. The role of the teacher is described as instructing and aim is to guide pupils into becoming lifelong learners and therefore taking each pupils individual learning approaches into consideration. Moreover, the pupils' experiences, feelings, and interests, as well as the interaction

with other pupils, are described to function as a foundation for school culture (EDUFI, n.d.y). Fundamentally, the conception of learning occurring in interacting with pupils, teachers, communities and learning environments draws from the principles of sociocultural theory (see 2.1). The learning objectives and values for school environment in the National core curriculum are culturally adjusted, bound by laws and different learning measurements, which means that as new updates are established the aim is to correspond to the context society and its demands (Vitikka & Rissanen, 2019). The role of the teacher as an instructor reflects the idea of mediator from SCT, whereas the goal of pupils becoming lifelong learners and being able to take responsibility of their own schoolwork reflects the constructivist view in SCT (White-Clark et al., 2008, p. 44, as cited in Panhwar et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the NCCBE states that every community and every community member is multilingual (EDUFI, 2014, para. 4.2). In Finland every pupil is technically multilingual since in addition to their first language (L1) they are currently learning at least two additional languages in school, which are typically foreign language English and second national language Swedish or Finnish. Ultimately, multilingualism is not a simple term to explain and there is a wide divergence in the definition within the research community. One aspect which is considered is the level of proficiency in the languages: i.e., whether the person should master native-like competence in the languages or if there is a certain level of competence which is considered enough. Another problem in defining multilingualism is how the proficiency level could be measured. The proficiency level is difficult to determine, for example regarding different language skills, such as comprehension and producing speech, writing, and reading. Aronin and Singleton (2012) explain that although the description of multilingualism is an area of debate and researchers have diverse conceptualizations for it, the researchers have seemingly agreed upon is that native-like fluency in languages is not required for a person to be considered multilingual. (pp. 1-7). Aronin and Singleton (2012) put Franceschini's definition for multilingualism on a pedestal for its inclusivity: "The term/concept of multilingualism is to be understood as the capacity of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage on a regular basis in space and time with more than one language in everyday life" (Franceschini, 2009, pp. 33-34 as cited in Aronin & Singleton, 2012, pp. 6-7)

Multilingualism is also inseparable from the teaching of second and foreign languages as the teaching is based on the pupils' prior language competences, based on which language of instruction is determined. The teaching of the language will gradually include more and more teaching in the target language (EDUFI, 2014). However, not every pupil in the class has Finnish or Swedish as their L1, which means they are learning English through another language which they might not be fluent in. In such a situation the pupil can be learning both the medium language of the teaching as well as

learning the target language (Kuukka & Rapatti, 2009, p.7). Multilingualism is also an area linked to LA in the NCCBE (EDUFI, 2014, para 4.2).

2.3. Language awareness in National core curriculum for basic education

The latest Finnish national core curriculum for basic education (2014) introduced language awareness to the Finnish basic education in the key principles guiding the development of school culture. In the NCCBE language awareness is described in combination to cultural diversity, emphasizing that the two principles are substantially linked to each other (EDUFI, n.d.y.). Since the two exist combined in the core curriculum it is important to acknowledge both in this thesis as it is difficult to determine the extent to which the two terms overlap. The core curriculum explains language awareness combined with cultural diversity as follows (EDUFI, 2014,):

> The school as a learning community is a part of a culturally transforming and diverse society where the local and the global overlap. Different identities, languages, religions and worldviews coexist and interact. Internationalisation at home is an important resource for a learning community. The community appreciates and draws upon the country's cultural heritage and national languages as well as cultural, linguistic, religious and philosophical diversity in the community itself and in its environment. It brings up the importance of the Sámi culture and various minorities in Finland. It promotes understanding and respect between individuals and groups as well as responsible action. The community recognises the right to one's own language and culture as a fundamental right. The pupils become acquainted with cultural traditions, constructively discuss different ways of thinking and acting, and create new ways of acting together. (para. 4.2)

> One manifestation of cultural diversity is multilingualism. Each community member is multilingual. Parallel use of various languages in the school's daily life is seen as natural, and languages are appreciated. A community with language-awareness discusses attitudes towards languages and linguistic communities and understands the key importance of language for learning, interaction and cooperation and for the building of identities and socialisation. Each subject has its own language, textual practices and concepts. The languages and symbol systems of different fields of knowledge open up different viewpoints to the same phenomenon. The instruction progresses from everyday language to the language of conceptual thinking. In a language-aware school, each adult is a linguistic model and also a teacher of the language typical of the subject he or she teaches. (EDUFI, 2014, para. 4.2)

To summarize, in the principle LA is described in unison with cultural diversity, but at the end of the chapter LA is approached separately from two perspectives: firstly, acknowledging multilingualism, discussing attitudes towards languages and seeing different languages as a resource, and secondly from the knowledge of how languages function, how they are present in each subject in their unique way and that every teacher is a linguistic model. The first approach refers to LA as linguistic values and equality, while the second approach draws on metalinguistic awareness (Angelovska, 2017). According to Angelovska's (2017) summary, metalinguistic awareness is used to define a multilingual person's ability to reflect on patterns in languages, analyze language properties and identify similarities, which means utilizing person's own prior language resources.

In addition to the key principles guiding the development of school culture, LA is also addressed within the subsections for each school subject. In the English language subject for grades 7-9 LA is referenced in one of the three key content areas: "C1 growing into cultural diversity and language awareness" (EDUFI, 2014, para. 15.4.3). In correlation with the key principle in school culture, language awareness is again linked to cultural diversity. The key content area, C1, which involves LA is described in the curriculum as follows:

> The pupils construct their perception of the multilingualism and parallel use of languages in the world as well as linguistic rights. They also study the development of English into a global lingua franca. The pupils explore cultures and ways of life in countries where English is the main language of the society. Linguistic concepts that help the pupils in studying English and making comparisons between languages are utilized in teaching and learning. The pupils acquire information about some varieties of English. (EDUFI, 2014, para. 15.4.3)

The content described in C1 is similar to the key principle, with references to multilingualism and linguistic rights and values, but it also elaborates on the role of English in the world and the different varieties of English language. In addition, metalinguistic awareness is briefly noted in the concepts which help making comparisons between different languages.

Moreover, the instruction of English language subject is also divided into objectives, of which there are ten altogether. Instruction refers to teachers' activity and role in teaching. Three of the ten objectives of instruction are connected to the key content C1 and contain language awareness:

> O1: to promote the pupil's ability to reflect on the phenomena related to the status and the variants of English and to provide the pupil with prerequisites for developing his or her intercultural competence. O2: To encourage the pupil to find interesting English-language content and environments that expand his or her perception of the globalising world and

opportunities for acting in it. O3: to guide the pupil to observe the regularities in the English language and how the same concepts are expressed in other languages and to use linguistic concepts as support for learning. (EDUFI, 2014, para. 15.4.3)

Once again, the lingua franca status and cultural aspects to language as well as metalinguistic awareness are detectable in the description.

To summarize, the NCCBE depicts language awareness in combination with cultural diversity and is described as pupils' perception of multilingualism, parallel use of languages, knowledge of linguistic rights, lingua franca English, English speaking countries and cultures, and the varieties of English. The content describing English language subject contains also metalinguistic awareness, such as finding regularities in English and making comparisons between languages. In other words, the LA description in the NCCBE is broad but theoretical, which obligates the teachers to decide how to approach the guidelines in practice. The content of the curriculum does not indicate the theoretical foundations for its LA content or provide practical guidance for actualizing the principles and objectives in teaching.

2.4. Language awareness

Although having only recently been implemented in the Finnish education system the concept of LA is not new. In fact, LA is customarily determined originating from the publication of Eric Hawkins's *Awareness of Language* in 1984, which laid theoretical foundations to LA research and the classroom implications of LA (Kennedy, 2012; James, 2005). Ever since the early days of LA research there have been diverse definitions to LA. The definitions are usually tied to the context in which the term is used (Suuriniemi, 2019, p. 43). The two following sections summarize some of the dominant definitions of LA in the research field and discusses the recent research on LA in educational settings.

2.4.1 Definitions of language awareness

The origins of the term "language awareness" are in language awareness movement, which is a grassroots organization of teachers and teacher educators (van Lier, 1996, p. 78). The movement originates in 1980s Great Britain (van Lier, 1996). According to Donmall (1985, as cited in van Lier, 1996) language awareness movement was a response to increasing demands for more systematic and efficient approach to language education and how language is used in schools and academic institutions. One of the most influential publications with this aim is Eric Hawkins's *awareness of*

the language (Kennedy, 2012). Eric Hawkins aimed at helping educators with pupils from diverse language backgrounds (Hawkins, 1987). The aim was to repair the then growing concern of teachers being unable to help children benefit from teaching if they came from homes equipped with less tools for verbal learning than school process would require (Hawkins, 1987). Another concern voiced in Hawkins (1987) was linguistic parochialism and prejudice, which he deemed deriving from "the fear of unknown" (p. 2). In Hawkins's agenda awareness of language was seen as a supporting tool in diminishing prejudices, challenging pupils "to ask questions about language, which so many take for granted", and children's ability to grasp patterns in language and between languages (p. 4). Although Hawkins's agenda was adopted into the curriculums in the UK, the materials were withdrawn from schools within a few years as they were considered too radical (Svalberg, 2016). However, since then research on LA has increased and Hawkins's contribution to LA research has been acknowledged widely in the subsequent research.

In addition to the United Kingdom, there are also similar movements in countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States (van Lier, 1996). According to van Lier (1996). all these movements have their own terminology and the way of conceptualizing language awareness, which has led to many and divergent descriptions of LA. Van Lier (1996) concludes, that despite the variety of descriptions, they all have in common the concern about equality and scope of language education in schools.

Van Lier (1996) discusses language awareness, autonomy, and authenticity in the language curriculum. Van Lier (1996, p. 10) describes awareness as an ancient principle of learning, which means that all new learning is impossible unless it can be connected to a person's existing knowledge and experience. Furthermore, he explains that "to learn something new one must first notice it", which means being aware of and paying attention to and object or an issue, which then is processed and linked to structures existing in one's mind (van Lier, 1996, p. 11). Thus, van Lier describes learning as constructive activity where new knowledge is built upon previous knowledge (O'Shea & Howes, 2014).

Van Lier (1996) also discusses the varied definitions of language awareness, first of which is a definition by Donmall from 1985. The definition describes LA as "a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Donmall, 1985: 7, as cited in van Lier, 1996 p. 79). The definition addresses being aware to learn a language, a notion also discussed by van Lier, but also includes the role of language in the human life. Van Lier also notifies that the description might sound simple but is open to various interpretations (1996, p. 79). The second definition concerns Eric Hawkins's work from 1987, which includes "connecting different

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aspects of language education (English, modern languages, minority languages)" and "challenging linguistic prejudice and parochialism through open discussion and greater awareness" (van Lier, 1996, p. 80). Hawkins's definition views language awareness through values and ideals for education purposes.

The third definition, which van Lier named a "spin-off or a subset" of the two definitions described above, is called *knowledge about language* (KAL) (van Lier, 1996, p. 80). Van Lier describes KAL as "renewed call for formal grammar teaching", in which LA narrowly focuses on the formal aspects of language, an approach which was popular in the 1950s. Due to the formal grammar teaching perspective, KAL is controversial in the field of LA and there has been debate between those who see explicit language teaching and conscious learning necessary and those who argue that language learning should be subconscious or acquisition-based (van Lier, 1996, p. 81).

The fourth definition of LA is called *critical language awareness* (CLA), which according to van Lier, "squarely confronts issues of power, control, and manipulation in language use in society" (1996, p. 82). In other words, CLA acknowledges the democratic decision-making and examines "institutionalised discourse" (Corson, 1990, p. 70, as cited in van Lier, 1996, p. 82).

Moreover, a definition which is widely used in LA research is by *Association for Language Awareness* (ALA). The association defines language awareness as "explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use" (Association for Language Awareness [ALA], n.d.a). ALA also acknowledges language awareness covering a wide spectrum of different fields; it for instance includes a conscious understanding of how languages work, how people learn and use languages and the benefits of developing a good knowledge about languages (ALA, n.d.a). ALA was founded in 1994 (ALA, n.d.b.) and is one of the main influences in the LA research due to their journal *Language Awareness,* which is dedicated to LA research. Thus, there are multiple definitions of LA, which can also be contradictory. According to van Lier (1996), it is important to be aware of the complexity and broadness of the concept. Ultimately, the simple but ambiguous definitions of LA ensure new definitions and meanings can emerge in the field of research (van Lier, 1996).

Lastly, the research also acknowledges a perspective specifically important for this thesis purposes: teacher language awareness (TLA). According to Thornbury (1997, as cited in Mok, 2013), TLA is the knowledge on the underlying systems of language that facilitates teachers in teaching the subject, for example English language. TLA "embraces both knowledge of subject matter and language proficiency, since it involves reflections on both and entails the mediation of the former through the latter" (Andrews, 2007, p. 28). In other words, the LA of the English teacher is qualitatively different

from the LA of an educated user of English language, since TLA includes the ability to consider the learner point of view (Andrews, 2007), which essentially is the understanding of pupil cognition. Thus, TLA is essential in enhancing the effectiveness of linguistic input provided by the teacher (Andrews, 2001) and in planning the teaching activities. Fundamentally, the English language teacher should acquire and understanding and be able to inspect the development of their pupils' LA in order to fulfill the objectives of the NCCBE. Furthermore, in the increasingly multicultural and multilingual society the teacher must be able to teach each pupil equally regardless of their cultural and linguistic background (EDUFI, 2014 para 9). Both the pupils fluent in the language of instruction and pupils still learning the language will benefit from adequate teacher language awareness (Kuukka & Rapatti, 2009, p. 7).

2.4.2 Recent LA Research

This section summarizes international and Finnish LA research. Agneta Svalberg's (2016) article reviews LA research between 2010 and 2014 in the United Kingdom. Svalberg (2016) summarized that the research in the UK has illustrated that students' language awareness has decreased, language subjects are losing their appeal in students and universities have dropped several language degrees. Moreover, the languages of the immigrants are not recognized and valued, and "many current language issues are linked to immigration" in the society in general (Svalberg, 2016, p. 5). In the years between 2010 and 2014, language learning and teaching themes were most researched (Svalberg, 2016). The topics of which included teaching and learning processes, awareness of language structure and language skills. Language skills feature for example listening, learner and teacher strategies, and pragmatic and cultural awareness. In addition, language varieties, sociolingual areas and language ideologies – topics such as immigration and bilingualism – were investigated during the period of inspection (Svalberg, 2016). According to Svalberg (2016) the varied spread of topics reflects the complex nature of LA. Furthermore, majority of the research on LA with focus on language learning had sociocultural view on language learning; the approach adopted in this thesis. Furthermore, the review of articles revealed that university students and university settings were over-presented (Svalberg, 2016). As a result, Svalberg (2016) proposed focusing on younger learners as it could enrich the research field. In the thesis the focus is on pupils in basic education which corresponds to the aspirations proposed by Svalberg.

Even though teaching and learning have been the most researched area in LA research, van den Broek et al. disclosed that "an in-depth analysis of teachers' beliefs about LA as a concept, however, has not yet been carried out" (2018, p. 333). Thus, van den Broek et al. (2018) conducted research in the

Netherlands to find out local English language teachers' beliefs about LA. They found that teachers had extensive descriptions for the concept of LA but did not share an understanding of its meaning. Based on the results the researchers argued that LA in teaching requires more inspection with teachers, to make LA more applicable in English as a foreign language education. One of the reasons was that the teachers' beliefs of LA are based on their own experiences in the classroom and what practices they have used and regarded efficient (van den Broek, et al., 2018). Thus, van den Broek et al. suggested "mapping teachers' beliefs about LA to be essential to facilitate the practical implementation of such an approach" (p. 334).

The topic of the thesis research, teachers' conceptualizations of language awareness and the ways in which they implement LA in their teaching, is also closely related to language teacher cognition (LTC) research. LTC research focuses on a person's thoughts, knowledge and beliefs influencing their teaching instead of what the actual actions in the classroom are (Bergström et al., 2021). The interest in LTC research is based on the recognition that teachers are active and decision-making humans whose role in shaping classrooms events is crucial (Borg, 2008). In the field of psychology, it is understood that knowledge and beliefs influence human behavior and closer inspection on teacher cognition helps understanding the process of teaching (Borg, 2008). Conceptualizations of language awareness in teaching is closely related to language teacher cognition as the conceptualizations teachers make on LA are cognitive processes. Moreover, since the teachers in Finland are instructed to utilize LA in their teaching, although concrete guidelines are not provided, the teachers' conceptualizations will inevitably affect the outcome. The previous LTC research has mainly focused on grammar, reading, and general learning processes, and a little on vocabulary (Bergström et al., 2021). Comprehensive research on conceptualizations on LA does not exist, however (see above).

Furthermore, van den Broek et al. (2019) studied English language teachers' language awareness-rising practices in Netherlands. The study revealed different ways in which the teachers stimulated language awareness in pupils, but numerous examples provided by the teachers could not be characterized as LA-raising, which according to van den Broek et al. (2019) could indicate incompleteness in the teachers' notions on LA stimulating practices (p. 59).

In Finland LA has been a focus of research in guidebooks, workplace trainings, conferences and in other expert network gatherings (Suuriniemi, 2019, p. 43). According to Suuriniemi (2019, p. 43), the latest LA research in Finland has focused on teaching, especially on the language of instruction in school subjects, which stems from the latest NBBCE update naming every teacher a language teacher in their own subject. In addition to the language of the school, there has recently also been research on multilingualism in educational settings. The focus has been on teachers' attitudes towards

multilingualism and how teachers utilize different languages in their teaching (Suuriniemi, 2019, p. 44).

In 2017 the Finnish Association for Applied Linguistics (AFinLA) published a yearbook consisting of articles on language awareness (Latomaa et al., 2017, p. 11). The articles in the yearbook investigated LA in Finland from the following perspectives: LA in teaching methodologies, conceptions of the needs of language competences and language use in working life, language ideologies, and discourses and vocabulary choices in texts and politics. Two articles in the yearbook discuss the NCCBE and LA, but the focus is on how L1 is depicted by teachers and pupils, and what kinds of pedagogical arrangements would benefit inclusion of varied pupil L1s in teaching and teaching materials (Latomaa et al., 2017, pp. 21-25). Thus, none of the articles approach the conceptualizations teachers have of language awareness. However, the two of the articles discuss the ways in which LA is present in Finnish schools: For instance, LA of teachers and pupils is discussed in an article examining the developed intuition in differentiating grammatically correct English phrases (Penttinen & Behning, 2017) and utilization of the L1 of the pupils with migrant background (Tarnainen, Kauppinen, & Ylämäki, 2017).

Suuriniemi (2019) reviewed research on LA in Finland and concluded that neither the meaning of LA in the context of Finnish education nor teachers' conceptualizations of the term have been researched (p. 44). Consequently, Suuriniemi (2019) herself examined the conceptions of LA in local curriculums in Helsinki, Finland. The aim was to find out how each school (=92) in the area has conceptualized LA in their own curricula. Suuriniemi (2019, p. 50) explains that each curriculum had been established in co-operation with working groups consisting of teachers, organizations, experts, pupils, and parents. Thus, the research does not examine teacher conceptualizations specifically. The research revealed that the concept of LA in the curricula of Helsinki area schools did not correspond to the LA described in the NCCBE: The focus of LA in Helsinki, which has the most multilingual pupil population in Finland, was conveniently on multilingualism. However, in comparison to the NCCBE perspective, i.e., multilingualism as a resource the schools, had either been ignored or linked it to the needed support and lack of competence in the curricula of schools in Helsinki area. (Suuriniemi, 2019, pp. 55-56). Once again, the results suggest that teachers might not have a thorough enough understanding of the concept of LA, as the shift of attention is drawn only to multilingualism in the local decision-making. Especially since the view to multilingualism was contradictory to the NCCBE. However, local curricula are constructed to correspond to the aspects considered essential in the different areas of Finland. Thus, LA appears to be adaptable in the eyes of those responsible of local decision making.

Majority of the limited research conducted within the specific area of interest of this thesis have been master's theses. The previous research has investigated teachers' knowledge on LA before the implementation of the updated NCCBE, how teachers planned to apply LA in teaching, and how teachers have experienced and utilized LA in their teaching since then. The results showed that teachers considered their teaching had already included language awareness. On the other hand, the teachers aspired for continuing education and workplace training, which could mean that the teachers were unsure of the implementation of LA in teaching. Even though teachers felt positively towards language awareness and acknowledged its importance they were either unable to define the concept (Minkkinen, 2021) or they had problem in understanding its essence (Tukeva, 2020; Gök & Rajala, 2017). In addition, the teachers have had knowledge of LA but had uncertainty or did not know how to apply it in teaching (Päivinen, 2017).

To conclude, the earlier research on teachers' conceptualizations of LA is scarce. The existing research on the topic usually suggests inadequate and divergent understanding of LA and its use in schools.

3. Methodology and research materials

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how English teachers conceptualize language awareness and how they use language awareness in their teaching. The research questions are:

- How do English teachers describe language awareness?
- How do English teachers utilize language awareness in their teaching?

The following sections describe the research materials and methodology. First section describes the data elicitation technique and the process of gathering research participants to form a representative sample. The second section details the content analysis process conducted on the data.

3.1. Research materials

The target group of the research was English teachers in basic education grades 7-9. A representative sample was gathered with two announcements which both deployed non-probabilistic sampling by convenience. The announcement specified the characteristics that were required of a participant. To reach teachers who belong in the target group the announcement was first published in a Facebook group for English teachers within Finland. Afterwards the announcement was also delivered via email to 14 schools from a selected area within Finland. Altogether four teachers participated in the research.

The data elicitation process consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews which were audio recorded and transcribed. The interviews were held individually with each participant. Interviewing is a flexible data collecting tool, which can be used for many means, for example to gather information, to test or develop hypotheses, to identify variables and correlations and as support for other data collecting methods (Cohen et al., 2011, pp. 409-410). For this thesis purposes the selected interview method was semi-structured interview, which enables both a prepared schedule and pre-decided questions, but also leaves room for expansions and the respondents can raise topics to the discussion (Cohen et al. p. 236). In this interview the pre-decided topics of discussion were the meaning of LA and how to use in teaching. The aim was to gain information about how teachers describe language awareness as a phenomenon and how they would describe it in the school context, both in the overall school culture and in their own teaching. The NCCBE principles and objectives regarding LA were visible for the participants during the interview so that they were able to reflect on it. The core curriculum objectives for English language subject were also inspected and the teachers were asked to provide examples from their teaching.

Each teacher was interviewed separately to ensure they were able to discuss their personal opinions of the research topic without the comments from others affecting them and to maintain participant anonymity. The interviews were held in Zoom videoconferencing website and recorded with the website's recording tool. On average, the duration of each interview was 30 minutes.

The type of transcript selected for the interview audio recordings was a closed transcript, which according to Jenks (2011), means capturing only the features of talk that are relevant for the purpose of the research. Thus, the type of a transcript is determined by the research questions and the data analyzing method, and any unnecessary transcribing should be avoided (Ruusuvuori & Nikander, 2017; Jenks, 2011). The research of the thesis concerns opinions and personal experiences. For this purpose, the transcripts did not need to include the ways in which utterances are said or the overlaps, turn-taking, and errors of speech production. Since the data was to be subjected to content analysis, i.e., the focus of the analysis is on *what* is said and not in how or when, the type of transcript is orthographic, which means that the transcripts included only the words that were uttered in the interviews (Jenks, 2011). In addition, insignificant or on some cases untranslatable discourse markers, such as 'tuota' and 'niinku' ["well" and "like"] and repetition of words were excluded from the transcripts because they would not provide any germane information for the analysis as was guided in Jenks (2011).

Initially, transcripts are a reflection of the person creating them, since the communication act is represented in it in the way in which the researcher has perceived it (Jenks, 2011). Human perception is prone to errors and the decisions for how much in detail the transcripts are created inevitably exclude a piece of the multimodal nature of human communication (Jenks, 2011). To ensure that the word choices in the transcripts correspond to those uttered in the interviews the audio recordings of the interviews were replayed also after the transcripts were complete, and during the writing of the thesis, for confirmation and to detect errors. Furthermore, the interviews were held in Finnish, hence the examples provided as examples in the thesis required translation. According to Ruusuvuori and Nikander (2017) it is impossible to create a perfect translation, which is why the excerpts are provided in this thesis in both the language of the report and the original language of the discussion to support transparency and validity.

Moreover, research ethics have been acknowledged during the research. The interview participants were selected via an announcement in a Facebook group for English language teachers in Finland, and thus the participants knew in advance the topic of research and the method of data gathering. Furthermore, each participant received information about the research process, a privacy notice, and a consent form before the interviews. The information provided in the documents were also

referenced at the beginning of the interviews in order to obtain informed consent. Each participant agreed to participate in the research, and the informed consent was audio-recorded. After the interviews any personal information present in the interview discussions were anonymized during the transcribing process, for example the names of the participants, cities, schools were omitted. To ensure anonymity of the participants they were referred to as teacher A, B, C and D in the data and in the thesis text respectively. In addition, any personal or reflexive pronouns used in the thesis are applied gender-neutrally by using the third person gender-neutral pronoun "they". The audio-recordings and transcript data were stored in a password-secured laptop hard drive.

3.2. Methodology

After the transcribing process, the data was processed with content analysis, a research method for reducing data and making sense of them with categorization (Julien, 2008). The categories are clusters of similar entities, which are created by identifying patterns or/and relationships between variables in the data (Julien, 2008). Content analysis is a versatile analyzing method which can be used in both quantitative and qualitative research (Julien, 2008). In this thesis, however, content analysis was used only with qualitative approach, since the aim is to identify descriptions and examples provided by the teachers on language awareness and categorizing them based on the information they provide, not focusing on the quantities of such descriptions or certain term usages. More specifically, the categories of data were constructed by identifying reoccurring, contradicting, related and unrelated topics of discussion from the interview data. Thus, the analysis is inductive in nature, meaning that the categories are built based on the data and not known in advance. However, the analysis was based on two research questions, based on which there were two focus areas during the analysis: opinions and descriptions for the *meaning* of language awareness and the *methods* for language aware teaching. All the information which did not apply to the focus areas were excluded from the analysis.

The first phase of the content analysis consisted of close reading of the transcribed data, after which words and phrases related to opinions, descriptions and teaching methods concerning LA were identified and underlined. After the identification process the identified text segments were listed into four separate lists based on which interview they originate. The four lists of findings were first inspected internally: the findings were compared and drawn together to form categories consisting of similar entities, after which the categories were named based on the content they contained. Some of the categories existed in all four data sets while some of the categories were present in only one or two of them.

In the second phase of the analysis the four teacher-based and already categorized lists were combined and content analysis was implemented to form themes for the categories identified in the data. The phase resulted also in renaming and division of some of the already constructed categories. Ultimately, the themes and their subcategories constructed in the content analysis represent the four participant teachers' conceptualizations of language awareness.

Julien (2008) discusses the reliability of content analysis. For example, a researcher must acknowledge the fact that meaning of texts is subjective and context dependent, which means that the researcher must be careful with ensuring that their perspectives and interpretations have as little effect as possible (Julien, 2008). To diminish researcher bias, Julien (2008) suggests that the researcher should be careful in forming the categories and define them as comprehensibly as possible so that they can reliably be identified in the data set and determined relevant to the research. During the content analysis of this thesis the transcripts were inspected in many occasions and the listings as well as the categories were reformulated and rearranged as new findings emerged. In addition, it is useful to consider also what is missing in the data during the analysis, considering that absence of a topic or an aspect might also prove germane (Julien, 2008). This has been acknowledged during the analyzing process and well as in the observations and conclusions drawn from the findings.

4. Analysis

The content analysis resulted in 6 themes and eleven subcategories defining participant English teachers' conceptualizations of language awareness. The six themes identified in the interview data are 1. the meaning of LA, 2. presence of LA in schools, 3. teaching methods, 4. pupil language competence 5. other subjects and other teachers, and 6. opinions on the core curriculum description for LA. The themes and their subcategories are displayed in Table 1.

THEMES	SUBCATEGORIES
1. The meaning of LA	• Difficulty in describing LA • Different areas of LA • LA before 2014 core curriculum
2. Presence of LA in schools	• Importance of LA • How much LA is present • Which areas of LA are present
3. Teaching methods	• Books and other teaching materials
4. Pupil language competence	• Utilizing L1 variety • How to help immigrants understand
5. Other subjects and other teachers	• Other subjects • Other teachers
6. Opinions on the core curriculum description of LA	• How LA can be transferred into practice

Table 1. *Themes and subcategories*

It is important to note that the topics discussed in the interviews originate in part from the remarks and questions of the interviewer. In other words, some of the topics were initiated by the interviewer to ensure the data corresponds to the research questions. Each discussion topic initiated by the interviewer is indicated within the sections discussing the themes. Moreover, the topics initiated by the interviewer were introduced with open-ended questions such as "Mitä kielitietoisuus tarkoittaa sinulle? [What does language awareness mean to you?] to avoid leading the participants into opinions. Thus, the contents of the themes and subcategories represent a reflection of the teachers' LA conceptualizations.

In addition, not all the themes presented in Table 1 were present in each interview, and the themes differed in perspectives and in the amount of emphasis given based on the interviewees. During the analyzing process, the transcribed interview data was also narrowed down according to the interest

of the thesis, i.e., some topics of discussion were excluded. For example, one of the teachers provided examples of teaching material and methods for younger pupils than the scope of the thesis. The LA definition selected from the core curriculum for English subject concerns grades 7-9, which is why the content in schoolbooks for younger pupils is irrelevant for the thesis purposes. However, most of the data discarded were discussion topics not linked to language awareness.

In this section each theme is described with demonstrating examples. The teachers' descriptions and opinions are inspected both in unison and comparingly to determine if and how the conceptualizations differed, since previous research has suggested that Finnish teachers have diverse conceptualizations about what LA is and how it is implemented in teaching. In addition, the descriptions are contrasted by referencing the definitions of LA introduced in section 2.4. and the description for LA in the National core curriculum key principles and in English subject for grades 7-9, which was used as a reference point during the interviews.

4.1. The meaning of LA

In this section the first theme, *the meaning of LA*, is described with examples from the interview data. The theme consists of three subcategories which are *difficulty in describing LA*, *different areas of LA*, and *LA before 2014 core curriculum*, which are introduced in order in this section. Most of the content in the theme stems from what the teachers disclosed at the beginning of the interviews, to avoid confusing the commentary provided by the teachers subsequently in the interviews, for example when inspecting the core curriculum descriptions of LA. The teachers' comments on NCCBE contents are discussed in section 4.6.

Whilst discussing the meaning of LA, two of the teachers, A and C, reported difficulty in providing a description for language awareness. Their commentary formed the first subcategory. For example, teacher A reported difficulty in finding a suitable definition for the topic although explaining the concept is familiar to them in its meaning:

> (1) Interview, teacher A
>
> Se on vähä silleen vaikeesti määriteltävä. Tavallaan kaikki tietää mitä se on, mutta sit ei oo olemassa mitään hyvää määritelmää. En oo ainakaan ite törmänny semmoseen.
>
> [It is quite difficult to define. Kind of, everyone knows what it is, but there aren't any good definitions. At least I haven't personally bumped into one.]

Teacher A's description in Example (1) depicts LA as implicit knowledge obtained by everyone, which is difficult to verbalize. Teacher C, likewise, commented on the difficulty in defining the concept:

(2) Interview, teacher C

Aika vaikeesti tää on… siis ei se ole terminä ehkä ihan semmoinen, että osaisin yhellä lauseella tai kahellakaan sanoa sitä.

It's quite difficult to... like, maybe it's not the type of term that I could say with one or ever two sentences.]

On the contrary to teacher A's comment in Example (1) about knowing the essence but having difficulty in verbalizing the concept, teacher C referred to the difficulty in describing it concisely in Example (2). Even though the teachers reported difficulty in defining LA both were able to provide examples of *different areas of LA* later in the interviews, which also reflects implicit knowledge teacher A alluded to in the quote above. Difficulty in defining or understanding the LA concept has been present in previous research within Finland (Tukeva, 2020; Gök & Rajala, 2017; Minkkinen, 2021). Teacher C's description for LA focused mostly on the English language subject teaching and contents:

(3) Interview, teacher C

No minä käsitän sen niin että, no, meidän aineessa, että esitellään ja tutustutaan eri… vaikka Englannin tunneilla eri maiden englannin… tai tapaan puhua sitä kieltä ja tuottaa sitä kieltä. Ja kaikki mitä siihen liittyy, kaikki kulttuuri ja että tutustutaan myös siihen kulttuuriin. Ei pelkästään opetella kielioppia ja sanastoa, vaan koko se yhteisö siellä taustalla. Mutta tälla lailla mää sen hahmotan ite. Että siihen liittyy moni eri osa-alue.

[Well, I understand it so that kind of, well, within our subject, presenting and familiarizing oneself with different… for instance, in the English lessons, to the different countries' English… or the way of speaking the language and producing it. And everything that is associated with it, all the culture and familiarizing oneself with also to the culture. It is not only about learning grammar and vocabulary, but the whole community there behind it. But, this is how I picture it myself. That there are many sides to it.]

In short, the description in Example (3) includes the subject specific areas such as English language use in English speaking countries and familiarizing oneself with the cultures and communities. Vocabulary and grammar are also referred to as contrast to the examples about culture and different

Englishes. Teacher C's description of LA focused on the subject English and reflects the description of the core curriculum English subject objectives regarding familiarization in anglophonic countries English use and culture. They also specified that they discussed English subject specifically ["meidän aineessa"].

On the contrary, teacher's B and D did not refer to difficulties when reporting the descriptions of LA and their definitions included also examples from outside of English language subject specific areas. For example, teacher B, mentioned the following topics when defining language awareness:

(4) Interview, teacher B

No se on ehkä sitä, että ymmärtää miten kieli vaikuttaa identiteettiin, miten identiteetti vaikuttaa kieleen. Kaikenlaista sen kielen… no sen ylipäänsä merkitystä yhteiskuntaan, ihmiseen… kaikkeen siihen. Ja sitten myös tämän kielten erilaisuuden tiedostamista ja ehkä sitä, että kielen rakenteet voi tavallaan…tiedostaa, että kielen rakenteet voi ohjata myös ajattelua.

[Well, it is maybe the understanding of the ways in which language affects the identity and how the identity affects the language. All kinds of the language's… well its overall influence in the society and in humans… to all of it. And also acknowledging the differences in languages, and maybe that the structures of language can also guide thoughts.]

This description in Example (4) focuses on the effect languages have on humans and how humans affect the languages. There is also a mention of acknowledging the differences between languages. Thus, the example is not limited to English subject teaching. In addition to the quote above, teacher B elaborated on the definition of LA further by discussing the different features of LA based on the context, for example, in teaching lessons and in everyday life, and the effects of pupils' ages in LA teaching. Teacher B also mentioned pondering the meanings of words, illustrating semantics and etymology, inspecting the structures of language and what effects they have and comparing languages. Furthermore, teacher B discussed accepting and respecting multiculturalism and diversity, and acknowledging prejudices. The description provided by teacher B reflects both the key principle LA and English subject objectives of the core curriculum. There are also aspects which were not included in the LA descriptions on NCCBE.

Along the same lines with teacher B, also teacher D emphasized that the nature of LA depends on the age and developmental level of the pupils. Teacher D's description included also comparing languages, English variants, discussing stereotypes, and knowledge of cultural conventions and habits. The description by teacher D, depicts language awareness mostly focusing on English subject teaching, which was also persistent in teacher C's description, although pieces of teacher D's

description can be identified in both English subject objectives and the key principle of the NCCBE: For example, the discussions about prejudices and cultural aspects not linked to anglophonic countries. Teacher A, on the other hand explained that their idea of LA is not much linked to the English subject and the subject's teaching objectives of the NCCBE:

(5) Interview, teacher A

No ei se miten mää kielitietoisuuden käsitän, ni se ei silleen liity tähän oppiaineeseen ja sen tavotteisiin juurikaan.

[Well, the way I understand language awareness isn't really that much related to this subject and its objectives.]

This opinion was declared when discussing how language awareness is present in the core curriculum objectives of LA in English subject teaching. The teachers were asked to provide examples of how they fulfil each of the three objectives linked to LA, to which teacher A commented what is depicted in Example (5). Thus, teacher A's description contradicts the descriptions provided by teacher C and D who discussed LA mostly from the English language teaching perspective. Teacher B's description, on the other hand, contained both the areas of English subject and those not limited to it. Thus, the teachers who referred to difficulties in providing a description, A and C, had the most contradiction in their contexts of LA. The contexts and different areas of LA are depicted in Table 2.

Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
School context: mainly outside of English subject	**Both in English subject and outside of it**	**Mainly in English subject**	**Mainly in English subject**
Difficult to define	Different based on pupils' age and developmental stage	Difficult to define	Different based on pupils' age and developmental stage
How things are said	Discussing prejudices	Englishes in English speaking countries	English variants
Word choices	Identity and language	Cultures of English-speaking countries	Comparing languages
Not about English subject	Semantics	(Grammar and vocabulary)	Stereotypes
Acknowledging the differences in pupil language competence	Etymology	Many sides to LA	Cultural customs and habits
	Accepting and respecting multiculturalism and diversity		Utilizing different L1s
	Languages affect behavior		
	Comparing languages		
	Structures in language		
	Context dependent language		

Table 2. *Different areas of LA*

The contents of the Table (2), the *different areas of LA,* are based on the descriptions provided when discussing the meaning on language awareness, which is thematically overlapping with teaching methods discussed in section 4.3. The difference, however, is on the perspective of inspection: This subcategory focuses on the areas of LA whereas teaching methods (4.3.) focus on methods and activities applied in teaching. Table 2 demonstrates that teacher A's definitions and examples focus on the teacher's word choices and clarity of speech and are not specific to the school subject English. Teacher C, on the other hand, discussed LA in English subject focusing on different languages, culture, and English variants.

Teacher B discussed the different topics that are incorporated in English lessons, such as cultures, etymology, semantics, language comparisons, and discussing prejudices. There are many similarities in teacher D's definitions regarding English subject teaching. The difference, however, is that teacher D does not mention etymology, semantics, or effects of identity specifically. Furthermore, teacher D emphasizes LA in English subject more than teacher B: Teacher B's examples include both the LA in English subject teaching and the LA outside of English subject teaching, such as history subject and the overall school context. For example, they explained applying semantics and etymology also in history lessons, during which they, for instance, inspect the language choices in war posters with their pupils and discuss the effects of language choices in political speeches.

To conclude, the teachers' definitions of language awareness were diverse, but there were also similarities. Even though teachers A and C both expressed similar experience about the nature of the concept, i.e., the difficulty of providing a concise definition of LA, they had drastically different approach to describing what areas LA is constructed of. Teacher C's description is close to the description provided in NCCBE objectives and content areas for English subject teaching in grades 7-9, whereas the description provided by teacher A is closest to the LA definition of Eric Hawkins's, especially the discussions about pupil language comprehension (Hawkins, 1987). Teacher B and D's descriptions also reflect the definition of Eric Hawkins's, but from a different perspective, in which LA functions as a tool for diminishing prejudices (van Lier, 1996; Hawkins, 1987). For example, both teachers mentioned discussions about pupils' assumptions and prejudices, while teacher D also referred to introducing pupil L1 and cultural heritage to the other pupils, which are also highlighted in the key principle LA in the NCCBE. In addition, teacher B disclosed identity and societal language issues, which are linked to critical language awareness (van Lier, 1996).

The third subcategory, *LA before 2014 core curriculum*, was constructed based on the discussions about LA before the current Core Curriculum. Three of the teachers, B, C and D, explained that they have work experience in teaching from before the NCCBE update was published in 2014 and the

concept of language awareness introduced in it. Teacher C discussed the deployment of the updated core curriculum and that there had been adaptations to the teaching contents. In the other two interviews it became apparent that the notion of LA was already intrinsic to the teachers before there was a term for it. For example, teacher B explained having immediately realized what the concept was about and referred to it as "perusasioita tässä nykymaailmassa" [basics in this contemporary world]. Teacher D, on the other hand, estimated that LA had always been implemented to some extent by language teachers, although the term itself might not have existed yet.

4.2. Presence of LA in schools

The second theme encompasses the descriptions the teachers provided in the interviews on the *presence of LA in schools*. The theme consists of three subcategories: *importance of LA*, *how much LA is present* and *which areas of LA are present*, which are elaborated on in order in this section.

Firstly, the importance of LA was discussed by three of the four teachers. Two of the three discussed the overall importance of LA, while one of them referred to the importance of LA in specific areas: Teacher C discussed the importance with reference to the English subject LA, which correlates with the teacher's definition of LA in section 4.1. When discussing the importance of LA, teacher B referred to it as "hirveen tärkee aspekti" [greatly important aspect], while teacher C expressed the importance of LA to be included at some point but contemplated how important it is compared to other themes in the subject English curriculum:

> (6) Interview, teacher C
>
> Meillä on siis tuentarpeet koko ajan kasvaa, mutta kuitenkaan resurssit ei, ni ehkä voi olla, että sitäki joutuu tai tätäki teemaa joutuu jollaki lailla miettimään, että mihin kaikkeen me käytetään sitä aikaa siellä tunneilla.
>
> [The needs of support increase all the time in our school but the resources do not, so it might be the case that this theme must be considered as well, concerning which things we spend our time on during the lessons.]

There were similarities in teacher C's and teacher A's opinions on the importance of LA. The importance was mentioned by teacher A in two separate occasions during the interview: When discussing the overall importance, teacher A declared "Ei se oo silleen kovinkaan merkittävän tuntonen asia" [It doesn't seem to be that significant of a thing]. When returning to the topic for second time, teacher A elaborated on their opinion accordingly:

(7) Interview, teacher A

Luennoitsija yliopistossa, ni osas hyvin puhua aiheesta, ja niinkö siinä hoksas miks sillä on merkitystä, mutta sitte se jää helposti hämäräksi.

[A lecturer at the university spoke well about it, and then it became apparent why it's important, but then again, it is easily left unclear.]

Altogether the teacher does not express their opinion on importance strongly, for example by using the adverb 'kovinkaan' [quite / that much] to define the adjective 'merkittävä' [important]. However, it is possible to decipher that the teacher does not consider LA to be very important or there might be confusion about the importance – especially concerning Example (7). On the other hand, they did not specify whether they were expressing their own opinion on the importance or referring to the assumption they have. Moreover, teacher A discussed the importance of LA with reference to a specific area of LA in the NCCBE. They expressed discontentment on the implied importance of the first learning objective, O1, in the NCCBE contents for English subject:

(8) Interview, teacher A

Jos vertaa siihen tärkeeseen juttuu mitä kielenopiskelussa tehään, niinku opetellaan ymmärtämään ja tuottaan sitä kieltä, ni tuohan on periaatteessa jos kirjaimellisesti tulkitaan ni ois yhtä tärkee tavoite muiden joukossa. Tuonhan vois laittaa ihan johonki sivulauseeseen. [interviewer comment removed]. Mutta että se ei oo mun mielestä kovin keskeistä sisältöä kuitenkaan niissä opinnoissa.

[If we compare [O1] to the important aspect that we do in language learning, which is learning to understand and to produce the language, then that is basically, if understood literally, as important of an objective as the others. That could be placed in some subordinate clause. [interviewer comment removed]. But I don't think it is such essential content in the education.]

In Example (8) teacher A is referring to the other nine objectives issued in the NCCBE for English language subject, which concerns the status of English, English variants, and support in intercultural co-operation.

To conclude the discussions about the importance of LA in the interviews with teachers A, B and C, it can be argued that teachers A and C did not consider language awareness as important as teacher B did. The importance of LA or any of its specific areas was not specifically referred to in the interview with teacher D, which is why it's not possible to contemplate their opinion.

The second subcategory, *how much LA is present*, concerns the commentary the teachers provided on the presence of language awareness in the lessons and everyday life of schools, which was discussed by all of the teachers. Their opinions differed drastically, especially between teachers A and B: Teacher B considered LA to be basics in the contemporary world and it being involved in everything ["kaiken läpäisevä juttu"]. Teacher A on the other hand declared the opposite: "ei se silleen arjessa ilmene kauheesti" [It doesn't appear that much in the everyday life] and "ei se oo silleen kovin läpileikkaava teema" [it's not quite cross-sectional theme]. Overall, the comments of the two teachers were contradicting.

Teacher C's experience was similar to teacher A's: "ehkä sitä ei niin aktiivisesti käytetä täällä arjessa" [maybe it's not used quite actively here in everyday life]. Teacher D did not specifically address the overall amount of LA in daily life, but regarded LA as something every language teacher has always included in their teaching to certain extent and considered LA as "itsestäänselväkin asia" [obvious thing also]. Ultimately the teachers' opinions were contradictory. The opinions on the presence of LA in everyday life coincide with the opinions on importance detailed above, i.e., teacher B on the other side of the continuum versus teachers A and C.

Moreover, the teachers discussed *which areas of LA* they considered more present than other areas. For example, the third objective in the National core curriculum, O3, concerning regularities of English and cross-linguistic comparisons, was identified as notably present in the English lessons by three of the teachers, A, B, and D. Teacher C also discussed the third objective, but estimated its presence to alter depending on the age of the pupils and the number of pupils with intensified support. The teacher pondered also whether the second objective, O2, concerning teachers supporting pupils in finding English-language content and environments, had been implemented at all lately. Teacher A, on the other hand, expressed disinterest in the first objective, O1, concerning the status and variants of English, as explained above in demonstrating the importance of LA. In conclusion, the third objective was positively accentuated in the interview data.

4.3. Teaching methods

The third theme discussed significantly in the interviews was *teaching methods*, which was a topic of interest in the thesis, and one of the pre-decided discussion topics for the interviews. However, the contents of the discussions on teaching methods differed based on the topics the interviewees brought up. The NCCBE description of LA as a guiding principle in school environment and the sections concerning LA in the foreign language English subject in grade 7-9, i.e., the three objectives and

content area C1, were utilized as a reference point in the discussions. The teachers were each asked how they execute the LA contents of the core curriculum. In addition, some of the teaching methods incorporated into this theme were brought up by the interviewees within other topics of discussion during the interviews. The language aware teaching methods discussed in the interviews are depicted in Table 3.

Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
How teacher produces speech, e.g., in instructions	Introducing anglophonic cultures and what other languages are used	Introduction to English speaking cultures	Clarity over correctness in pronunciation
Ensuring every pupil understands instructions	Discussing news media from English speaking countries	Familiarising pupils with English variants	Encouraging English use outside school
Explaining difficult concepts and terminology	Encouraging pupils to use news media	English grammar	Meaning of terminology in Finnish
Tasks to find information on cultures and then asking questions about them	Comparing vocabulary in English	Regularities in English	Discussing English variants and their origins
Comparing cultures to Finnish culture and finding similarities	Explaining and discussing etymology	Pronunciation and speech production	Demonstrating the existence of cultures and languages other than FIN
Pondering where English can be learned	Comparing languages (EN, FIN, SWE, FRA), finding similarities	Reasoning importance of learning English language and cultures	Vocabulary in other languages than EN + FIN
Pondering situations where English can be used	Discussing English variants	Comparing EN + SWE	Reminding that EN and SWE are related
Watching movies	Discussing assumptions and prejudices	Discussing the status of English	Raising awareness of benefits of language and culture knowledge
Literature reading	Regularities in English (e.g., pronunciation)		Utilizing pupils L1s
Discussing different Englishes and their use	Encouraging contact with English speaking people and cultural exchange		Teacher's own way of speaking English (variant)
Comparing EN to SWE	Cultural history		Discussing stereotypes
Observing the evaluation criteria together with pupils			
Grammar quizzes			

Table 3. *LA teaching methods*

The teaching method examples provided by the teachers include and reflect both the TLA and the activities supporting the development of LA in pupils. For instance, teacher A discussed the way in which teacher communicates with the pupils to ensure every pupil can understand and be included in the lessons. They referred to the pupils with different L1 backgrounds but also the pupils with L1 Finnish who might have difficulty in following along the lessons and instructions from the teacher. This perspective of LA teaching methods depicts TLA, i.e., understanding of pupil cognition and

learner point of view (Andrews, 2007). Furthermore, the TLA perspective is visible in teacher A and teacher D's examples of explaining terminology and the assumedly difficult concepts to enable pupil comprehension. In addition, each of the teachers mentioned comparisons between English and other languages, such as Swedish, Finnish, and French. For example, teachers B and D discussed language comparisons from the perspective of finding similarities between the languages. Teachers B and C referred to intralingual comparisons and regularities. Thus, language comparison is a prominent LA teaching method, in which the comparisons can be made in intralingual or interlingual level.

Moreover, teachers A, C and D referred to demonstrating the importance of English language learning and cultural knowledge to their pupils. In close relation to cultural knowledge, teachers B and D mentioned discussing stereotypes and prejudices of the pupils, which they reasoned accordingly:

(9) Interview, teacher B

"Jo se ymmärrys tavallaan siitä omista ennakkoluuloista ja ennakkoasetelmista, vaikka, voi johtaa tohon kulttuurienvälisen toimintakyvyn paranemiseen ja mun mielestä johtaaki."

[Even the understanding the person's own prejudices and advantages, for instance, can lead to improvement in intercultural competence, which it in my opinion does.]

(10) Interview, teacher D

Mun mielestä ehkä se kielitietoisuus pitää ehkä sisällään myös sen kulttuuritietoisuuden. Että ite näkisin aikakin, että siihen kielitietoisuuteen liittyis sitten tämmöset kulttuuriin liittyvät asiat ja tavat ja tottumukset ja tämmöset. Ja sitten mitä vanhempia oppilaita ni sitä hedelmällisempää on siinä yhteydessä puhua sitten stereotypioista ja siitä niitten paikkansapitämättömyydestä tai -pitävyydestä.

[In my opinion maybe the language awareness also includes cultural awareness. At least I think that the aspects, habits, and customs and so on which are linked to culture are related to language awareness. And the older the pupils the more fruitful it is in that context to then discuss stereotypes and whether they are truth or not.]

Thus, the teachers also addressed the importance of knowledge of and familiarization with different cultures important aspect in teaching of language awareness. Teacher D also explained in the Example (10) that they consider cultural awareness as a part of language awareness.

Moreover, the different variants of English and their values as a type of English were discussed by all the four teachers, although the focus of the discussions varied. Teacher C discussed variants as something the pupils get familiar with, while teachers B and D elaborated also on the origins of the

variants, emphasizing the cultural notion more. Teacher B also linked the variants to pupil suppositions, which can be discussed with the class to emphasize that identity and language are heavily linked to each other. This was also referenced by teacher D, who remarked that the way a person speaks English is impacted by the L1 of the individual: "että mikä on sen lähtökielen vaikutus ikäänku päälle opittuun kieleen" [what impact first language has on the language learned afterward]. Contrary to teachers B, C, and D, teacher A discussed different Englishes mostly from the perspective of the language use situations and the different registers of English used in them. The teacher also remarked the variants of English are not an area of special interest to them, which is why the variants are not in such important role in their teaching. Teacher D, on the other hand, discussed the English variants as also something that every English teacher embodies.

To summarize the LA teaching method descriptions, each teacher utilizes other languages in their teaching, of which Swedish and Finnish are most used to demonstrate differences and similarities between the languages. The two languages are typically familiar to the pupils, and also language subjects in the schools. Thus, language awareness is supported by drawing from the existing language competences. Hence, the teachers utilize the learning conception of sociocultural theory. Introducing different English variants was discussed by all of the teachers, two of which also emphasized the effect L1 or cultural background has on the English use. Teacher C's examples of language aware teaching focused on the English subject, whereas the other three teachers mentioned also language awareness methods that were not linked to English language in particular, such as teacher A's instructions, teacher B's example of semantics in posters and politics, and teacher D's method of learning other L1s with the pupils.

Moreover, a comparison of the teachers' descriptions of LA teaching methods to the definitions of LA in literature (see 2.4.1) reveals many similarities to Eric Hawkins's original aims and description of LA in schools. For example, the original aim of Eric Hawkins's, when he created theoretical foundations to LA, was to help educators of classes with pupils from diverse language backgrounds (Kennedy, 2012). Similar agenda was addressed by teacher A when referring to the way in which teacher provides instructions and ensuring every pupil can understand and follow the lesson. The same can be identified in teacher A and D's reference to explaining terminology and concepts when teaching grammar. Furthermore, Hawkins's agenda can be identified in teachers B and D's methods in order to address stereotypes and prejudices, which Eric Hawkins described as one of the main concerns to which his idea of LA was aimed at. Moreover, the same agenda is present in critical language awareness, which aims at confronting issues of power and manipulation in language use (van Lier, 1996). This view can be detected in teacher B's methods to include discussions on

etymology, identity questions and on the history of English and the anglophonic countries in English subject teaching.

There are also fragments of Donmall's (1985, as cited in van Lier, 1996) LA definition: The acknowledgement of the role of language in human life can be identified in the teacher-pupil discussions about culture, identity, and language varieties from each interview. For example, teacher A discussed the different situations and different ways in which English is used, while teachers B and D referred to identity, prejudices, and language backgrounds of language learners. Furthermore, the controversial LA definition, KAL, described by van Lier (1996) as a narrowed focus on the formal aspect of language and grammar and requirement of conscious effort of learning was contradicted by teacher A. When discussing grammar teaching methods, teacher A explained that they prefer to not teach grammar by focusing on the grammar rules but by applying the structures into practice instead:

(11) Interview, teacher A

Mulla on ehkä yks tunti kolmessa viikossa millon opetetellaan tarkemmin kielioppia. Se on enemmänki semmosta, että otetaan se asia käyttöön, että ei niinkään opetella sääntöjä sun muita. Yritetään harjotella kieltä missä sitte tulee käytettyä niitä tarvittavia tai opetuksen alla olevia rakenteita.

[I have maybe one lesson in three weeks where grammar is studied more specifically. It's more like applying the topic into practice, not actually learning grammar rules and the like. We try to practice language in which the structures that are necessary and in focus in teaching will be used]

The description provided by teacher A in Example (11) contradicts the formal grammar learning concept of KAL. On the other hand, participating in English lessons taught by a teacher are ultimately situations in which pupils usually are consciously studying English. The different teaching methods chosen by a teacher might, however, contribute as both conscious and unconscious learning material.

To summarize this section, the LA teaching method examples provided by the teachers had different dimensions although the teachers had the NCCBE material as a reference point during the discussions.

Upon discussing the different LA teaching methods, each of the teachers also discussed learning materials. Three of them had physical schoolbooks whereas one had digital material. The teachers discussed expanding the material further or expressed discontentment to either the amount or quality of the material. Different areas of LA were also identified from the materials or determined missing from the schoolbooks. For example, the different variants of English were identified in the teaching materials by each of the four teachers. In addition, the status of lingua franca English was identified

in the teaching materials by two, teachers A and B, although teacher B wished for more information about the history and developments causing the phenomenon. Teacher A referred to the lingua franca content as something the creators of the materials had not really got far with it yet.

Moreover, anglophonic culture was a discussion topic in each interview, but the culture in teaching materials was discussed by two teachers, C and D. Although the teachers were content with the amount of culture in the materials teacher D elaborated on the quality of the cultural input:

(12) Interview, teacher D

Se maailma mitä nämä oppikirjat toistaseksi vielä välittää ni ne on aika tämmöstä sanotaanko aika perinteisiä. Ja vaikka ollaan eri maissa niin tuota kyllä siellä tämmönen valkoinen heteronormatiivisuus on aikalailla läsnä edelleen näissä kuvituksessa. Ja no tietysti jos on tämmöstä että kappaleet sijottuu eri kaupunkeihin, eri maihin ympäri maailmaa, ni kyllä siellä nyt saattaa sitten vähän näkyä oikeasti vaikka… jos käsitellään Etelä-Afrikkaa niin sitten on sikäläisiä ihmisiä omissa puuhissaan. Että vähän on semmosta, mutta kyllä se semmonen perusajatus on kuitenkin että se on aika tämmönen perinteinen maailma kulttuurisesti.

[The world that the schoolbooks depict for the time being is, should we say, traditional. And even though when covering different countries, this sort of white heteronormativity is still quite much present in the pictures. And well, of course, if the chapter's location is in different cities in different countries all over the world, then there might actually be shown, for example… if the topic is South Africa, then there are local people doing their chores. So there is a little of it, but the sort of basic idea is still that it is this kind of culturally traditional world.]

Furthermore, teacher B concluded that language awareness is not automatically provided in the schoolbooks, and thus LA is largely created by and included in the lessons by the teacher. Similar notion, i.e., the teacher adapting and elaborating on the material, was expressed by teacher C who also commented on the sufficiency of the amount of culture content:

(13) Interview, teacher C

Musta tuntuu, että aika paljon riippuu varmaan siitä kirjasarjastaki, että miten niinkö kuinka paljon me sitten muokataan niitä tai miten hyvin sitä on sinne sisällytetty. Meillä on semmonen ku [name of the book series], että se on aika semmonen jo valmiiksi. Siellä on aika tosi… tai hyvin sitä kulttuuria, ettei hirveesti ei oo tarvinnu ylimäärästä kehittää.

[I feel like it depends a lot on the book series too how much we edit them, or how well they [LA objectives] are imbedded in there. We have one called [name of the book series], which

is quite the type already. There is a lot… or sufficiently culture in it, so there has not been a need to develop that much extra.]

In conclusion, the teaching materials were estimated to display English variants and cultures sufficiently, but the overall sufficiency of LA content was questioned. The teachers discussed elaborating and editing the material for it to suffice in teaching LA. Although the teachers discussed the extent to which learning materials provide elements of language awareness, the opinions shouldn't be taken out of context, since the materials mentioned in the interviews were different for each teacher. Thus, an opinion about whether the learning material is sufficient in providing material to LA teaching shall only be considered in this thesis focused on the discussion about what the teachers had identified in the materials and how they behave when the materials do not suffice. Moreover, the discussions about culture in the teaching materials supports a notion that the teachers considered culture contents to be involved in language awareness teaching.

4.4. Pupil language competence

The fourth theme which emerged from the interview data was discussions about *pupil language competence* and their cultural backgrounds. The discussion topic was initiated in the interviews by teachers A and D. The discussions with the two teachers focused mostly on the L1s of the pupils. Different L1 backgrounds were discussed from two opposing perspectives, upon which two subcategories were identified: *Utilizing L1 variety* and *How to help immigrants understand*. The utilization of other languages to highlight regularities and similarities between languages, such as Swedish, was discussed in the theme covering LA teaching methods (see 4.3) and will not be elaborated in this section to avoid unnecessary repetition. Furthermore, Swedish, Finnish, and other languages in comparison and utilization were discussed as reference points when teaching English whereas this theme concerns pupil L1s and how the teachers acknowledge and approach the L1 languages.

Teacher D discussed utilizing pupil L1s during English lessons so that the pupils can be introduced to other languages and cultures. The teacher considered the different L1s fruitful and as something that can be benefited from in demonstrating the existence of different languages and the nature of language:

(14) Interview, teacher D

Kyseinen oppilas opetti meille sitten ne viikonpäivät omalla äidinkielellään ja niitä toistettiin ja makusteltiin. Katottiin onko jotaki yhteistä vai onko ne ihan erilaisia ja miltä ne kuulostaa ja näin.

[The pupil of question then taught us the weekdays in their own mother tongue and then those were repeated and chewed over to determine if there is something in common or whether they are completely different, and what they sound like and so on.]

The Example (14) depicts a positive intake on different languages and implies the teacher's respect for pupil language background, especially since they refer to the situation as the pupil teaching *us*. It emphasizes that the teacher is actively learning the vocabulary from the pupil as well. On another occasion during the interview the same teacher described the lack of L1 variety in their own school as unfortunate, which emphasizes further the teacher's positive view on pupil language backgrounds in this context. Teacher D also referred to the different L1s as a medium for demonstrating the existence of other cultures and languages outside of the bubble of the school and the region which the pupils live in. Utilizing pupils' language background and competence is a recommended way to increase LA and cultural awareness in Finnish schools as guided by National core curriculum (EDUFI, 2014, p.27). In addition, utilizing different languages and to find similarities was one of Eric Hawkins's agendas for language aware teaching (Hawkins, 1987).

The second perspective for pupil language competence, *how to help immigrants understand*, is based on the interview with teacher A, who discussed the language the teacher uses to include each pupil in the lesson. For example, teacher A discussed LA in providing instructions to exercises or explaining a concept to the class, but referenced also the different language and culture backgrounds on pupils:

(15) Interview, teacher A

Mää oon aina ajatellu tuota kielitietoisuutta opettajan näkökulmasta. Että miten se pitäs huomioida siinä työssä varsinki ku on paljon maahanmuuttajataustaisii oppilaita, jos se opetuskieli ei oo välttämättä niin vahva ku sitten äidinkielisille puhujille."

[I have always considered language awareness from the teacher perspective. In the sense of how to acknowledge it when teaching, especially since there are so many pupils with immigrant background, if the language of instruction isn't necessarily as strong as for the L1 speakers.]

In the quote in Example (15) teacher A acknowledges the different L1 backgrounds from the perspective of providing support and enabling participation in the learning activities. Teacher A also

mentions the number of immigrants in their school, which might influence the perspective of the discussion. Although the teacher discussed LA from the perspective of enabling inclusivity of immigrant pupils, the teacher also emphasized that the instructions do not necessarily differ that much depending on the pupil, since also the pupils with L1 Finnish might have difficulty in grasping certain concepts. Furthermore, when asked how language awareness is present if the pupil does not have strong skills in Finnish, the teacher discussed the pupils who have received a year of instruction preparing for basic education before transferring to the general education:

(16) Interview, teacher A

Ne on lähinnä nuo, jotka tulee valmistavasta opetuksesta, se kestää vuoden, ni ei… Niitä on kuitenki aika vähän. Ni heille monesti käy sit selittämässä asiat uudestaan, varmistamassa että sen on ymmärtäny.

[It's mainly those who come from instruction preparing for basic education, it lasts a year, so… There aren't many of them. So, it's often explaining things to them again, making sure they have understood.]

This type of language awareness present in teacher A's commentary in Examples (15) and (16) is similar to the original agenda of Eric Hawkins's, in which the aim was to help teachers with pupils from less equipped language backgrounds. Teachers B and C did not discuss either of the subcategories specifically, although referencing language comparisons between other language subjects and L1 Finnish (see. 4.3).

4.5. Other subjects and other teachers

The fifth theme identified in the interview data was discussions about other teachers and other school subjects. The discussion topic was brought up by the researcher if the research participants discussed LA strictly from English language teacher perspective to decipher how they depicted LA outside the scope of English subject or language subject teaching. The topic was initiated with questions such as: "How is LA present in other subjects?" [Kuinka kielitietoisuus näkyy muissa oppiaineissa?].

The theme consists of two subcategories: *other subjects* and *other teachers*. The extent to which each of the teachers discussed the topics varied distinctly. For example, when discussing LA outside of English lessons, teacher A explained having always considered LA from the teacher perspective and how to support pupils from different L1 backgrounds (see 4.4). Hence, teacher A did not discuss LA outside classrooms, but the examples they provided on language awareness would correspond to other

school subjects as well. Moreover, when discussing the core curriculum description to LA as a key principle guiding the development of school culture, teacher A elaborated also on the nature of LA in different school subjects:

(17) Interview, teacher A

Tavallaan että ollaan tietoisia siitä, että oppiaineissa on tavallaan vähän erilaista kieltä kuin toisissa oppiaineissa ja näin.

[Kind of being aware of that different subjects have sort of different language in comparison to other subjects and so on.]

The description in Example (17) assumedly refers to the different concepts and terminology that are conventional for the specific science discipline, which is a notion referred to also in the NCCBE key principle. The teacher also elaborated that "eri asioista puhutaan eri sanoilla" [different things are discussed with different vocabulary]. Teacher D, on the other hand expressed clear uncertainty on the ways in which LA could be implemented outside English classrooms, referring to the same notion mentioned by teacher A:

(18) Interview, teacher D

Jos nyt aattelee, että matikanopettajana tai reaaliaineenopettajana, niin vaikka opsissakin sanotaan, että kaikki opettajat ovat kielten opettajia, niin en mää äkkiseltään osaa sanoa, että minkälaisissa yhteyksissä siellä sitten tämmönen kielitietoinen ote olis luontevaa tuoda jotenki… Ellei sitten opettajalla, tai ellei ryhmässä ole oppilaita, joilla on erilaista taustaa, että sitä kautta sitte tuoda sitä tietoisuutta.

[If I think about mathematics and natural sciences teachers, although it says in the core curriculum that every teacher is a language teacher, I wouldn't be able to say promptly in what kinds of contexts this language aware approach would be natural to apply… Unless the teacher or if there are some pupils in the group who have different background, to bring awareness that way.]

In Example (18) teacher D discusses different teachers of different subjects but the LA perspective is on the language and cultural backgrounds, not on the subject specific terminology or concepts. Hence the descriptions of teachers A and D had different approaches to the nature of LA. Moreover, teacher D expressed inability to provide example of how LA can be applied by mathematics or natural sciences teachers and discussed teacher or pupil background as possibility to bring language awareness instead (18). The perspective of teacher D's description draws on the examples mentioned

in the earlier theme discussing the utilization of pupil L1s in creating LA in the lessons (See 4.4). When discussing LA outside classrooms, teacher D contemplated whether LA is present at all in the scenario, but did, however, discuss guiding pupils about manners when speaking, for example reminding them not to use curse words. Thus, the perspectives provided by teacher D did not address other subjects specifically. Moreover, when discussing other subjects, teacher C suggested that each teacher includes LA in their own subject in their own way. Although they did not provide examples for the 'own way', there is a notion that the LA is different in other school subjects. Thus, teacher C and teacher A had similarity in their descriptions.

On the contrary to the three, teacher B discussed LA outside English subject teaching on many occasions. They referred to LA outside of English subject as respecting cultures and diversity, acknowledging the impact language has on thinking and overall discussion of the meanings of words. The teacher discussed having had discussion with their pupils about the Finnish word 'eripura' [discord], inspecting the language and word choices, such as how politicians speak and what language is used in propaganda posters which in history lesson. In summary, teachers A and C referred to the different nature of LA in different subjects whereas teacher D emphasized pupil/teacher cultural and language backgrounds. Teacher B discussed both perspectives, i.e., culture and diversity and the different natures of LA in other school subjects.

The second subcategory was constructed from the discussions about other teachers. The participant teachers were asked if there had been conversations about LA in the teacher community. None of the teachers referred to having had discussions on the topic. For example, teacher A' answer was "no eipä oikeastaan" [well, not really]. Similar experience was alluded to by teachers B, C and D, although teacher C explained having co-operation in planning the lessons and B having a lot of discussions on teaching in general. Furthermore, teacher C elaborated that in their experience there had not been any guidelines to how LA is to be implemented in their school although they follow the Core Curriculum quite largely. Teachers A, C, and D also mentioned the lack of workplace trainings for the topic, when asked whether there had been one. Teacher A, however, had recently signed to a workshop in which LA would be discussed, which at the time of the interview had not yet been held.

Moreover, three of the teachers, B, C, and D, voiced that the way in which LA is implemented is based on the teacher, which reflects TLA knowledge. Teacher C referred to teaching being a personality occupation to which also being up to date in things impacts. Teacher D mentioned teacher's own activity and willingness, whereas teacher B discussed teacher's interests and teacher's own LA. Thus, it can also be argued that the teachers know the teachers own activity affects the LA of the classroom and the lessons.

In conclusion, two of the teachers', C and D's, descriptions emphasize that LA is mostly linked to language teaching, whereas two of the teachers, A and B discussed LA in a way that was not limited to specific school subject. Teachers A and C regarded the LA outside of English subject shortly, referring to the NCCBE key principle definition of every teacher being a language teacher. Their description regard LA of different subjects having different language and teachers implementing LA in their own way. Teacher D implied uncertainty in the difference of non-English subject LA and referred to the cultural and linguistic representation, whereas teacher B discussed culture and exemplified the different nature of LA outside of English subject. None of the teachers declared having discussed LA in the teacher community, and the lack of workplace trainings was brought up by two of the teachers. LA was also described to be affected by teachers' own willingness, knowledge, and interests.

4.6. Opinions on the Core Curriculum description of LA

The sixth theme in the interview data was the teachers' opinions on the NCCBE description of LA, discussion topic initiated by the interviewer if not discussed by the participant teacher. The theme is conjoined with a subcategory: *How LA can be transferred into practice.*

The opinions on NCCBE description of LA differed between the research participants. Two of the teachers suggested that the text was abstract (Teacher A) or fine sentences. (Teacher C) which had to be thought over: Teacher A described the core curriculum text as "kohtuullisen abstraktia" [moderately abstract] and the LA description as "obscure". Teacher C characterized the description also as "ympäripyöreä" [vague] and stated that it is the type of description that might not be comprehensible for all, after which aspiring for more practicality to the text. On the contrary, teacher D referred to the description of LA as appropriate and reasonable which they endorsed as such. Teacher B did not address the quality or nature of the description.

Furthermore, two of the teachers discussed the contents and sufficiency of the description compared to their own conceptions of LA. For example, teacher B regarded the NCCBE description as similar to their own conception but aspired for more etymology to be included in it. The teacher also aspired for more history to be included in English subject LA description in the key content area C1 and addressed the tone in segment about lingua franca English (EDUFI, 2014, para 15.4.3):

(19) Interview, teacher B

Tässä on että "tutkitaan englannin kielen kehittymistä globaaliksi lingua francaksi" niin tavallaan mun mielestä vois jo opetussuunnitelmassa olla siitä, että miten se pohjautuu niinku näihin

valtasuhteisiin, ja tämmösiin niinku imperialismiin, mitä on harrastettu aikanaan ja edelleen tietenki, varsinki kulttuuri-imperialismia. Että tossa on ehkä jopa vähän turhan neutraali minun mielestä tuo ilmaisu siihen nähen mitä se todellisuus on siitä englannin kielen noususta.

[It says here, "study the development of English into a global lingua franca", so kind of, in my opinion it should be included in the Core Curriculum how that is based on the power-relations, and on imperialism, which has been practiced formerly, and also currently, especially cultural imperialism. So, in my opinion, that's maybe too neutral of an expression in there, compared to what the reality of the rise of the English language is like.]

In the Example (19) teacher B makes a further reference to the history aspects of English language teaching. The comment also reflects CLA, in which the power-relations behind language use are acknowledged. Teacher A, on the other hand, discussed the contents of NCCBE description of LA when evaluating the importance of the first objective, O1, to be included in English subject teaching objectives:

(20) Interview, teacher A

Mua ite hämmästyttää tuo miks tästä pitää kokonainen tavoite tehdä opetussuunnitelmaan, musta tuon vois pyyhkiä kokonaan pois sieltä.

[I myself am baffled by why this must be a concrete objective in the core curriculum. I think it could be removed completely from there.]

The teacher also commented on the importance of the objective in comparison to the other focus areas, and whether the O1 should be included in pupil evaluation.

To conclude, one of the teachers was content with the LA description, whereas two described it as abstract and vague. Furthermore, two of the teachers expressed modifications, of which one was to introduce new content and change the tone of one segment and the other to remove a segment.

In addition to the opinions on the NCCBE description, the teachers discussed how the core curriculum description of LA can be transferred into practice, which constitutes the second subcategory. The transferability of National core curriculum contents was discussed with the teachers by inquiring the activities performed to accomplish the English subject objectives for instruction and to pursue the key principle guiding the development of school culture. When inspecting the examples provided by the teachers on the topic, teachers B and D's examples were most detailed, covering each of the objectives and also the contents of the key principle. Hence, although teacher B did not specifically

address the facility of transferring the contents into practice, they provided detailed various examples when discussing the objectives which can be argued to demonstrate high transferability.

On the contrary, teachers A and C addressed the transferability specifically. For instance, teacher A commented that it is not easy to connect the curriculum and practice:

(21) Interview, teacher A

Sitä on vaikee niinku opsin pohjalta hahmottaa mitä se käytännössä on. Mutta sitä on hyvä miettiä. Ne on tavallaan vaan niin eri muodossa ku mitä se käytännön arki on.

[It is difficult to distinguish from the core curriculum what it is in practice. But it's good to think about it. Their [sentences] form is just so different compared to the practice.]

Similar notion was alluded to by teacher C when describing teaching methods for the English subject objectives for instruction. The teacher referred to the text as "niin hienoja lauseita" [such fine sentences] that it requires time to think them over to determine how they can be actualized in teaching. Moreover, the teacher was not able to provide example for the second objective, O2, concerning supporting pupils in finding English content and environments. Although it could indicate difficulty in transferring the objective to practice it does not necessarily mean they had problems executing it in teaching. Other possible reasons are problem with recall, not having included it in teaching lately. Lastly, although teacher D did not address transferring the content to practice, they referred to the third objective, O2, concerning finding regularities in English and other languages, as the most concrete. They also pondered how the internationalisation at home can be used as a resource in different regions of Finland since different areas are more diverse than others.

The opinions provided by the teachers on transferability of core curriculum into practice were equal to the variety and number of teaching method examples they provided in the interviews. Although there appears to be a connection, the reason behind the phenomenon cannot be known for sure, only hypothesized. The connection and further synthesis are explained more thoroughly in discussion in section 5.

5. Discussion

The content analysis on the interview data resulted in six themes which contain information on the teachers' conceptualizations of language awareness. The contents of the themes revealed that the teachers had varied opinions, descriptions, and examples on LA. Although the descriptions provided by the teachers and interpretations derived from the examples and comments construct differing conceptualizations for LA, there were also similarities between the four sets of data. The four LA conceptualizations are depicted in Table 4, in which the contents are divided into two rows based on the research questions of the thesis. The rows are LA descriptions and LA teaching methods. The discussion begins with discussing the LA descriptions and LA teaching methods, after which the discussion reviews the dimensions of the participant teachers LA conceptualizations with references to previous research and LA definitions. And lastly, there is discussion on the trustworthiness of the findings.

	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
LA descriptions	Does not seem that significant Does not appear much in everyday life	Greatly important aspect, basics LA involved in everything Teacher's own interest and own LA affect	Important to include at some point, but other areas affect Maybe not used actively Personality occupation, being up-to-date affects	Obvious thing Every language teacher has implemented somehow Teacher's own willingness and activity affect
LA teaching methods	Difficult to define, obscure No good description exists Not really linked to EN subject and its objectives Teacher's clarity of speech, word choices – making sure pupils understand Explaining terminology	Differs based on pupil age, different in lessons and everyday life Understanding language and identity effecting each other languages' influence in society and in humans Acknowledging differences in languages How language structures can guide thoughts Semantics, etymology Accepting and respecting multiculturalism and diversity Acknowledging prejudices, discussions English subject specific: - Etymology, semantics - Comparing languages to EN - Language structures - Culture	Difficult to express in 1 or 2 sentences Many sides to LA Definition linked to English subject: - Introducing different countries Englishes - Familiarizing pupils with cultures and people in them - Not only grammar and vocabulary	Differs based on pupil age and developmental level Definition linked to English subject: - Comparing languages - English variants - Discussing stereotypes - Knowledge of cultural conventions

Table 4. *The participant teachers' LA conceptualizations*

5.1. LA descriptions

The content analysis revealed significant differences in the teachers' definitions of LA. In addition, two of the teachers, A and C, reported difficulty in providing a definition for language awareness, but were able to describe the ways in which LA is present in teaching and elaborated also on different content areas of LA, which reflects an implicit nature of LA. There was a significant difference in the context perspectives of LA in the interview data. Connecting the definitions of LA (see section 4.1), LA teaching methods (4.3), and the discussions on LA outside of English subject (see section 4.5) the contexts of the teachers' LA descriptions can be placed on a continuum between English language subject teaching and everyday life. A simplified continuum is depicted in Figure 5 below in which every teacher is marked with different colors. Teacher A's LA descriptions would place the teacher's conceptualization at the opposite side of the continuum in comparison to teacher C. This is due to examples of LA with focus on English language subject from teacher C (green) and teacher A's statement about their idea of LA not being linked to the English subject and its NCCBE objectives. In addition, teacher A (yellow) emphasized having always considered LA from the teacher perspective and their teaching method examples, such as the way in which teacher provides instructions cannot be determined subjects specific. Teacher A did not express examples from other subjects either. Thus, teacher A is placed in school context. Teacher D (blue) emphasized English language subject but provided also examples not subject limited, such as learning pupil L1 and commenting pupils' use of curse words. However, their examples emphasized language teacher perspective. Teacher B's (red) LA definition and examples can be argued to cover the whole continuum. For instance, in addition to the English and language subject contexts the teacher discussed the everyday life context by referencing the linkage between language and identity and respecting multiculturalism.
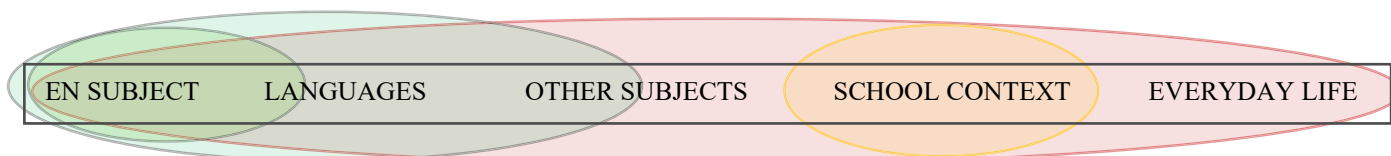

Figure 5. *Teachers' LA context perspectives*

The continuum of LA context perspectives demonstrates the focus of discussion and teaching examples provided by the teachers. The context of discussion can be seen as a reflection of the teachers' LA conceptualizations, although the phenomenon is not as simple as the demonstration depicts.

Moreover, upon discussing the importance and presence of LA the teachers' opinions were divided in two. Teacher B emphasized the importance of LA, whereas teacher C contemplated whether LA is as important as other thematic aspects of teaching and teacher A explained that LA does not seem to be quite significant. Teacher D did not provide specific opinions on the importance but considered LA to be an obvious thing which each language teacher has always utilized in teaching somehow. Furthermore, the same teachers, A and C, who did not consider LA was as important as teacher B, regarded LA also as something that is not used actively in the everyday life of schools. The opinions on importance and prevalence of LA appear to be related, i.e., the teachers who considered LA not as actively used as the others also alluded to LA as less important. Moreover, the teachers, A and C, who estimated of LA's importance and prevalence lower were the same two who expressed difficulty in providing a definition to LA at the beginning of the interviews. Thus, it is possible to argue that there is a relationship between the difficulty in providing a definition and the lower value and prevalence set upon the concept.

On the other hand, the descriptions provided by teacher A and C differed drastically upon describing the meaning of LA, although having similar opinions on the importance and prevalence of LA in the schools: Teacher C described LA in English subject teaching, referencing the culture and communities as recognized also in NCCBE, whereas teacher A mentioned that they did not consider LA to be much linked to the English subject or the subject teaching objectives mentioned in NCCBE. Teacher A's description for LA addressed, for instance, the ways in which teachers provides instructions and explains content so that each pupil understands.

Moreover, each teacher discussed expanding on the teaching materials for language awareness purposes. For example, teacher C discussed editing the schoolbook content, teacher B explained that LA is not automatically delivered by the schoolbooks and require teacher's own action. Thus, it could be argued that the amount of LA cannot be expected to be achieved merely with the teaching materials, although they function as a useful base. Teacher language awareness is thus important in determining how sufficient the material is and providing LA content as well as in the consequent creating of more material. Thus, it can be argued that it is important for the teacher to know what language awareness means and how it can be implemented in teaching so that they are able to expand and edit the material accordingly. If the conceptualizations on LA differ drastically between teachers, the outcome of LA can be extremely different.

5.2. LA teaching methods

The LA teaching methods were discussed from various perspectives which depict the variety in the teachers' LA conceptualizations. The teachers' descriptions depicted both the TLA and the ways to improve pupils' LA. For example, TLA is visible in teachers A and D's examples of explaining linguistic terminology to ensure pupils understand the concepts, in teacher A discussing the acknowledgement of pupil language competence regarding understanding the language of instruction, and in teachers B, C and D remarking the differences in LA areas regarding the pupil age and developmental level.

On the other hand, assigning the pupils to search regularities and differences in languages, discussed in each interview, activates pupil LA, and is also mentioned in the objectives of instruction in NCCBE English language subject. Although the teachers discussed comparisons to many languages, such as Finnish, Swedish, and French, the only language which all the teachers mentioned comparing English to was Swedish. Swedish is a language in which many pupils already have language competence. Drawing on the prior knowledge in order to teach something new reflects the notion of sociocultural theory. Each teacher also discussed English variants being a part of English language teaching, although not all of them agreed on the importance of the variants. For example, teacher A explained that they do not find the variants interesting and remarked that they would not place as much emphasis on the O1 objective as it now has on NCCBE. Teacher D, on the other hand, emphasised that every English teacher also embodies an English variant. Although expressing disinterest in the English variants, teacher A emphasised situational English language use as a topic of interest in their teaching.

In addition, two of the teachers discussed acknowledging the pupil language background. Teacher A discussed LA teaching methods from the point of view of ensuring pupils understand the instructions and concepts, which corresponds to the findings of Suuriniemi (2019) regarding the support-provider perspective to multilingualism, while teacher D approached the different L1 backgrounds from the opposing perspective, in which they regarded L1 backgrounds useful and fruitful. They for example explained assigning a pupil to teach other pupils vocabulary from their L1 and also referred to background variety as a way of demonstrating the cultural variety, since it is not as much present in the region of their school. One of the reasons explaining the difference in the perspective could be the regional difference.

The teachers described many teaching methods which they considered language-aware or language awareness rising. Many of the examples reflected the NCCBE objectives of instruction for English language subject, which was used as a reference point during the interviews. Some of the interesting

findings in the teaching method discussions were the methods and topics which were not mentioned in the NCCBE objectives or contents, but also the aspects which were not discussed by the teachers. For example, teacher C did not discuss teaching methods for the second objective of instruction regarding supporting pupils in finding language content and language environments that would expand their perception of the globalising world. Moreover, the teacher discussed LA teaching methods rather strictly in reference to the contents of the English subject in NCCBE. They did not provide examples on the key principle content however, which teacher B and D did when they exemplified discussions about prejudices with their pupils. Similar to teacher C, teacher D's teaching method examples focused mostly on the English language subject areas of the NCCBE, but included also the key principle as they explained addressing prejudices and introduction to pupil L1s. Teacher A on the other hand remarked that their conception of LA is not much linked to English subject and its objectives of instruction, which was also evident in the examples they provided on LA teaching methods. Majority of the teaching method examples which were not reflection to either English language subject content and objectives or the key principle LA, were uttered by teacher B. They for example detailed teaching methods which apply semantics and history teaching.

Taken together, it is possible to argue that the teachers own conceptualization of LA, and their interest areas affect the teaching methods selected. The same notion was discussed by the teachers themselves during the interviews. Three of the teachers also remarked upon the different nature of LA depending on the ages of the pupils. Thus, it appears that the LA and how it is applied in teaching depends heavily on the teacher, although this hypothesis is only supported by the information gathered by interviewing the teachers. It would be interesting to combine this information with field observations to determine how the teachers' LA conceptualizations affect their teaching.

5.3. Reviewing conceptualizations

Ultimately, the many differences in the teachers' conceptualizations reflect the scattered nature of LA in the research field and in previous research. For example, teachers B and D mentioned discussions with their pupils about prejudices and stereotypes. This corresponds to Eric Hawkins's agenda for LA, i.e., "challenging linguistic prejudice and parochialism through open discussion and greater awareness" (van Lier, 1996, p. 80). Similarities to Eric Hawkins's LA agenda can also be identified in teacher A's references to the way in which teacher provides instructions and ensuring every pupil can understand. The same can be identified in teacher A and D's reference to explaining terminology and concepts when teaching grammar. Teacher A discussed aiding pupils with non-L1 Finnish background, which is similar to the findings in Suuriniemi (2019). One of the teachers, B,

also displayed CLA during the interview by describing LA as knowledge of how identity and language are entwined and how language structures can affect thinking.

In addition to defining LA and exemplifying LA teaching methods, the teachers were asked to discuss the NBBCE description of LA and how it is realized in their teaching. Some of the teachers also discussed the ways in which NBBCE description reflected their own LA conceptualization. Two of the teachers determined the text vague and moderately abstract. There were also differences in opinions regarding the sufficiency of the description for LA. One of the teachers would have added content whereas one determined a piece of it should be removed. This, again, demonstrates the divergence of the teachers' conceptualizations on LA.

Another important aspect is that none of the teachers declared or remembered having discussed LA in the teacher community, and two of the teachers also commented on a lack of workplace trainings. One of the teachers also mentioned that there are no guidelines in their school for how to apply LA in teaching. Therefore, all the above could implicate that the teachers might not really know how other teachers apply LA in their teaching, which can also explain why the conceptualizations are divergent, especially if there are no workplace trainings either. Furthermore, the teachers suggested that the LA is influenced by teachers' own willingness, knowledge, and interests, which were also recurrent in the examples and opinions provided by the teachers. For instance, teacher B emphasized etymology and semantics as crucial area of their LA. Ultimately, the data suggests teachers have great responsibility on how and if LA is implemented in teaching, although it has been established a key principle guiding the development of school culture in NCCBE. Given these points, the research revealed similar results to the previous research: the teachers conceptualize and teach LA divergently.

Although the results coincide with earlier research, there are aspects regarding research trustworthiness to address. First of which is the fact that the participant sample of the thesis is not representative of the English teacher population. Namely, the participants were gathered via an announcement and email by convenience from an occupational target group. Thus, the participant teachers might have had a general interest in the topic of research, for example, meaning the knowledge provided by the teachers cannot be determined to represent the average English language teacher and cannot in consequence be generalized either. On the other hand, having four participants diminishes the possibility of similar motives and behaviour as well as enables variety of knowledge in the research topic.

Furthermore, certain aspects might also affect the trustworthiness of the results, such the interview as a method of data collecting. One example is expectancy effect in which the participants estimate what researcher wants to hear and answer to the questions accordingly. This was attempted to be

diminished and prevented by using open-ended questions and avoiding leading questions and not proposing researcher opinions. On the other hand, it is possible that the participants omit information such as opinions or teaching examples which might display unprofessionalism. Hence, anonymity of the research participants, as well as informing the participants that the aim was not to evaluate their professionalism or determine anyone's superiority were applied to ensure honest answers and opinions. It is also crucial to acknowledge that the data is mostly crafted from the opinions and examples. Thus, they should not be taken out of the context as they might not reflect the actual teaching activities, which observation could reveal or verify.

Another limit of the trustworthiness of the data are the circumstantial influences, such as misinterpreting a question or being nervous or tired. Unfortunately, one of the aforementioned occurred during the interviewing process: teacher C mentioned that the timing of the interview had to do with the number of examples they were able to provide. Although it is important to also analyze the aspects left out or not answered in the interview for their possible significance, there might be many reasons behind it. Another reason for a lack of information or discussion topics is the semi-structured nature of the interview since the interviewee also has an effect in the contents of discussion. However, avoiding a question or providing an evasive answer can prove significant. In such situations the teachers were asked more specific questions to reveal why something was left out or if they would answer it when asked again.

Lastly, the method of using NCCBE as a reference and having it on display during the interview must be acknowledged when inspecting the research data because the teaching methods originate in part from the NCCBE contents. However, even though the NCCBE would not have been on display the teachers were acquainted with it already.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this master's thesis was to find out how English language teachers in basic education conceptualize LA and how they have applied LA in their teaching. The research data was gathered with semi-structured interviews and the data analyzed with content analysis. The analysis revealed that the teachers' conceptualizations of LA were varied, and the teachers had drastically different perspectives on certain areas of LA. In addition, there was a significant difference in between the teachers' impressions on the importance and prevalence of LA in schools and in everyday life. One of the teachers determined LA not quite significant, whereas one of the teachers emphasized LA as greatly important and all-encompassing.

Two of the teachers commented also on the vagueness and abstractness of the National core curriculum description of LA. Although their LA conceptualizations corresponded to the contents of NCCBE, the perspectives and focus areas were different: one focused on English subject teaching and culture, whereas the other addressed LA universally in the school context. It is important to acknowledge the possible relationship between the opinions on the importance and presence of LA together with the statements about difficulty in providing a definition and the commentary on the abstractness and vagueness of the NCCBE description. The trend could also explain why the two teachers had the most opposing examples on the essence of LA.

Moreover, the research revealed that the teachers considered LA to be dependent on the teacher and the target pupil group. They explained that the teachers' willingness, interests, and teachers' own language awareness affect the nature of LA. The opinions coincide with the different natures of the participant teachers' LA descriptions. The results also suggested that LA had not been discussed in the teacher community lately, which also emphasizes the teacher dependence of LA. Thus, the teachers have varied conceptualizations of LA and the responsibility and the methods of applying it in teaching is left on the teacher.

Ultimately, the divergence in the participant teachers' LA conceptualizations and LA teaching methods corresponds to the previous research conducted on the topic, but also reflects the diversity and vastness of LA in the definitions and in the research field. Since the aim of the National core curriculum for basic education is to secure pupil equality in education (EDUFI, n.d.y.) and since LA is established as one of the key principles guiding the development of school culture, the conceptualizations and teaching methods might need to be more aligned. However, the teaching in Finland is also adjusted to the local needs, which can affect the nature of LA in certain areas. For determining generalizable LA conceptualizations future research is needed, but based on this thesis

also workplace trainings or joint discussions in the teacher community regarding LA are advised to ensure the LA of the teachers corresponds to the equality guidelines of NCCBE. Future research on the LA conceptualizations would also support the crafting of upcoming updates to the Core Curriculum. It could aid in homogenizing the LA conceptualizations and teaching conventions to enhance equal education for each pupil. Future research could also aim at creating uniformity in LA teaching methods via crafting a guidebook for teachers who experience confusion or uncertainty regarding language-aware teaching.

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