



**Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching Multilingual
Pupils in English:
A Qualitative Study in Finland**

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Abstract

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This qualitative study explores the challenges faced by English instructors in Finland when teaching multilingual pupils and the strategies they employ to address these challenges. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 9 English instructors from the English lines of bilingual primary schools in Finland. Thematic analysis was used to identify several themes for each of the four parts: (1) Teachers' Perspectives on Multilingual Pupils' Learning Performance, (2) Teachers' Strategies for Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English, (3) Teachers' Challenges of Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English, (4) Teachers' Support for Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English. There are several sub-themes under each theme to discuss in details. Results suggest that while multilingualism is highly valued and considered a resource in the classroom, it can also present challenges. The study highlights the importance of taking into account the individual needs of multilingual students and the value of collaborative support among teachers. In terms of strategies, instructors reported using a variety of methods, including Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and immersion, to address the unique needs of multilingual students. The findings also revealed that both international students and teachers faced more challenges in the context of multilingual education in Finland, and they require more support, including language-related challenges and culture integration. The implications of this research can inform future policy and practice in multilingual education in Finland, and highlight the importance of considering the role of language instruction in the broader context of Finnish education.</p>	
<p>Key words: Multilingual education, Multilingual pupils, English language instruction, Teachers' challenges and support, Teacher education</p>	

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The exceptional success of Finnish education in major international education rankings, such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), has earned it a favorable reputation (Sahlberg, 2011). Despite a slight decline in Finland's PISA rank in recent years, the country is still ranked among the top nations, thanks to its high-quality education system. Finland's education system has earned a favorable reputation globally, making it a topic of great interest for education scholars worldwide. The Finnish "miracle" has generated widespread curiosity and inspired numerous studies, and researchers continue to explore the factors that contribute to its success.

Finnish education is well-known for its high demands on teachers and high quality teacher education. Being a teacher in Finland is often regarded as a respected and fulfilling profession. Finnish teachers have a high level of autonomy and hold a significant role in the country's renowned education system (Sahlberg, 2011). However, to my surprise, in 2021 the teacher's union OAJ reported that 57% of teachers were considering career change. The most common reasons were the burden of work, increased workload and wage level. The profession of teaching in Finland appears to be increasingly challenging, and it is imperative that policymakers and employers recognize the severity of the situation and address the issues that are driving teachers away from the field. This research paper attempts to explore the phenomenon of Finnish education, particularly in the context of language instruction, by examining teachers' perspectives on their challenges and support.

Everyone acknowledges the indisputable necessity of language for humans in all aspects of life, particularly in schooling. Language is one of a culture's most vital communication tools, which is crucial for individuals to connect with one another, convey messages, build relationships, and create a sense of community. Teachers and students communicate with one another through spoken and written language to convey academic material and activities, participate in learning processes, assess learning output, demonstrate knowledge and abilities, and establish classroom life. In other words, language is fundamental for education. The importance of language is highlighted throughout the Finnish

curriculum, as language is an explicitly articulated resource and key to all learning, and students are expected to understand “the central meaning language has for learning, communication, and cooperation as well as for identity development and integration into society” (Finnish National Core Curriculum, 2014, p. 29).

Language education is a complex and dynamic field, particularly in multilingual contexts such as Finland where multilingualism is prevalent. The education system in Finland has been widely lauded for its high academic standards and equitable access to education for all students, including those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Finland has experienced an increase in multilingual pupils, who bring a rich array of languages and cultures to the classroom (Wernicke et al., 2021). While multilingualism is often viewed as an asset in education, it also presents unique challenges for teachers in terms of language instruction, classroom management, and cultural understanding (Pietikäinen, 2018).

With increasing globalization and mobility, English has become a key language of communication and a required skill in many educational settings. In Finland, English is taught as a foreign language to multilingual pupils who bring diverse linguistic backgrounds and experiences to the classroom. The challenges and opportunities of teaching English to multilingual pupils in Finland are areas that warrant exploration, as they have implications for language education policies and practices. Some studies have highlighted the challenges faced by Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils effectively. For instance, research has shown that language interference and language mixing can be common issues, resulting in difficulties in communication and comprehension in the classroom (Cummins, 2009). Furthermore, the lack of adequate training and support for teachers in handling multilingualism in the classroom has been identified as a significant challenge (Kyeyune, 2003). While previous research has addressed various aspects of Finnish education, there is a research gap in understanding teachers' perspectives on teaching multilingual pupils in English, particularly in the context of challenges they encounter and the support they receive.

The objective of this qualitative research is to bridge the existing research gap by examining the obstacles encountered by teachers in Finland when teaching multilingual pupils in English, analyzing the methods they use to overcome these obstacles, and

evaluating the assistance they receive in terms of professional growth and collaborative aid. The study also explores the role of multilingual pupils' mother tongue in the English instruction classroom, and the implications of the findings for future language education practices. By exploring teachers' perspectives on teaching multilingual pupils in English, this study contributes to the existing literature on language education, specifically in the Finnish context. The findings of this research can inform policy decisions, curriculum development, and teacher training programs, and can provide insights for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers interested in promoting effective language education practices for multilingual pupils. This study will shed light on the experiences, challenges, and support of Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils in English, and provide valuable insights into the current state and future prospects of multilingual education in Finland.

1.2 Multilingualism and Multilingual Pupils

Along with globalization in economics, politics, and technology, as well as the turbulence created by conflicts, there is an increase in transnational population movement throughout the world. As people migrate across borders, their acquisition of languages is facilitated, resulting in a surge of multilingualism, which is defined as: “the ability of societies, institutions, groups, and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives” (European Commission, 2015).

Besides migration, there are other causes of multilingualism, such as cultural influence, historical reasons, and education choice. According to the statistics, there are approximately 7000 languages spoken in about 200 independent countries in the world today (Lewis, 2009). Since the number of spoken languages far exceeds the number of countries, it is evident that many individuals worldwide speak more than one or even two languages for various reasons. People who have acquired more than two languages are multilingual, defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981: 90). In this vein, Hammarberg (2009) asserted, “Humans are potentially multilingual by nature and that multilingualism is the normal state of linguistic competence.” According to Paudel (2020), speakers of minority languages usually need to acquire additional languages in order to increase their communication. As a result, multilingual speakers might be native speakers of a minority

indigenous language who have to acquire the major-state language. In migration cases, multilinguals are the immigrants who speak their native language and have also learned the language(s) of their host country. Immigrants and indigenous minorities, as described by Aronin and Singleton (2008), make up the bilingual population.

Similarly, Cenoz (2013) has pointed out that there have been more multilinguals in areas where regional or minority languages are spoken or in border areas. Finland is a very typical example. As a bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) country, all students here have to learn other national language, as well as English, the most widely spoken foreign language. Consequently, it makes every pupil multilingual or future multilingual. In this sense, the term “multilingual pupils” in this paper refers to primary school students who are using or learning to use more than two languages in the classroom. While most of the research about multilingualism focus on immigrants, this paper covers multilingual pupils in a local context, including both immigrant students and native students.

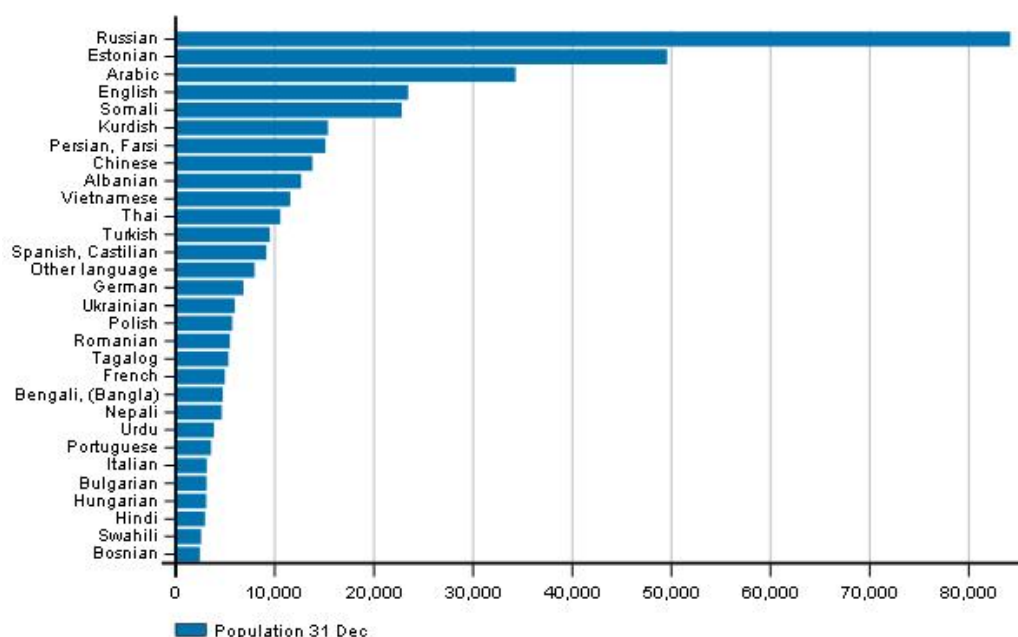
1.3 Research Aims and Research Questions

The successful Finnish education is mainly based on high quality teachers. Teachers are playing a key role in Finnish education system, as they are responsible and autonomous in curricular planning, pedagogical preparation, and student assessment (Sahlberg, 2011). Nowadays, Finnish educators are encountering mounting challenges as they contend with an expanding student population that encompasses diverse languages and cultural backgrounds. The share of people with foreign background in Finland's population has risen from 0.8 to 5.9 per cent between 1990 and 2014 (Statistics Finland, 2014). It is noteworthy that Finland is a trilingual country, with Finnish, Swedish, and Sami (with small number of speakers in the North) as official languages, and the biggest numbers of foreign-language speakers are Russian, Estonian, Arabic, and English by the year of 2020 (Statistics Finland, see figure 1). According to Statistics Finland's statistics on population structure, in the course of 2021, the number of persons speaking Finnish, Swedish or Sami as their native language went down by 10,747 persons, and the number of foreign-language speakers grew by 25,195 persons, which is the most in at least 40 years. The diversification of Finnish society since the mid-1990s has been the fastest in Europe, at a rate of 800% (Sahlberg, P. 2011). Furthermore, according to

Statistics Finland, the share of pupils studying English in grades 1 to 6 increased by 10 percentage points in 2020 from the previous year, and a total of 93 per cent of pupils in grades 1 to 6 studied English, while almost all students in grades 7 to 9 studied English (Statistics Finland, 2020). All data shows that the multilingual population is growing in Finland.

Figure 1

Biggest numbers of foreign-language speakers 2020



Source: Statistics Finland / Population structure

Hence, the aim of this study is to examine the challenges faced by English instructors who teach multilingual pupils in Finland, explore the strategies adopted by teachers to address these challenges in the classroom, and investigate the support available to Finnish teachers in this context. I believe it is necessary and valuable to analyse how English instructors can teach multilingual pupils more effectively within the educational contexts and explore the possibilities for future teacher education. Therefore, the following research questions are raised up:

1. How do teachers perceive the learning performance of multilingual pupils?
2. What strategies do teachers employ to assist their pupils?
3. What challenges do teachers confront while teaching multilingual pupils in English?

4. What kind of support do teachers possess?

2. Literature Review

This literature review section provides an overview of the existing research on various aspects of multilingual education in Finland. It begins with an examination of multilingualism in Finnish schools, including the prevalence of multilingual pupils and the implications for language instruction. This is followed by a discussion on English learning in Finland, including the motivations for native Finnish speakers to learn English and the role of English language instruction in Finnish schools. Next, the beliefs of Finnish teachers about multilingual education are explored, including their attitudes towards multilingualism and the challenges they may face in teaching multilingual pupils. Additionally, the challenges encountered by Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils and the support available to them are discussed. Finally, the section concludes with a summary of the existing literature and the research gap that the current study aims to fill.

2.1 Multilingualism in Finnish Schools

According to Cenoz (2013), various factors have contributed to the current prevalence of multilingualism. Among them, globalization, population transnational movement, and the expansion of new technology are highly influential in different political, social, and educational contexts. Multilingualism is a widespread phenomenon that has received abundant scholarly attention in recent years, from a variety of perspectives. Most of the research focused on immigrants, but there have been relatively few studies on native multilingual speakers who choose to acquire more than two languages. This study focuses on the challenges experienced by English instructors of multilingual pupils in Finland, explores the strategies teachers employ to tackle the challenges in the classroom teaching process.

Multilingualism has become increasingly important in Finnish schools, where a growing number of students come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. According to the Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE 2019), over 10% of students in Finland have a native language other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami. This diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for schools and teachers, as they strive to provide effective education for all students. In recent years, there has been a growing focus on multilingualism

in Finnish education policy, with an emphasis on promoting bilingualism and multilingualism as valuable resources for personal and social development (Nikula et al., 2012).

There are several types of multilingual individuals. Among the prevalent examples are immigrants who use one language in their household and acquire additional languages at educational institutions. However, we should not disregard the growing population of native multilinguals who were born bilingual and actively utilize both of their languages in daily life while also acquiring a third or even fourth language at school or at work, making them multilingual (Cenoz, 2013). In this paper, I will focus on the language instruction in the primary school of Finland, a bilingual country, where the national languages Finnish and Swedish are obligatory for all pupils. Besides, all students are encouraged to learn at least one additional language, nowadays most commonly English. Therefore, many Finnish students and teachers are multilingual. Since the launch of Swedish immersion in 1987, bilingual education has been a popular option in the schools of Finland (Björklund, 2005). Furthermore, it appears that English immersion programs are the most popular choice among students nowadays. As Bergroth (2016) stated, all of the bilingual programs in Finland are, in fact, multilingual in their orientation.

In Finland, there is an explicit discourse of multilingual education with the goal of integrating multilingual perspectives throughout the curriculum. Multilingualism is apparent and publicly acknowledged in the country, with official national responses to multilingualism (Paulsrud, Zilliacus & Ekberg, 2020). According to the Finnish Curriculum, “the objective is to guide students to appreciate different languages and cultures and promote bilingualism and plurilingualism” (p.90). Finnish students are expected to become flexible and skilled language users, and coursework may involve multilingual instruction in which instructors and students utilize all of the languages they are familiar with:

Teaching and learning support the plurilingualism of students by utilising all languages, including those used by students in their leisure time. Teaching and learning also strengthen the students' trust in their own language learning abilities and in using their language skills confidently, even when they are limited. (Mother tongue and literature, p. 110).

Please note that while “plurilingualism” and “multilingualism” are related concepts, they have some subtle differences. “Plurilingualism” focuses on the individual's ability to use multiple languages, while “multilingualism” refers to the broader context of multiple languages being spoken and used within a community or society. Plurilingualism is often considered a desirable outcome of multilingualism, as it reflects the linguistic diversity and proficiency of individuals within a multilingual community (Cenoz, 2013). In this research, we use “multilingualism” as the context of this study.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has stated that linguistic support for multilingual students is critical to maintaining academic success and societal justice (Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007). According to Paulsrud (2020), Finland has been a bilingual country since 1922, with a wealth of experience providing education in both Finnish and Swedish. The Finnish curriculum preserves a fundamental starting point that “students are guided to see cultural and linguistic diversity fundamentally as a positive resource” (Finnish National Core Curriculum. 2014 p. 22). Multilingualism is typically stated as a normative statement in the individual and school community, as seen by the general section’s assertion that “languages are to be valued” (Finnish National Core Curriculum. 2014 p. 29). The curriculum also mentioned that the goal of multilingualism and multiliteracy is one of the language proficiency objectives, and the school is viewed as a language learning community in which all instructors act as linguistic role models and language teachers in the subjects they teach. The objective is to create a “language-aware school” (Finnish National Core Curriculum. 2014 p. 29), where cultural and linguistic variety is valued. The necessity of language-aware subject instruction was also emphasized by FBNE, as was the belief that all teachers are language instructors (Paulsrud et al., 2020).

When come to the case in Finland, we have to take the feature of the multilingual education here into consideration, as Finland has officially been a bilingual country since 1922, with long experience in providing both Finnish and Swedish medium education. And most teachers themselves have been taught in the same school system, where all students have to learn two additional languages, so they have more personal experience of language learning to share with their students. Many researches have shown that there’s positive

influence of bilingualism on a third language acquisition. Among them, Cenoz's study (2013) revealed that bilinguals have advantages over monolinguals when acquiring an additional language, as bilinguals have more language learning experience and may have evolved learning techniques to a greater extent than monolinguals. They also have a more diverse linguistic and multicultural repertoire. And she explained that there are three factors the most influential: metalinguistic awareness, learning strategies and the broader linguistic repertoire, that is available in a third language as compared to a second language. Similarly, Swain's study (1990) on the acquisition of a third language (L3) in a bilingual context have shown that literacy in two languages facilitates the acquisition of a third. Coincidentally, in Palmberg's research (1985), a relatively good knowledge of English vocabulary was found among Swedish-speaking children before they start studying English at school, especially in instances of similarity between English and Swedish forms. Palmberg's research (1985) also indicated that teachers of English to Swedish-speakers take advantage of the linguistic similarities to facilitate comprehension. On the other hand, Ringbom's study (1985) of the effects of learning Swedish as a third language on native Finnish-speaking students' knowledge of English revealed that learning Swedish, a language similar to English, influenced students' knowledge of English in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and word order. There were two primary Swedish lexical impacts discovered in Ringbom's research (1985): one in which formal resemblance between existing Swedish and English terms had a detrimental impact on the learner, and the other in which the learner's search for a single English lexical item triggered a Swedish item instead. Therefore, further study is needed to investigate whether the advantages or drawbacks of teaching English in the bilingual (Swedish-English) context outweighs the other.

2.2 English Learning in Finland

English is widely taught as a foreign language in Finnish schools, and is considered an important language for international communication and career opportunities. According to the Finnish National Agency for Education (2021), English is the most widely studied language in Finland, with nearly all students beginning English instruction by age 10. English language education in Finland is guided by the national curriculum, which emphasizes the

development of communicative competence and intercultural understanding (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). Despite the importance of English in Finnish education, however, there is ongoing debate about the best ways to promote effective English learning and teaching in schools (Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003).

Multilingualism has become more valuable as a result of globalization. It is advantageous to be able to communicate in a variety of languages. This is now the case with English, which is the most widespread language and a widely taught subject in schools across the world (see, e.g., Kirkpatrick & Sussex). Speaking English can be necessary, as Edwards (2004) argued, "but the ability to speak other languages none the less ensures a competitive edge" (p. 164). In Europe, most countries are bilingual or multilingual, English is learned chiefly as a third language. For example, the native speakers of a minority language who learn a majority national language at school and study English additionally. In this case, native speakers of Swedish in Finland learn Finnish as a second language and English as a third, whereas immigrants from non-European countries learn the official language of the host country and study English as a third language (Görlach, 2002).

Taavitsainen and Pahta (2003) investigated the state of the use of English in Finland and found that English is used for more purposes and by more people than ever before among Finnish people, who are eager to learn languages, with English being the most popular first foreign language. There's also a tendency toward learning more languages at a younger age. In many schools in Finland, it is possible for pupils to study up to four foreign languages as part of their comprehensive education. Despite the country's diverse linguistic demands, English is rapidly becoming the only foreign language learned (FNBE, 2011b). Integrating language and content is usually seen to be an useful strategy to promote communicative language abilities, and getting a head start on language acquisition is thought to be a favorable element that decreases anxiety (Bergroth, 2016).

For numerous decades, Finland's language education program has incorporated a bilingual approach. Since Finland is an officially bilingual country, all students who speak either Finnish or Swedish must learn the other official national language during their obligatory schooling (Finnish National Core Curriculum, 2014). The adoption of concepts,

such as immersion programs and bilingual schools, in the European context frequently goes from bilingualism to full multilingualism, with English being suggested as a possible alternative due to its role as a lingua franca in many European countries (Björklund & Suni, 2000). In Finland, English is taught as a third language in bilingual educational programs in both Swedish and Finnish medium schools from an early age. There are three instruction languages mostly used in the schools of Finland: Finnish, Swedish, and English. So all students are using at least three languages at school, and some of them may be using other extra language(s) at home. In this sense, all pupils in Finland are multilingual. These three languages play important roles here: Finnish as the dominant language in society, Swedish as the minority language spoken by a majority of the population, and English as an increasingly important additional language (Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003). As Björklund and Suni (2000) stated, the importance of English as a instructional language is critical at all levels of education.

2.3 Finnish Teachers' Beliefs on Multilingual Education

Finnish teachers' beliefs about multilingual education have a significant impact on the ways in which they approach teaching and learning in diverse classrooms. Research has shown that many Finnish teachers hold positive attitudes towards multilingualism, recognizing the value of linguistic diversity and the potential for language learning to promote intercultural understanding and social justice (Paulsrud et al., 2020). However, there are also challenges associated with multilingual education, including the need to address language barriers and provide appropriate support for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Finnish teachers' beliefs and attitudes about multilingual education can shape the extent to which they are able to effectively address these challenges (Kirsch et al., 2020).

The European Commission advises its member states to promote language awareness and multilingual pedagogies, meaning linguistically responsive teaching in schools (European Commission, 2018). As Lucas and Villegas (2013) stated, linguistically responsive teaching requires a knowledge of how language, culture, and identity are all interconnected. Furthermore, they claimed that instructors who are linguistically responsive should appreciate linguistic variety and advocate for multilingual pupils' language acquisition. Moreover,

linguistically responsive teachers consider their students' multilingualism as a resource and encourage them to use all of their language resources to acquire content (Lucas & Villegas, 2013.)

Understanding the significance of language and culture in students' learning is essential to being a linguistically and culturally sensitive teacher (Alisaari et al.,2019). This is reflected in the present Finnish core curriculum which was implemented in 2016 for basic and upper secondary education, requiring all instructors to be linguistically aware and to exploit the entire language repertoire of pupils as a learning resource (National Agency of Education, 2014; 2015). The goal is to teach students to respect diverse languages and cultures while also advocating for multilingualism in all of its forms. The curriculum also encourages the simultaneous use of many languages. All language groups in Finland have a constitutional right to preserve and develop their respective languages. Furthermore, as students attempt to grasp subject area expertise, the new core curriculum (National Agency of Education, 2014) stipulates that several languages can be utilized side by side in the classroom. When all languages are viewed as essential tools for literacy and learning, it increases multilingual students' sense of belonging in the school community and encourages them to participate more actively in literacy practices (Cummins, 2007).

It is critical to understand Finnish teachers' beliefs about multilingualism and teaching multilingual learners, in order to ensure that they are equipped to fulfill the demands of the new curriculum and handle the growing multilingualism among their pupils. Teachers' views, as Barcelos (2003) has pointed out, influence their perceptions of teaching and learning, and consequently their choices of classroom activities. Alisaari and her colleagues' research in 2019 indicated that teachers and prospective teachers in Finland have generally positive attitudes on multilingualism. And the research conducted by Heikkola and her colleagues in 2022 showed that the majority of respondent teachers needed more information on their students' backgrounds, experiences, and skills, and more knowledge about the professional learning processes. And most Finnish primary school teachers would benefit from both theoretical and practical linguistically responsive pedagogy training.

Teachers are able to support students' learning in and through the language of instruction in a better way, when they understand how languages are learned. (Cummins, 2007). Teachers in Finnish basic education are expected to understand language learning processes, in line with the linguistically responsive teaching framework (Lucas & Villegas, 2013) and the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), therefore, to support students' learning through practices that integrate language and content (EDUFI, 2014).

2.4 Finnish Teachers' Challenges in Teaching Multilingual Pupils

Upon examining language instruction in schools, it appears that teachers of multilingual pupils encounter even greater challenges. According to Bergroth (2016), the general language curriculum in Finnish schools strives to teach democratic global citizens who are conscious of their own multifaceted cultural history while also being open to and comprehending other cultures. The FBNE also emphasized the necessity of language-aware subject instruction and the belief that all teachers are language teachers. The use of various languages in all aspects of instruction is encouraged in the new curriculum. Therefore, teachers must comprehend sociolinguistics, accept linguistic variety, and advocate for multilingual language learners, according to Lucas and Villegas's framework (2013) for linguistically responsive teaching (LRT). Furthermore, Lucas and Villegas (2013) also pointed that this paradigm requires instructors to grasp multilingual language learners' linguistic background, experiences, and proficiency; identify the language needs of classroom discourse and activities; comprehend extra language learning; and scaffold instruction. All of these factors highlight the need for highly skilled teachers who can effectively teach multilingual pupils.

According to Björklund (2013), Finnish national reports on the need for teacher education and in-service courses for teachers recognize a number of significant changes in the conventional role of teachers and their working environment. Coelho (2012) also identified concrete challenges related to welcoming and integrating newcomers at any time during the school year, for instance, how to adapt the curriculum and provide differentiated instruction for pupils at various levels of language proficiency, how to incorporate linguistic and cultural diversity into the curriculum and learning environment, and how to involve the parents. As Björklund (2013) mentioned, a teacher is also viewed as a facilitator of the

students' internationalization process. This requires teachers to obtain a sufficient communicative competence in several languages, cultural knowledge, and project management abilities. The ability to comprehend legislation and apply the guidelines in multilingual and multicultural classrooms appears to necessitate competent teachers who are aware of societal changes and devoted to assisting their students' learning routes.

Sahlberg (2011) also pointed out that diversity in students' personalities, abilities, and orientations have to be taken into account in designing learning settings and selecting pedagogical approaches in schools. This proved to be one of the most difficult professional challenges that teachers have faced. For example, PISA 2012 found that students with immigrant backgrounds scored lower in mathematics than others. Assisting immigrant pupils in catching up on their Finnish language skills became one of the most difficult tasks for teachers. What's more, according to Sahlberg (2011), due to the education reforms, Finnish teachers have demanded more autonomy and responsibility for curriculum planning and student assessment. And the teachers' key role in pedagogical choice obviously requires teacher education to equip all future teachers with well-developed knowledge and abilities linked to curriculum development, student assessment theory and practice, as well as teacher leadership.

In addition, the implementation of changes in the education system involves teachers in an active learning process (Kimonen & Nevalainen, 1996). As Fullan (1992) claimed, there are strong links between a teacher's lifelong learning, school reform implementation, and students' progress. On the other hand, according to Kimonen and Nevalainen (1996), the teachers' learning motivation is based on the challenges and problems of the school activity, which drive them develop their own work. Therefore, the constant school reform and curriculum change also bring challenges for the teachers in Finland, they have to keep continuous learning in order to adjust themselves to meet the demands in their daily teaching.

Obviously, Finnish teachers face a range of challenges in providing effective education for multilingual students, including language barriers, cultural differences, and a lack of training and resources. For example, Illman and Pietilä's research in 2018 showed that the majority of Finnish teachers had not received any training in teaching students of immigrant

background. In addition, there can be tensions between the demands of the national curriculum and the need to accommodate the diverse needs and backgrounds of students. Research has highlighted the importance of providing appropriate support for teachers to address these challenges, including professional development opportunities and access to resources and materials (e.g., Acquah et al., 2016). However, there is ongoing debate about the most effective ways to support teachers in multilingual education, and further research is needed to explore this issue.

2.5 Finnish Teachers' Support in Teaching Multilingual Pupils

One of the important reasons for the success of Finnish education is that Finland has high-quality and well-trained teachers. The teacher education profession in Finland has high academic requirements, and master's degree is a basic requirement since the 1980s. The professional autonomy of Finnish teachers is manifested in curriculum development and student evaluation (Sahlberg, 2011).

Despite the fact that teaching, as stated by Sahlberg (2011), is more difficult than rocket science, Finnish educators are provided with a range of support and techniques to overcome these obstacles. Sahlberg (2011) also suggested that Finland's educational culture would endeavor to assist teachers who are not meeting the expectations. With less time in the classroom, teachers would have more opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues and identify more effective strategies to assist their pupils' progress. Personalized learning and differentiation have become fundamental ideas in the organization of education for students with various background (Sahlberg, 2011). Fortunately, the wide pedagogical freedom is fundamental in Finland, where each teacher has the right and obligation to choose their own teaching methods and plan their teaching methods in interaction with their pupils (FNBE, 2011a). Thanks to the research-based teacher education, teachers at all levels are prepared to operate in complex, changing social and educational situations. Research-based academic training has also facilitated the establishment of more radical national education policies. Finland's teacher education programs have effectively blended research, curriculum and didactics expertise, and practice (Sahlberg, 2011). Teacher education in Finland has been widely recognized for its high quality and effectiveness in producing skilled and competent

teachers. The Finnish teacher education system is based on a strong theoretical foundation, practical training, and continuous professional development, which has been the key to the success of Finnish education system. This literature review will discuss the main features of Finnish teacher education and the current challenges and developments in the field.

To address the challenges faced by Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils, various forms of support are available. One such support is the use of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) method, which integrates language learning with content learning in the classroom (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Another approach is immersion, where students are fully immersed in the target language (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010). Both the CLIL method and immersion strategy can provide valuable support to Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils in English in several ways. The two approaches can support Finnish teachers in effectively teaching multilingual pupils in English by integrating language and content, providing authentic language exposure, offering differentiated instruction, and promoting cultural competence. Additionally, Finnish schools offer teacher training programs to prepare teachers for the challenges of teaching multilingual pupils (Szabó et al., 2021). Collaboration with colleagues and educational professionals is also important for teacher support in addressing the challenges of teaching multilingual pupils (Creese, 2005). Overall, Finnish teachers face numerous challenges when teaching multilingual pupils, but support is available to help them address these challenges. By utilizing CLIL, immersion, teacher training programs, and collaboration with colleagues, Finnish teachers can better support the diverse needs of their multilingual students.

2.6 Literature Summary

The literature review in this study focuses on various aspects related to multilingualism in Finnish schools and English learning in Finland. It discusses Finnish teachers' beliefs on multilingual education, as well as their challenges and support in teaching multilingual pupils. The review highlights the prevalence of multilingualism in Finnish schools, with an increasing number of students speaking multiple languages. It also discusses the English learning landscape in Finland, including the popularity of English as a foreign language and the growing motivation of Finnish parents to enroll their pupils in English language

instruction. Furthermore, the literature review delves into Finnish teachers' beliefs on multilingual education, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and valuing students' mother tongue in the classroom. It also examines the challenges faced by Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils, such as language interference and the need for varied instructional methods. Additionally, the review discusses the support available to Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils, including the role of teacher education and collegial support in addressing these challenges.

Overall, the literature review provides a comprehensive overview of multilingualism in Finnish schools, English learning in Finland, and the beliefs, challenges, and support of Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils. Based on the current evidence, here I generally conclude that Finnish schools attach great importance to the development of students' language diversity, which places higher demands on teachers, who consequently face unprecedented challenges. However, because the Finnish education system has high-quality training and comprehensive support for teachers, and most of the teachers have a positive attitude towards multilingual education, they might be able to handle these severe challenges, but still have space for progress.

However, there is still a research gap in understanding the challenges and support for teaching multilingual pupils in Finland, particularly from the perspective of English instructors. Therefore, this qualitative study aims to explore the challenges experienced by English instructors of multilingual pupils in Finland and the strategies they employ to tackle these challenges in the classroom teaching process. The findings of this study can contribute to the existing literature on multilingual education and provide insights for policy and practice to better support English instructors in their teaching of multilingual pupils in Finland.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methods of Data Collection

This paper is based on a qualitative research strategy. Qualitative research is an inquiry employed to understanding a social situation focusing on the description, experiences and understanding of the people involved directly (Yilmaz, 2013). As one of the typical

approaches of qualitative research, case study is thorough and versatile employed to investigate a single social phenomenon. It shows thorough, in-depth analysis and revealing key traits about the nature of a single case (Bryman, 2012). As Stake (1995, pp. xi–xii) described, case study is the examination of the uniqueness and complexity of a single case with the goal of comprehending its action beneath significant conditions. The qualitative researcher places an emphasis on nuanced episodes, the context-related order of events, and the individual's completeness. Therefore, case study was chosen for this study as it is one of the most influential ways of conducting research in the educational field. This research utilized a qualitative case study approach to investigate the challenges and support experienced by Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils in English. A case study is a research design that allows for an in-depth exploration of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). In this study, the case is English instructors teaching multilingual pupils in Finland.

In case study, one of the methods for collecting data is interview. Interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, seen, spoken, heard and, indeed with online interviews, and written (Cohen et al., 2017). Additionally, Valsiner (2017) argued that an interview is an act of communication implying a system of roles and reciprocal expectations in exchange. The interviews for this research are semi-structured. Longhurst (2003) defines semi-structured interview as “a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Finnish teachers to gather their perspectives, experiences, and beliefs regarding the challenges and support in teaching multilingual pupils in English. The interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions and were audio-recorded and noted with consent from the participants.

Another data collection instrument I used is observation. According to Bryman (2012) observation is useful for generating in-depth descriptions of organizations or events, for obtaining information that is otherwise inaccessible, and for conducting research when other methods are inadequate. Similarly, it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather first-hand, “live” data in situ from naturally occurring social situations rather than, for

example, reported data (Wellington, 2015, p. 247) and second-hand accounts (Creswell, 2013, p. 213). Cohen and others (2017) argued that the use of observation as a principal mode of research has the potential to yield more valid or authentic data than would otherwise be the case with mediated or inferential methods. Data was collected through both observations and interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Observations involved the researcher observing classroom interactions, instructional strategies, and language use during lessons taught by English instructors to multilingual pupils. Field notes were taken during observations to capture relevant details and observations.

The combination of observations and interviews complemented each other in several ways. Observations provided rich and contextual data on the actual classroom practices, interactions, and language use during English lessons. Interviews, on the other hand, provided insights into teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences related to multilingual education, their challenges, and support strategies. By using both methods, the study aims to triangulate and validate the findings, providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

3.2 Context and Participants

The selection of the study site will be partly based on purposive sampling criteria and partly based on convenience sampling. Purposive sampling approach used in the selection of study site is based on criterion sampling on specific, pre-decided characteristics (Bryman, 2012). I collected data from the primary schools English and bilingual lines in Finland.

Sampling for the purpose of this study is the process of selecting informants who have at least one common characteristic with the larger population for a study. According to Godwill (2015) sampling is the act of selecting participants or items by a researcher for a study from a given population. For the observation part, my samples were the Finnish classes at bilingual (English-Swedish and English-Finnish) primary schools. For the interview, I recruited 9 teachers who work for pupils with multilingual backgrounds and use English as an instructional language. All of them work in the English line of primary schools. Among the nine of my informants, three of them speak Swedish as their first language, three speak Finnish as their first language, and the other three have international backgrounds with

different mother tongues. It is near-universally overlooked that estimates of causal effects obtained from a study sample are only well-defined if they include specific reference to a target population in which they are said to apply (Westreich et al., 2019, P439). This implies that the target population cannot be overlooked in a good qualitative research. In this study, my target population to participate in the study are teachers who work with bilingual pupils in Finland. This group of participants are necessary for this study since bilingual education is a known topic and practise in schools.

In this study, I first observed some Finnish classes at bilingual schools, where they mostly use English as instruction language. I paid much attention on the language(s) they used during the classes, the way teachers interacted with their pupils, difficulties and challenges for pupils and teachers, and the strategies teacher applied to assist the pupils. During my observation, I took notes with the observation protocol. After that I wrote some reflections to help me record the observation, specifically the most impressive moments. After the observation, I created my interview questions based on my research aims and observations. The interview questions were rephrased and restructured several times according to the response of my interviewees, and I tried to make the questions clear and easy for the interviewees to understand, so they can share as much information as possible.

Data was collected from nine teachers working in three bilingual (Swedish-English or Finnish-English) primary schools in Finland. Invitations to participate this research were sent to teachers via email or personal networking, with no limitations on gender, age, or language backgrounds. However, in order to have a broader view and generalized sample, I tried to diversify the sample by having teachers with different language backgrounds, and years of teaching experience. For more information on the participants, see Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Information

Schools	Participant	Language backgrounds	Years of teaching	Years of teaching multilingual pupils in English

School A	Teacher 1	Swedish, Finnish, English, German	30+	17
	Teacher 2	Swedish, Finnish, English, German	35	28
	Teacher 3	Swedish, Finnish, English, French, German	8	2
School B	Teacher 4	Spanish, Galician, English	2	2
	Teacher 5	English, Greek, Finnish, Swedish	14	2 months
	Teacher 6	English, Finnish, Chinese	8	1
	Teacher 7	Finnish, Swedish, English	18	14
	Teacher 8	Finnish, English, Swedish, French, German, Norwegian	15	11
School C	Teacher 9	Finnish, English, Swedish, French, Russian	20	20

The interviews were conducted mostly in person at quiet places, two of them were done online, and one was done via e-mails, up to the convenience preference of the participants. Consent to record and use the interviews for research purposes from the teachers was received via formal consent forms with signatures. All of the interviews were conducted in English, and electronic devices, as well as notepads, were used to record the interviews, which were later transcribed for qualitative research. A list of 12 questions (see Appendix A) were asked to each teacher, with interviews lasting from 25 minutes to 50 minutes, depending on the amount that the teacher would like to share.

3.3 Ethical Consideration and Consent

Ethics is one of the bases of educational research. Educational research deals with a wide range of characteristics; individuals with different backgrounds. Every researcher must have to carefully consider issues that might harm participants, invade the privacy of the participants, deceive participants, and above all consent of participants involved in the study must be sought. These are basic principles of ethical concern in qualitative research. In order

to ensure that these basic principles will be met, the following measures were taken: participation in this project was fully voluntary, and informants could also opt out in the middle of the observation or interview without explanation. Informed consents were obtained from participants and authorities concerned. In order to guarantee the participants' right of anonymity, participants' names and other personal information were not used in any of the data analysis. This is done to ensure the protection of vulnerability and misunderstanding of participants and interviewers (Frankel et al., 2012). Besides, recording devices such as audio recording and notepads for the collection of data were carefully trash immediately after the data analysis.

3.4 Research Instruments

The research instrument used in this study consisted of a combination of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. A semi-structured interview guide designed to collect data on the perspectives of English instructors on teaching multilingual pupils in Finland. The interview guide was developed based on the research aims and themes identified through thematic analysis of the relevant literature and findings from the pilot study. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that aimed to explore the challenges faced by English instructors in teaching multilingual pupils, the strategies employed to address these challenges, and the support received by teachers in this context. The questions were designed to elicit rich and detailed responses from the participants, allowing for in-depth exploration of their perspectives and experiences. The interview guide was reviewed and validated to ensure its content validity. The final version of the interview guide was used for data collection after obtaining ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board. The interviews were conducted in-person with English instructors who had experience teaching multilingual pupils in Finland. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

In addition to the interviews, classroom observations were conducted to gather direct observations of the teaching practices and interactions in the multilingual classroom setting. The classroom observations were conducted by the researcher, who visited the classrooms of the participating English instructors during their regular teaching sessions. The observations

were guided by the research aims and themes identified through the literature review and pilot study. The researcher took detailed field notes during the observations, documenting the classroom dynamics, instructional strategies, and interactions between the teachers and pupils.

The combination of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations provided a comprehensive approach to capturing the perspectives, experiences, and actual classroom practices of English instructors in teaching multilingual pupils in Finland. The data collected through the interviews and observations were used to validate the findings, providing a more robust and nuanced understanding of the research aims and themes. The research instrument, i.e., the combination of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, proved to be effective in collecting data that captured the perspectives, experiences, and actual classroom practices of English instructors, and facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the research aims and themes of the study.

3.5 Methods of Analysis

Among the many forms of analyzing data in research, I use thematic analysis in answering my research questions. According to Braun and Clarke as cited in Lochmiller (2021) thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). Lochmiller (2021) added that coded data is based on the recurring application of codes and the patterns associated with those codes. Which means that the more frequently codes appear in the data set, the more likely the analyst will state that code as the basis of a theme. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data. It involves a systematic and iterative process of coding and categorizing data to identify meaningful patterns or themes that emerge from the data.

One commonly cited approach to thematic analysis is the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which includes familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, naming themes, and producing the final report. This approach emphasizes the importance of inductive coding and iterative data analysis to identify and refine themes that capture the essence of the data.

Before the data analysis, I transcribed each interview as a separate document, including the interviewee's name, gender, language backgrounds, years of experience, and the date of the interview. After that, I coded the transcripts, put the similar contents together, emphasized the repeated content mentioned by the informants, and constructed categories. I read and re-read the data, identified themes within and between interviews, and linked to the aforementioned research aims and research questions.'

The data was collected through both observations and interviews, and then a joint analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns. During the analysis of the observational data, codes were assigned to various behaviors, actions, or events that were observed. Similarly, during the analysis of the interview data, codes were assigned to different responses or statements made by the participants. These codes were then used to identify common themes that emerged from both types of data. Since I collected more data from the interviews than the observations, I used the codes from the observations as supplementary to the codes from the interviews, and placed them wherever they resonated with the same themes.

To enhance the trustworthiness of this qualitative research, several measures were taken. Firstly, data triangulation was used by collecting data from multiple sources, including classroom observations and interviews with teachers. Secondly, the researchers reflected on their biases and assumptions throughout the research process and kept an audit trail to ensure dependability. Thirdly, the study's limitations and potential sources of bias were discussed in the research report to enhance transferability. Overall, the researchers attempted to enhance the trustworthiness of the study by using multiple strategies to ensure the accuracy, consistency, and credibility of the findings.

4. Results

The findings of the study revealed key insights into the challenges and support experienced by Finnish teachers in multilingual education. Through data analysis of observations and interviews, several recurring themes emerged, shedding light on the current state of language instruction in Finland. This section presents the main findings of the study, including the challenges faced by English instructors in teaching multilingual pupils, the strategies

employed by teachers to address these challenges, and the support they receive from various sources. The results provide valuable insights into the complexities of language instruction in a multilingual context and offer implications for policy and practice in the field of education.

Based on the data I have collected, I found that there is increasing diversity among both students and teachers, as well as the challenges for both students and teachers, especially in bilingual schools. To answer my four research questions, I divided the collected data into four parts during the data analysis. I then identified various themes for each part through observations and interviews conducted with teachers to gain their perspectives. These themes reflect the individual experiences of each teacher of bilingual schools in Finland. Under each theme there are several specific sub-themes that explain the topic further (see Table 2).

Table 2

Themes

Parts	Teachers' Perspectives on Multilingual Pupils' Learning Performance	Teachers' Strategies for Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English	Teachers' Challenges of Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English	Teachers' Support for Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English
Themes	The Importance of Multilingual Pupils' Mother Tongues	Multilingualism as a Resource	Teachers' Challenges for Differentiated Instruction	Support from Working Community
	Language Interference -- Multilingualism as a Problem	CLIL Method and Immersion Strategy	Teachers' Challenges from Pupils' Cultural Differences	Support from Teachers' Continuous Study
		More Time and Space for Pupils	Teachers' Challenges from Social Media	Expected Support for Multilingual Education

			Influence	
		International Teachers' Special Strategies	Extra Challenges for International Teachers	

Part 1 Teachers' Perspectives on Multilingual Pupils' Learning Performance

All teachers interviewed in this study have good understanding of multilingualism, and almost all of them agreed that pupils who are able to use (speak, communicate with, or act according to) more than two languages are considered to be multilingual pupils, and pupils in the bilingual (English-Swedish, or English-Finnish) lines are all considered to be multilingual pupils. All of the teachers interviewed are multilingual themselves, and most of them have good command of three or more languages. But teachers have different perceives on multilingual pupils' performance. Some teachers don't perceive obvious differences of learning performance among pupils caused by the linguistic diversity, but consider it as individual variation. It's difficult for teachers to point out where multilingualism plays a role in specific cases.

Theme 1 The Importance of Multilingual Pupils' Mother Tongues

Many informants emphasize the importance of pupils' first language proficiency, where their second or more languages based on. The importance of multilingual pupils' mother tongue is a significant aspect to consider in the context of language education. The use of the mother tongue in the classroom can facilitate effective communication, comprehension, and engagement among multilingual pupils. In the Finnish context, where multilingualism is prevalent, recognizing and valuing the importance of multilingual pupils' mother tongue can contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Finnish teachers can leverage the mother tongue as a valuable asset in teaching English to multilingual pupils, by incorporating translanguaging practices, encouraging code-switching, and acknowledging and respecting the diverse linguistic backgrounds of their pupils.

T1: It (the learning performance) depends on the child's language level. The children are so individual, it's difficult to know for which child is very easy, or for which child is more challenging.

T2: That would have to do with that the level of their first language. If you have a good base in your first language, it's much easier to pick up things from another language...What I think might be a difference is that they (multilingual children) are more aware about language...If they start comparing and then start using and sometimes it's a little bit of code switching and sometimes you can see one language seems to interfering with the other one.

Some teachers perceive that multilingual pupils have some advantages to acquire English, especially for pupils who have English as their mother tongue, or the ones whose mother tongues are other than Finnish or Swedish, since they have to use English more often in their daily lives.

T5: I know that trying to learn a different language is a kind of programming their brains. They have already switched from mother tongue to English or from mother tongue to Finish, it must be easier for them to learn a new language.

T5: I feel that multilingual students have a better connection with the English because they have to use it more, I guess, and it seems it's easier for them.

T6: I've seen that the ones who were raised up with English as a first language, then their abilities are much much stronger than those who use English as an additional language.

T9: Multilingual pupils have generally good abilities in learning English.

It seems that multilingual pupils' difficulties also depend on their mother tongues or home languages. For example, many teachers mentioned the difficulties of learning Finnish for the pupils who don't use Finnish at home, and few teachers talked about the challenges of learning English faced by the native Finnish pupils, as they use less English in their daily lives.

T3: If we think more about language learning itself, especially with Finnish, because Finnish is a very difficult language, as some students speak Finnish at home, but then

those who don't, especially the ones who maybe speak more than one language at home and neither of those languages is Finnish, I think they struggle with Finnish more than the others.

T9: Usually the biggest issues are in Finnish skills, narrow Finnish vocabulary, reading comprehension and structure of the Finnish language, not necessarily in English. Challenges with Finnish language of course links with understanding and learning subjects which are taught through Finnish.

T5: Well, since it's an English class, they are doing well. The tricky part is that the Finnish students struggle more. It's opposite actually, because I think the students with Finnish mother tongue struggle more in the English line ...in Finnish courses the students who don't speak Finnish have much bigger problems that sometimes affects also their progress in Math, for example, or other subjects. ...

T5: But the Finnish students, for example, some of them, especially if parents don't speak English at home, it's more difficult for them.

During the interviews with teachers regarding their perspectives, some of them shared their experiences with tricky situations. One such situation discussed was related to pupils who have lost their mother tongue due to using multiple languages in different contexts. These pupils may face learning difficulties when it comes to comprehending content in different languages.

T7: Usually the multilingual kids perform better, but it's tricky...some kids use several different languages, for example, they might speak with their friends in English, and they go to a hobby in Finnish, and then they speak to their parents maybe in Chinese or any other language, but none of them is as strong as a mother tongue, so they haven't got a linguistic awareness, they might have more difficulties to understand.

T8: If a student has problems with the lingual developments, it doesn't help them to have many languages to struggle with...If you have problems with one language, then you put on the top a second language, so it's a burden for them...Not even one home language, not even the mother tongue was detected...so having that broken languages is not a benefit, it's a burden.

The aforementioned results suggest that regardless of the number of languages pupils are learning concurrently, their first languages play a crucial role in their overall learning performance, encompassing both advantages and challenges. If a child has lost their mother tongue, it can pose difficulties for their development of multilingual abilities.

Theme 2 Language Interference -- Multilingualism as a Problem

According to the informants, the main difficulty for multilingual pupils is language interference. They might mix up the rules of different languages, while they are learning several languages simultaneously. It may affect their understanding of the content, especially for some subject learning. The language interference is considered as a problem of multilingualism, as it highlights one of the difficulties for multilingual pupils. Language interference, also known as cross-linguistic influence, is a common problem in multilingualism where the knowledge or use of one language may impact the acquisition or use of another language (Odlin, 2003). When multilingual individuals learn or use multiple languages, the features, rules, or structures of one language may influence their performance in another language, leading to errors, inconsistencies, or deviations from the target language norms Canagarajah, S. (2007). Language interference can be a challenge for multilingual individuals, as it may lead to confusion, misunderstandings, or inaccuracies in their language use. It can also impact their language learning and academic performance, particularly in formal language contexts, such as education or professional settings.

T4: The most difficult thing for them is to read and understand the text in English, in order to learn the subjects such as Math and Science.

T6: The biggest difficulty is not understanding the expectations of the teacher. The students who have poor English ability they might be totally lost, and they don't know what I'm talking about and they don't know what activity they should do or do the activity wrong, because they didn't understand.

T3: More problem for them is the spelling because Swedish and English are very similar and sometimes they mix up ... when they are writing they might mix up the spelling. And I've noticed that these kind of rules that they pick up from one language and try to apply the same rules in the other language, even though it's not the same.

Part 2 Teachers' Strategies for Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English

Teaching multilingual students in Finland requires a range of effective strategies, including creating a positive classroom environment, using visual aids, scaffolding instruction, and providing opportunities for students to use their home languages in the classroom. By implementing these strategies, teachers can support the learning and development of multilingual students, and also promote a more inclusive and welcoming classroom environment. Teachers I interviewed have various strategies to help their students, including language switching, sign language, visual aids, differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, more attention and individual tutoring.

Theme 1 Multilingualism as a Resource in the Classroom

Many informants mentioned about peer support as a strategy in the classroom, and they encourage students to use other languages in the classroom. Teachers perceive multilingualism as a resource in the classroom, as it suggests that valuing students' first languages can contribute to a more inclusive and effective learning environment. All interviewed teachers believe the linguistic diversity among pupils prompt students' English learning. Several informants mentioned about the encouragement of use pupils' different home languages in the class. Providing opportunities for students to use their home languages in the classroom can be an effective strategy for teaching multilingual students. As Huhta and other researchers claimed (2019), multilingual classrooms in Finland are often characterized by a linguistically diverse ecology, where students may use a variety of languages to communicate with one another. Providing opportunities for students to use their home languages in the classroom can help them develop their language skills, and also promote a sense of belonging and inclusion. Using multiple teaching methods and seeking support from colleagues can help instructors effectively harness the resources of multilingualism in the classroom.

T1: Sometimes we have that they teach each other to count to ten, or to say hello, or to give some phrases in their own home languages, and the children enjoyed this very much.

T6: One of the strategies is to place the stronger students with the weaker students,

and put them in pair for activities or group work. So that they can help each other, maybe in their first languages.

Theme 2 CLIL Method and Immersion Strategy

The findings also proved that CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) method and immersion strategy are popular in Finnish bilingual schools. CLIL method allows teachers to integrate language learning with content instruction, which can be particularly beneficial for multilingual pupils. By providing instruction in English across various subject areas, such as science, social studies, or mathematics, CLIL enables students to develop English language skills while also acquiring content knowledge. This integrated approach can help Finnish teachers effectively engage multilingual pupils in English language learning by making it relevant and meaningful in the context of their academic studies. During my observation in school A, where the CLIL method is used, I noticed that some teachers use Swedish to explain certain English words that the students are not familiar with. Additionally, I observed that sometimes teachers ask questions in English, but the students respond in Swedish, and the class proceeds smoothly nonetheless. Then one of the teachers explained about this strategy.

T3: I usually try to teach them the words and phrases almost in Swedish and English, so whenever and wherever they go after grade 6, if they want to continue in English speaking group or if they want to switch to a Swedish speaking group, that they are able to switch, so that they still get the knowledge and have the vocabulary they need to use later on.

While in School B where the immersion strategy is applied, the class teachers use English only, with a Finnish-speaking teacher's collaboration. They conduct "one teacher, one language" policy, and they have an innovation way to support each other, which is called the "block lesson". Immersion strategy provides opportunities for multilingual pupils to be exposed to English as a medium of instruction in an authentic and immersive environment. Through regular and sustained exposure to English, immersion programme can facilitate language acquisition by creating an immersive language environment where English is used for communication, instruction, and interaction (Tedick & Fortune, 2011). This can help

multilingual pupils develop their English language skills in a natural and contextualized manner, fostering language proficiency and confidence.

T7: It was like once or twice a week there is a book lesson, where we put them into the level of groups according to their English skills ... Then there is Finnish throughout from first to sixth grade. We have three different leveled groups. We have beginning Finnish... then we have the next available group called S2, Finnish as a second language...and then the third level is the native Finnish speaking... So we have three level groups for all the students.

Both CLIL method and immersion programme recognize the diverse language proficiency levels of multilingual pupils and offer differentiated instruction to cater to their individual needs. Finnish teachers can adapt their instruction to the language abilities of their pupils, providing additional support or challenges as needed. This personalized approach can help address the varying language levels among multilingual pupils and support their English language development at their own pace. As two important supportive approaches of teaching multilingual pupils in English, CLIL method and immersion programme also can promote cultural competence by exposing multilingual pupils to different cultures, perspectives, and ways of communication through the use of English. This can foster intercultural understanding, promote diversity and inclusivity, and enhance the social and cultural competence of multilingual pupils, which are important skills for living and working in a globalized world.

Theme 3 More Time and Space for Pupils

Some teachers suggested allowing more time and space for pupils and letting them attempt to solve problems on their own before intervening with other strategies. My classroom observations supported these points as the classes were generally quiet with little teacher input. Most of the time, students were given individual or group tasks and allowed to explore and find solutions on their own. This led me to reflect on the role of teachers in Finland, where they are seen as helpers or guides rather than lecturers or instructors. Finnish teachers spend more time preparing for classes than giving instructions, which encourages pupils to

become independent and autonomous learners. Perhaps this approach is one reason for Finland's successful education system.

T2: Then I go back to how I planned the lesson, and think about organizing more time and space for the students.

T6: Use simpler terms, use visual aids, or leave the students to practice the question first.

Theme 4 International Teachers' Special Strategies

It is intriguing to observe that teachers who are native speakers sometimes switch between languages, especially those who implement the CLIL method, to assist students in becoming familiar with both languages. On the other hand, teachers with international backgrounds typically do not have the advantage of language switching during class, but they possess their own strengths in communicating with students. These teachers have a better understanding of how to interact with multilingual students, especially those with international backgrounds, since they have shared experiences in language learning and being foreigners themselves.

T5: As an international teacher I also understand that the hardship of not speaking in their mother tongue, so it's easier for me to understand what the kids have gone through, when they are not connected with the language... I also used body languages a lot. When I explain something, I even can mime.

T4: Having the background of many languages really helps me to communicate and understand these kids, especially me as an international teacher, let's say. I think the kids feel more comfortable, and I think it helps me to connect with them, because I kind of feel somehow how they feel.

Part 3 Teachers' Challenges of Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English

In this part, the focus shifts to the challenges that Finnish teachers face when teaching multilingual pupils in English. Finland's growing multilingual population presents a unique set of challenges for educators, who must navigate linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical complexities to ensure that all students receive quality education. Previous studies have highlighted several difficulties that teachers face, including inadequate training and support, the need to differentiate instruction for pupils with varying language proficiencies, and

balancing the needs of multilingual and monolingual pupils. These challenges not only affect the quality of education but can also lead to teacher burnout and high turnover rates. Therefore, it is essential to understand the difficulties that Finnish teachers encounter when teaching multilingual pupils in English and identify ways to support them in this process. Based on the perspectives of the participants, teachers encounter a major obstacle in dealing with students who have diverse language and cultural backgrounds, varying levels of knowledge, and different learning styles. It is important to note that in addition to these common challenges, international teachers have to overcome additional hurdles.

Theme 1 Teachers' Challenges for Differentiated Instruction

The issue of varying levels of knowledge among students was a common topic among the interviewed teachers, as it requires extra effort to maintain a balanced teaching approach and differentiate instruction for different student groups. Differentiated instruction is a teaching approach that seeks to adapt instruction to the diverse learning needs, preferences, and abilities of students. While it has been touted as an effective way to improve learning outcomes, it poses significant challenges for teachers. One of the primary challenges of differentiated instruction is that it requires teachers to create multiple lesson plans and teaching materials for each class, which can be time-consuming and resource-intensive. Teachers must also be skilled in differentiating instruction while maintaining high expectations and rigor for all students. Additionally, teachers must be able to accurately assess each student's learning needs and adapt their instruction accordingly. Another challenge is managing the classroom effectively to ensure that all students are engaged and making progress towards their learning goals. These challenges can be further compounded when working with multilingual students who may have varying levels of English proficiency and educational backgrounds.

T3: Sometimes their knowledge of English to be very vary...to find the balance or then find resources that you can have different levels, so that everybody gets a challenge at their own level, so that sometimes it means more work for me when I prepare the lessons.

T3: It's just the class teacher, most of the time, who is responsible for the teaching and making sure that you differentiate enough the learning, so that all students can follow and all students would learn at their own level and be challenged.

T6: The other one is just trying to keep the more advanced students activated while you are helping the less advanced students, because it's very easy for the more advanced students to feel bored, if you keep it too simple, and it's very easy to lead more poor students feel overwhelmed if the lesson is going too fast and they're not following. So try to find a balance.

T7: The challenge probably is that we have children at so many different levels in English... we need to be able to differentiate and sort of help the high achieve as well that they get teaching at their own level. And to think about how to do, what kind of materials to use, that we can get students differentiated teaching and learning.

Theme 2 Teachers' Challenges from Pupils' Cultural Differences

Several teachers also highlighted the significance of cultural differences and diverse learning habits among multilingual pupils, emphasizing the need for extensive preparation and support from teachers. Just like Sahlberg (2011) has pointed out, diversity among students is proved to be one of the most difficult professional challenges that teachers have faced. Teachers face challenges from pupils' cultural differences when teaching in a multicultural classroom. These challenges can arise due to different cultural backgrounds and values held by pupils, which can affect their attitudes towards education and learning styles. For example, some pupils may come from cultures where direct questioning or challenging of teachers is considered disrespectful, while in other cultures it is seen as a sign of engagement and interest. Such differences in cultural norms can create misunderstandings between teachers and pupils. Teachers also need to be aware of potential biases and stereotypes they may hold towards pupils from different cultures, and ensure that they treat all pupils equally and fairly. Furthermore, teachers need to be able to adapt their teaching styles to meet the needs of pupils from different cultural backgrounds, providing instruction that is culturally responsive and inclusive. It is essential for teachers to develop their cultural competency to understand and appreciate the diversity of their pupils and create a safe and inclusive learning

environment for all.

T6: The main challenges would be the cultural differences between students. Because the students are from such diverse backgrounds. Some students will be incredibly quiet and shy in their culture, maybe they have not been living in Finland for very long. So they do not understand how the Finnish classroom works. They don't understand that they should be free to raise their hands and tell the teacher that they don't understand...

T3: We might get students who moved to Finland during the year, when we already have our routines and we have worked in a certain way. And then if somebody comes in, and their language background might be very different from the rest of the group, so that might also mean more work when you prepare the students.

T4: I think the most difficult thing is that they come from so many different places, and they have different ways of learning, especially at home with their parents... then they come with all these things to school, they try to do what they do at home, of course their parents support what they do. I think for me it's quite hard.

Theme 3 Teachers' Challenges from Social Media Influence

One teacher shared concerns about the impact of social media on language teaching. She noted that with the increased exposure of students to the internet and social media, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, students often pick up informal language habits from social media. This includes the use of abbreviations and non-standard language forms in their schoolwork. The teacher emphasized the importance of being aware of these influences and making efforts to correct such language usage in the classroom.

T3: Nowadays when students ...pick it (English) up from Youtube videos or from TV series, and they traveled... I would say that the language learning is getting a big difference on where they learned, and I think the schools and teachers have to take that into consideration, and then also figure out how we can support that, so all the children get good education (to learn standard languages).

Theme 4 Extra Challenges for International Teachers

Based on the data I have collected, I found that usually teachers with longer working

experience have less challenges, but the ones with shorter experience feel themselves facing more challenges, especially for the teachers with foreign backgrounds. One of the most significant challenges for international teachers in Finland is the language barrier. For international teachers who do not speak Finnish or Swedish, it can be difficult to communicate with students, colleagues, and administrators. And because of the limited experience of living in Finland or receiving education in Finland, they are lack of the knowledge of the Finnish curriculum, or the teaching methods in the Finnish context. All these obstacles hinder them to get stable employment, therefore, limit their integration and further career development. For example, among nine interviewees of this research, there are three teachers with international backgrounds, two of them are working on yearly based contract, and the other one is a substitute teacher, while all other six native teachers have permanent employment. Obviously, teachers with international backgrounds have to put much more efforts to overcome these challenges.

T5: The (biggest challenge for me is) Finnish (laugh). I mean it was like a surprise, because it's completely a paradox for me, working at a bilingual school and feeling that at some points ... having a teachers meeting that was entirely in Finnish, I was like so strange.

T5: It feels like we are left out at some points and this can cause a lot of stress because we are never sure if there's something we missed, or something important someone forgot to translate, then we have to find out ourselves. So the support would be a more inclusive working environment for us who don't speak Finnish yet.

T4: I I think that it's quite lonely experience, at least here in Finland, as a teacher. From my workmates I can get the support I need, regarding teaching and my work. But not from anywhere else. I haven't gotten support from anywhere else than that I got from my workmates.

As per an informant who also serves as an administrator in the school, it is challenging for international teachers to secure a stable job in Finland. This is primarily because they have to meet high language proficiency standards and get their qualifications

recognized. Typically, teachers with international backgrounds are hired on a yearly contract or work as substitutes, especially if they are new to the country.

T7: The the problem is the recruitment process. It's tricky for this, if there are too many international teachers who do not have knowledge in Finnish, the curriculum, or the teaching methods ... but we are still following the Finnish curriculum in a Finnish school, with the support programs and the support things in Finnish, and then that means the persons who get the permanent job need to know Finnish.

Part 4 Teachers' Support for Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English

Although Finnish teachers face numerous challenges when teaching multilingual pupils, fortunately, with the strong teacher community, sufficient support from co-workers and school administration, most teachers are satisfied with the support they have received, and they are confident about tackling the challenges they have come across. It seems that the longer they have worked at a school, the more satisfied they are with the support they have got. However, teachers with international backgrounds still expect additional support, particularly to address the language barrier exclusivity.

T1: Well, now I think that I've got the support I need, because I've been here for seventeen years now.

Theme 1 Support from Working Community

Almost all teachers mentioned about the support from working community and colleagues. With collaboration with colleagues, Finnish teachers can better support the diverse needs of their multilingual students. For example, Many schools have special education teachers, and many classes have assistant teachers, who can help the students with learning difficulties.

T3: We have a special education teacher and we can always ask her for help, and it's perhaps more geared towards math and Swedish and Finnish ... So our special education teacher is teaching Finnish for them at a really easy level and at a slower pace.

T4: I think that the working community I'm in right now is quite supportive, so I would say that if I have any issue, I know I have someone who would help me. From my workmates I can get the support I need, regarding teaching and my work.

T5: I would say that I have a lot of support. This is one of the things that I am really grateful ...I think the team work is a very important thing in the school where I work. I have amazing support from my principal, from the colleagues, from mentor teachers who shared materials with me.

T6: The teacher community is very strong and very good. Whenever you ask for assistance from other teachers, they are always more than willing to help, with worksheets and advice ... For bigger classes there would be an assistant teacher which is very very helpful. They are very useful to help the teacher and help the students, and keep the class calm and managed. Half of the classes have a teacher assistant, which is very very nice.

T7: We have a very vast support system. We have support lessons in English, for those who are struggling with reading and writing in younger classes, but as well as with understanding. We have support teachers who are in class helping around. We have special need teachers who pull them out from the class to work with smaller groups. Then we level the groups. We have them in leveled teaching groups. Then we are able to to work on their level, so then we support those ones who need help.

Theme 2 Support from Teachers' Continuous Study

Several teachers mentioned continuous studies as a supportive method for their daily work. It's very inspiring that teachers who talked about continuous study are actually super experienced. In Finland, teachers are required to engage in life-long learning to acquire versatile competence to address the challenges in multilingual education. Continuous study can support teachers in tackling their challenges in teaching multilingual pupils in English by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively teach and support multilingual learners. This can include learning about different language acquisition theories, strategies for promoting language development, and techniques for creating an inclusive classroom environment. Additionally, continuous study can help teachers stay up-to-date on the latest research and best practices in the field of multilingual education, as well as provide opportunities for professional development and collaboration with other teachers. By continually improving their knowledge and skills, teachers can better address the challenges

of teaching multilingual pupils in English and ensure that all learners have the opportunity to succeed.

T1: We had meetings two times per year (at the teachers' training university), just discussing this CLIL method, and so on. I had some teacher education about this language learning right now ... We have discussion about third language acquisition meetings in Europe, in different countries, where we could hear about the researches involved in CLIL learning and what is the newest thing about language learning, and so on.

T2: Since I started language immersion and then I started with the PhD, and that had to do with acquiring new languages, too. So those extra studies help me. So I feel quite confident.

Theme 3 Expected Support for Multilingual Education

Even though teachers get vast support, there is still room for improvement in teacher training to better prepare both future and in-service teachers. One informant suggested practical courses, such as communication skills with parents, winter sports, and local crafts. Additionally, several informants called for intercultural sensitivity to be included in teacher training, as it is essential for teaching multilingual pupils.

T4: I think a lot of practical subjects are missing. Maybe some more deeply on communication with their parents, and more contents about how do schools work in Finland, more classroom work...Have subjects such as craft and winter sports, these kind of subjects that are special here, and we might not have it in our home country.

T5: I realize that the teacher training in general is not enough. Teachers in the Finnish schools need much more connection to real life, like intercultural training, which is a part of studies now, but It was done in such as a theoretical way that has nothing to do with what happens in real schools. Nothing! You have to deal with so many different things in the school and the social things that come with the multilingual backgrounds, the cultural sensitivities and things like that ... I don't know if we are prepared properly.

T5: It needs much more training to deal with this kind of multilingual groups and classrooms ... to deal with much more sensitive situation. So I think that in Finland they just need to include the training which is more relevant to real life and real problems.

During the interviews, I also received many valuable recommendations for future teachers and teacher education that could be highly beneficial. Most of the suggestions were to advise teachers to remain open, inclusive, and impartial, and to continue learning, particularly regarding multilingualism and interculturality, as well as the need for teacher education on multiculturalism.

T3: It's very beneficial if you learn about multilingualism, and how to help students acquire languages, and also how to support the students in language learning that happens outside of school because it's become a larger part than that was before.

T5: It's important to be culture sensitive and always personalize your teaching according to your students and their needs.

T9: I would definitely suggest more education on how to support learners with multilingual backgrounds!

Concluding Remarks

Based on the data I have collected, I found that there is increasing diversity of language backgrounds among both students and teachers, especially in bilingual schools, and many of the students and teachers are multilingual, including both the native and the international ones. The study revealed that multilingualism is omnipresent, multilingualism is an ideal that no one is opposing, and all of the interviewed teachers have a good understanding of multilingualism. The majority of interviewed teachers do not perceive clear discrepancies in the learning outcomes of multilingual students, but view them as unique individuals. The primary challenge for multilingual pupils is closely associated with their mother tongue. Teachers have various strategies to help their students, and the usage of students' first languages is considered as a resource in the classroom.

In Finland, teachers face numerous challenges when teaching multilingual pupils. One of the main challenges is the diversity of the pupils' backgrounds and languages, which

makes it difficult for teachers to know the students' language skills and adjust their teaching methods accordingly. Furthermore, teachers may lack the necessary training and resources to effectively teach multilingual students. Another challenge is language interference, which occurs when a student's native language interferes with their learning of a new language. This can lead to confusion and frustration for both the student and the teacher. Finally, It is noteworthy that the tactics utilized by native and international teachers exhibit slight variations, with native instructors possessing an edge in language transitioning and international teachers excelling in communicating with multilingual students, especial for pupils with international backgrounds..

Although English instructors of multilingual pupils face numerous challenges, with the strong teacher community, sufficient support from co-workers and school administration, most teachers are satisfied with the support they have received, and they are confident about tackling the challenges they have encountered. However, there is still space for teacher training to help future teachers as well as in-service teachers to prepare themselves better. Teacher training necessitates a high level of demand for practical courses and cultural awareness.

To conclude, being a teacher in Finland is a challenging task. Although the Finnish education system, which allows teachers to access high autonomy and sufficient support, is almost the best in the world, it is not perfect. Teachers in Finland still face increasing challenges, as globalization brings more diversity among students. Therefore, teachers have to be open-minded and keep learning, on the other hand, policymakers and teacher education institutions should notice these issues and take actions accordingly, to support and prepare teachers to tackle all those challenges.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of Findings

The aim of this research is to explore the phenomenon of Finnish education, particularly in the context of language instruction, by examining teachers' perspectives on their challenges and support. Therefore, nine teachers working at bilingual schools and using English as instructional language were interviewed. The result of the thematic analysis of the interviews

show that there are four parts, including 13 themes, throughout teachers' accounts: Part 1 Teachers' Perspectives on Multilingual Pupils' Learning Performance, Part 2 Teachers' Strategies for Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English, Part 3 Teachers' Challenges of Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English, Part 4 Teachers' Support for Teaching Multilingual Pupils in English. All of these themes are intricately connected, calling for future solutions and practical application.

The research findings demonstrate the increasing diversity among both students and teachers, which is consistent with the growing multilingual population in Finland. Additionally, there is a significant rise in the number of English learners in Finnish schools, which matches the previous research about English learning situation in Finland. Among the English learners, there is a significant proportion of native Finns. This trend indicates the growing motivation among Finnish parents to promote English learning for their children. Moreover, most teachers have a positive attitude towards multilingualism, as revealed in earlier studies by Alisaari and other researchers (2019). Due to Finland's bilingual history, many teachers and students are multilingual, which adds to their knowledge and experience in learning and teaching languages, contributing to a successful multilingual education approach. Furthermore, recognizing pupils' first language as a valuable resource in the classroom can have a positive impact on their language development, academic achievement, social integration, and overall well-being, creating a more inclusive and effective language education approach for multilingual pupils in Finland. The research also highlights the different challenges faced by native and immigrant pupils, as well as the distinct difficulties experienced by native and international teachers. Further research can explore the implications of these findings and make recommendations for future research.

5.1.1 Most of Teachers' Challenges are Caused by Pupils' Difficulties

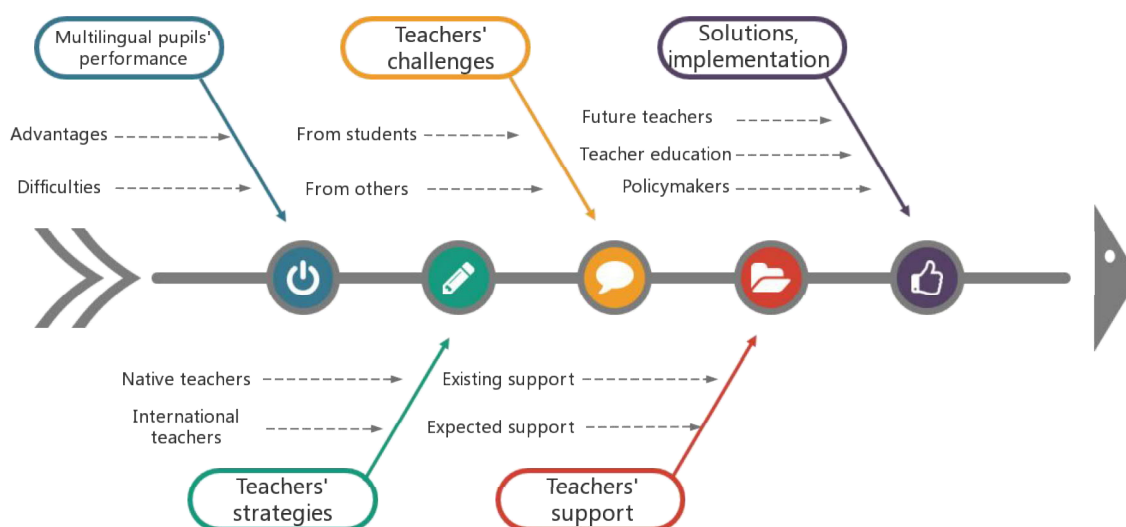
As shown in Figure 2, multilingual pupils' difficulties cause most of the teachers' challenges, as Finnish teachers are students-centered, and they have to try every possible strategy to help their students. Students' diversity leads increasing challenges for teachers. Despite the support that they receive, teachers still require further assistance. Hence, educational

institutions and policymakers should take these issues into account and prepare future teachers in a more effective manner to tackle the challenges related to multilingual education.

The difficulties faced by pupils in language learning can have a direct impact on the challenges faced by teachers in the classroom. When pupils encounter difficulties in language learning, such as language loss, limited exposure to the language, or cultural differences that affect their language use, it can create challenges for teachers in facilitating effective instruction and communication. For example, if pupils have lost their mother tongue or have limited exposure to the language of instruction, it may be challenging for teachers to provide appropriate language support and cater to the diverse needs of pupils with different language backgrounds. Teachers may need to adapt their instructional strategies, differentiate their teaching, and provide additional language resources to support pupils with language difficulties. Additionally, pupils' difficulties in language learning, such as code-switching or language interference, may also impact classroom dynamics and interactions. Teachers may need to address issues related to language dominance, establish clear language use guidelines, and promote inclusive language practices among pupils with diverse language backgrounds (Cummins,1994).

Figure 2

Themes Connection



Furthermore, pupils' social and emotional challenges related to language learning, such as adjusting to a new educational system and developing a sense of belonging, may also affect teachers' roles as facilitators of language learning and social integration. Teachers may need to provide additional socio-emotional support, create inclusive classroom environments, and foster positive relationships among pupils to mitigate the challenges faced by pupils and promote effective language learning (Sarja et al., 2017). Therefore, there is a close link between the difficulties faced by pupils in language learning and the challenges faced by teachers in the classroom. Teachers play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by adapting their instructional strategies, promoting inclusive language practices, providing socio-emotional support, and fostering positive classroom environments to support pupils in overcoming their language learning difficulties. The aforementioned findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Coelho (2012) and Björklund (2013), which suggest that supporting diverse students necessitates teachers to acquire adequate competencies in multiple domains. In this vein, Coelho (2012) identified the specific challenges faced by teachers in terms of accommodating and integrating new students at any point during the academic year.

5.1.2 Immigrant Pupils Have More Difficulties

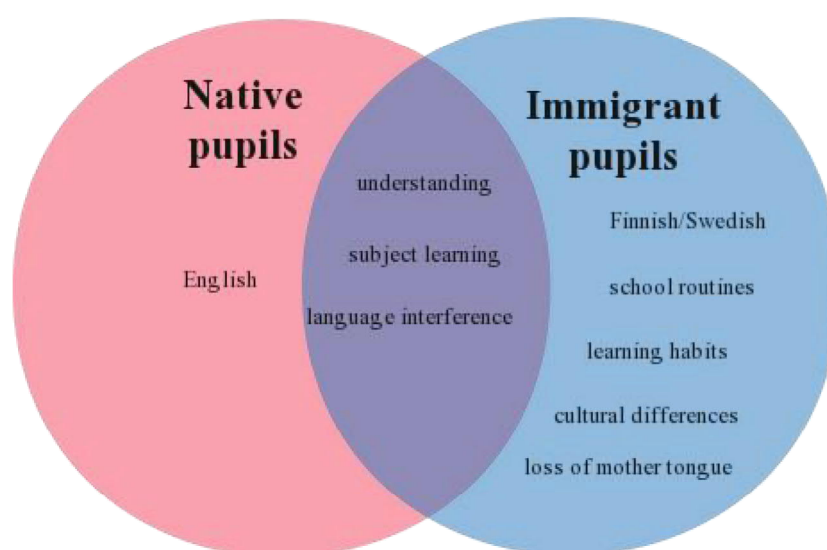
As described previously, multilingual pupils are primary students who use more than two languages, and in this study both native pupils and immigrant pupils are included. Please note that 'native pupils' here refers to the ones who speak Finnish or Swedish at home, with one or two Finnish native parents; while 'immigrant pupils' here refers to the ones who do not speak Finnish or Swedish at home, with foreign backgrounds. As Figure 3 illustrated, the main difficulties faced by native pupils and immigrant pupils are not same. Obviously, there are more difficulties for the immigrant pupils. In addition to understanding, subject learning and spelling, which are shared with the native pupils, immigrant pupils also face additional difficulties, such as Finnish/Swedish language learning, different school routines and learning habits, cultural difference, and loss of mother tongue.

In Finnish bilingual schools, both native pupils and immigrant pupils face challenges in language learning. For native pupils, one challenge is the dominance of English in the

curriculum, which can lead to a neglect of their mother tongue and reduced opportunities for developing their proficiency in Finnish or Swedish. This can result in language loss, reduced self-identity, and lower motivation for learning (Sarja et al., 2017). On the other hand, immigrant pupils face unique challenges in language learning due to the need to acquire Finnish or Swedish as a second or foreign language. These challenges may include limited prior exposure to the language, lack of language resources at home, and cultural differences that impact their language use and communication skills (Sawir, 2005). Immigrant pupils may also face social and emotional challenges related to adjusting to a new educational system, and building a sense of belonging in a new linguistic and cultural environment. Both native and immigrant pupils may also face challenges related to language interference, code-switching, and language dominance, as they navigate between different languages and language contexts in their daily lives (Nikula et al., 2016). These challenges can impact their language learning progress, language use, and language identity development. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be aware of these challenges and provide appropriate support to help both native and immigrant pupils overcome these challenges and thrive in their language learning journey.

Figure 3

Main Difficulties Faced by Native Pupils and Immigrant Pupils



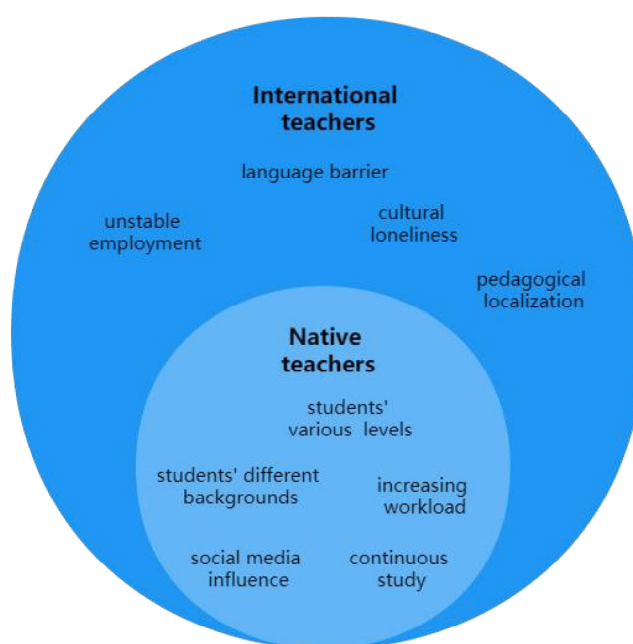
The above findings are identical with the previous researches. For example, Sahlberg (2011) has pointed out that diversity in students' personalities, abilities, and orientations was proved to be one of the most difficult professional challenges that teachers have faced. Similarly, PISA 2012 found that students with immigrant backgrounds scored lower in mathematics than others. Therefore, assisting immigrant pupils in catching up on their Finnish language skills became one of the most difficult tasks for teachers.

5.1.3 International Teachers Face More Challenges

As shown in Figure 4, teachers face many challenges, such as students with different knowledge levels, students with different backgrounds, and the influence of social media on language learning, which leads to an increase of teachers' workload and pushes teachers to continue learning. Apart from these challenges, teachers with international backgrounds face some extra challenges, for example, they have language barrier, cultural loneliness, unstable employment, and they have to get themselves integrated into the Finnish education system and localize their pedagogic methodology.'

Figure 4

Main Challenges for Native Teachers and International Teachers



As I mentioned at the very beginning, this study attempts to investigate the miracle of Finnish education from the standpoint of language instruction. The Finnish education system is widely regarded as one of the most successful in the world, and its approach to language instruction is a key factor in this success. The findings of this study show that Finnish education places a strong emphasis on multilingualism and the importance of learning multiple languages from an early age. One of the key aspects of the Finnish approach to language instruction is its focus on immersion and the use of the target language in everyday contexts. This means that students are exposed to the language in authentic and meaningful ways, which helps to develop their language skills more effectively. In addition, Finnish education also emphasizes the importance of a student-centered approach, where students are encouraged to take an active role in their own learning. This approach helps to promote motivation and engagement, which are key factors in language learning success. Another important aspect of Finnish language instruction is the focus on individualized learning and providing support to students who may be struggling. Finnish teachers are trained to provide personalized support to each student, which helps to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed. Overall, the success of Finnish education in the area of language instruction can be attributed to a range of factors, including a focus on immersion or content language integration, a student-centered approach, and individualized support. These factors have helped to create a culture of multilingualism in Finland, which has been a key driver of the country's overall success in education.

Meanwhile, the findings of this study highlight the challenges that Finnish teachers face in teaching multilingual pupils in English, as well as the limited support they receive in addressing these challenges. These challenges and the lack of support may have implications for the overall quality of education in Finland, which has been declining in recent years. According to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which assesses the performance of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science, Finland's ranking has been declining since 2006 (Ahonen, 2021). The decline in Finland's education system has been attributed to several factors, including changes in the national curriculum, decreased funding, and a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers (Rautalin, 2018).

The challenges faced by Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils in English may further exacerbate the decline of Finnish education. Multilingualism is becoming increasingly common in Finland, and teachers must be equipped with the necessary skills and support to effectively teach these students (Ruohotie-Lyhty et al., 2010). If teachers are not adequately supported, they may struggle to meet the needs of multilingual pupils, leading to lower academic performance and further decline in the education system. Thus, there is a need for policymakers and education stakeholders to address the challenges faced by Finnish teachers in teaching multilingual pupils in English and provide them with the necessary support to enhance the quality of education in Finland. This may include providing more professional development opportunities for teachers, ensuring that teacher education programs adequately prepare teachers to teach multilingual pupils, and providing additional resources and support to schools with high populations of multilingual pupils. By addressing these challenges and providing support to teachers, Finland can work towards improving the quality of education and ensuring that all students, including multilingual pupils, have equal opportunities for academic success.

5.2 Implications

This study has several implications for teachers, policymakers, and teacher education programs. Firstly, teachers should be aware of the challenges that multilingual students face in learning English and should adopt appropriate strategies to support their learning. These strategies could include scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and the use of students' first languages as a resource in the classroom. Secondly, policymakers should consider the linguistic diversity of their student populations when designing education policies and programs. They should ensure that resources are allocated to support multilingual students and that teachers are adequately trained to work with these students. Finally, teacher education programs should provide pre-service and in-service training to teachers on how to effectively teach multilingual students. This training should include both theoretical and practical components, and should address topics such as language acquisition, cultural sensitivity, and differentiated instruction.

The findings of this study fill the gap in the existing literature on the topic, and contribute to the understanding of the challenges that teachers face in teaching multilingual children and the strategies that they employ to tackle these challenges. The study highlights the importance of acknowledging the first language of multilingual pupils and using it as a resource in the classroom. This finding supports previous research that emphasizes the benefits of promoting the use of the first language in the classroom (García, 2017; Cummins, 2015). This study underscores the need for teachers to use multiple teaching methods and resources to cater to the needs of diverse learners. This finding is in line with previous research that highlights the importance of employing varied and flexible pedagogical approaches in multilingual classrooms (Tedick, Christian, & Fortune, 2011). The study emphasizes the importance of providing adequate support and training for teachers working with multilingual children. This finding adds to previous research that has identified the need for teachers to receive ongoing professional development to effectively teach multilingual pupils. In conclusion, this study makes a significant contribution to the literature on teaching multilingual children in Finland by shedding light on the challenges and strategies of English instructors in this context. The findings of this study have important implications for teacher education and professional development programs and highlight the need for policy makers and educators to recognize the importance of promoting multilingualism as a resource in the classroom.

5.3 Limitations

This research is based on a qualitative study, with small amount of data, few interviewees from few schools and couple of cities, therefore, obviously, there are some limitation. In addition to the small sample size, there are several other limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the participants in this study were selected through convenience sampling, which may have led to a biased sample that is not representative of all teachers who work with multilingual pupils in English in Finland. This could limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or populations. Second, the study relied on self-report data from the participants, which may be subject to social desirability bias or inaccurate recall. The researchers attempted to mitigate this limitation by

ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, as well as by triangulating the data with other sources such as classroom observations and document analysis. Third, the study focused exclusively on teachers' perspectives, and did not include the perspectives of other stakeholders such as students or parents. This may limit the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the findings, as well as the potential implications for practice. Finally, as with any qualitative study, the findings are context-dependent and may not be applicable to other settings or contexts. Therefore, caution should be exercised when applying the results of this study to other contexts or populations.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Study

Based on the limitations of this study, several recommendations can be made for future research on teaching multilingual pupils in English in Finland. First of all, future studies should consider using a larger and more diverse sample, including teachers from a wider range of schools and cities across Finland. This would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of teachers who work with multilingual pupils in English. Then, combining qualitative and quantitative methods could provide a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of teachers and students in multilingual classrooms. Quantitative research could provide more precise and reliable data on the prevalence and severity of specific difficulties that multilingual pupils face, while qualitative research could provide a more in-depth understanding of the social and cultural context of these difficulties. In addition, future studies could focus on specific subgroups of multilingual pupils, such as immigrants or pupils who have lost their mother tongues. This would provide a more targeted and nuanced understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that these subgroups face in the classroom. What's more, future research could also investigate the challenges and opportunities that international teachers face when teaching multilingual pupils in English in Finland. This could provide insights into the ways in which teacher education programs and school systems can better support international teachers and improve the quality of education for multilingual pupils.

5.5 Conclusions and Reflections

In conclusion, this study has provided insights into teachers' perspectives on teaching multilingual pupils in English in Finland. The findings suggest that while teachers recognize the linguistic diversity of their student populations as a challenge, they also see it as an opportunity to promote intercultural understanding and to develop students' language and cognitive abilities. The study has also identified several strategies that teachers use to support multilingual students, such as scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and the use of students' first languages as a resource in the classroom. These strategies can be useful for other teachers who work with multilingual students in English language classrooms. Overall, this study has contributed to our understanding of how teachers can effectively teach multilingual pupils in English, and has provided insights into the challenges and opportunities of teaching in linguistically diverse contexts. It is hoped that the implications of this study will inform the development of policies and programs that support the learning needs of multilingual students and promote their academic success.

In reflecting on this study, it is clear that the experiences and perspectives of teachers play a critical role in understanding the complexities of teaching multilingual pupils in English. Through their insights and reflections, this study provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities that multilingual pupils face in the classroom, and the ways in which teachers can support their language learning and cultural integration. The process of conducting this study has also been a valuable learning experience, highlighting the importance of taking a nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to researching multilingual education. The insights and perspectives gained through this study have deepened our understanding of the experiences of multilingual pupils and their teachers in Finland, and have underscored the importance of ongoing research and professional development in this area. Therefore, this study has provided valuable insights into the experiences of teachers in Finland, and the ways in which they navigate the complex landscape of teaching multilingual pupils in English. By shedding light on these important issues, it is hoped that this study will contribute to ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education for multilingual pupils, both in Finland and beyond.

The findings of this study also highlight the importance of promoting and supporting multilingualism in the Finnish education system. The Finnish government and education authorities should prioritize developing policies and initiatives that enhance teacher training and support for multilingual education, including providing opportunities for professional development and collaboration among teachers. It is also crucial to recognize the value of students' diverse linguistic backgrounds and identities and incorporate them into the classroom. By doing so, Finland can continue to foster a high-quality and equitable education system that prepares students for success in a globalized world.

Overall, this study highlights the challenges that English instructors face when teaching multilingual pupils in Finland and the strategies they employ to support these pupils. The findings also underscore the need for more teacher training and professional development in this area. English instructors noted that they received limited training on teaching multilingual pupils during their formal education. As a result, many teachers expressed a desire for more professional development opportunities to better support multilingual pupils in their classrooms.

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Appendix A

Classroom Observation Form

Instructor: _____ Course _____

Observer: _____ Date and Time _____

1.SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT

(shows good command and knowledge of subject matter; demonstrates breadth and depth)

2.ORGANIZATION

(organizes subject matter; evidences preparation; states clear objectives; emphasizes and summarizes main points, meets class at scheduled time)

3.USING Of LANGUAGES

(main instruction language, code switching, language proficiency of teacher and students)

4.TEACHING METHODS

(uses relevant teaching methods, aids, materials, techniques, and technology; includes variety, balance, imagination, group involvement)

5.PRESENTATION

(classroom environment conducive to learning; teacher-students communication)

6.MANAGEMENT

(How does the teacher engage with students?)

7.SENSITIVITY

(exhibits sensitivity to students' personal culture, language backgrounds, responds appropriately in a non-threatening, pro-active learning environment)

8.ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS

(How does the teacher assist students with academic problems?)

9. CHANLLENGES FOR THE TEACHER

(What kind of challenges? How does the teacher overcome?)

10. SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHER

(What helps the teacher? Is the problem solved? Is the teacher happy?)

Overall impression of teaching effectiveness:

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Can you please tell me something about your educational background?
2. How long have you been working as a teacher? And how long have you been teaching in English?
3. How do you define multilingual pupils? (Who are multilingual in your own understanding?) Are there many of them among your students?
4. What are the first languages among your students? Do you think the linguistic diversity among pupils helps or hinders them to learn English? How?
5. How do you think about multilingual pupils' learning performance in your class?
6. What kind of difficulties do they usually come across?
7. What strategies do you usually use to help them?
8. Are you multilingual yourself? What languages do you speak? What are the pros and cons to be a multilingual as a teacher?
9. Do you think there are more challenges or advantages while teaching multilingual kids in English? And what are the main challenges or advantages for you?
10. What kind of support can you access when you meet challenges in teaching multilingual kids in English?
11. Do you think you've got enough support? If not, what kind of support do you expect?
12. Do you have any suggestions for teacher education or the future teachers who will teach in English in Finnish schools?