

Finnish 6th graders' attitudes towards learning English vs learning Swedish

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In this master's thesis, 6th grade students' attitudes towards learning English and Swedish were studied. The aim was to find out if the students preferred one language to the other and also to see if there is a difference in the attitudes between boys and girls.

The participants in the study were 92 6th grade students (age 11–12), who answered questionnaires about their attitudes to learning English and Swedish. For background information, age and gender of the participants were asked. The participants filled in one questionnaire about their attitudes to learning English and another questionnaire about their attitudes to learning Swedish. The questions in the questionnaires were same regarding both languages and both questionnaires included eight questions. The same students answered the questionnaire twice; first about their attitudes to learning English and then about their attitudes to learning Swedish. The questionnaire had open and closed questions, Likert-scale questions and multiple choice questions. The results were analyzed by using a computer programme SPSS and content analysis. The interest to study this topic was created by the reform of the national core curriculum for basic education. In the new national core curriculum, Swedish is taught already from 6th grade on (age 11–12), instead of 7th grade on (age 13–14). In addition, English was previously taught from 3rd grade on at the latest (age 8–9) but is now taught from 1st grade on (age 6–7).

The results of the study showed that the students' attitudes to learning English were mostly positive, and English was seen as an important and useful language. Students also used and heard English a lot in their free time. There were no major differences in the attitudes to learning English between boys and girls. Furthermore, the results indicated that attitudes to learning Swedish were not as positive. Swedish was not seen as a very useful language, and students mostly saw it being helpful when travelling to Sweden. Some students also argued that they do not need Swedish, because they can use English instead. Boys' attitudes were somewhat less positive to learning Swedish than girls', but the differences were, however, minor.

The results of the study offer information about primary school students' attitudes to language learning. In the future, more studies about the effects of early language teaching are needed in order to find out how early teaching of English and Swedish affects students' attitudes towards those languages.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, Swedish as a second language, language learning attitudes

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Abbreviations

FINEEC	Finnish Education Evaluation Centre
POPS	National Core Curriculum for Basic Education
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
EFL	English as a Foreign Language

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Finnish Summary

1 Introduction

Attitudes towards language learning have been studied vastly in the past (see e.g. Gardner 1985; Baker 1992; Garrett 2010). The interest in researching attitudes can be partly explained by the relationship between successful learning and attitudes (Bartram 2012; Kerkhoff et al. 1988), even though not all research support this relationship (see Gardner 1985; Extra & Vallen 1988). Recently, there has been changes in the Finnish education system, which makes the topic of this study relevant. In 2014, the National Curriculum in Finland was revised, and that has affected, for instance, the language learning in schools (Ministry of Education and Culture 2012). Previously, Swedish has been taught from seventh grade (13 years old) on at the latest, but in the new curriculum Swedish is now taught from the sixth grade on (12 years old). Some of the reasons behind the change are that the school system needs to be more participatory, creative and linguistically richer (Finnish Government 2012). Also, according to the Ministerial working group on educational policy, starting to learn Swedish earlier is said to strengthen bilingualism in schools and society (ibid.).

In addition to starting to teach Swedish earlier, there will also be a change in the starting age of A1 language (language starting in grades 1-6 of basic education), which has most typically been English. Previously, the first foreign language has been taught from the third grade (9 years old) on at the latest, but from the year 2020 on, all first graders will start to learn a foreign language in the spring term of their first year (7 years old) (Ministry of Education and Culture 2018a). The aim of the change is to reduce the inequalities in language teaching caused by the socio-economic and regional backgrounds (ibid.). The aim is also to support the development of language learning skills with early, functional language teaching (ibid.).

The attitude towards English in Finland has previously been shown to be mostly positive (see e.g. Pihko 2007; Leppänen et al. 2009). Leppänen et al. (2009, 160) argue in their National survey of the English language in Finland that English language is important to the Finnish society and business, because without it, international contacts and communication would be in difficulty. Also, because the two official languages of Finland (Finnish and Swedish) are not widely used in international contexts, the importance of other foreign languages, such as English, becomes evident (Piri 2001, 253).

On the contrary, the attitude towards Swedish in Finland has not been as positive, especially among young teens (Tuokko 2009), and according to Leppänen et al.

(2009) Swedish is not seen as important as English in Finland. Large amount of students in Finland also feel that learning Swedish and Swedish lessons are boring (Tuokko 2009). Thus, as some previous studies show that attitudes towards learning a second language become less positive with age (see e.g. Gardner 1985, 44; Leppänen et al. 2009; Baker 1988), beginning to learn Swedish earlier could have a positive effect on the students' attitudes.

These differences in the attitudes and the changes in the curriculum have intrigued my interest to study the attitudes of primary school students towards English and Swedish. Also, much of the previous research (especially concerning Swedish language) has dealt with older students' (13 years and up) attitudes, which is why it is important to study the topic also on a primary school level. The aim of this study is to find out what kinds of attitudes 6th graders have towards learning Swedish and English. I want to know how children that age feel about learning Swedish compared to learning English, and if they prefer one to the other. I am also interested to see if there is a difference between boys and girls. Most previous studies have concentrated on the attitudes to English and Swedish separately, but not compared them. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to compare the attitudes to the languages in question. The data for this study was collected via a questionnaire that had eight questions. The questionnaire included open ended questions, multiple choice questions and Likert-scale type questions. Altogether 92 6th grade students answered the questionnaire during their language lessons at school. The same students answered the questionnaire two times, first about their attitudes to English and then about their attitudes to Swedish. All the participants were 11 to 12 years old and attended a primary school in Southern Finland. The study is a mixed-methods study, with both quantitative and qualitative measures.

Based on previous research (see e.g. Pihko 2007), my hypothesis is that girls are more positive towards learning Swedish and English than boys. Pihko (2007, 87–88) found out in her study that boys' attitudes and motivation to learning English at school are lower than girls'. My other hypothesis, also based on previous research, is that the students prefer learning English to learning Swedish (Leppänen et al. 2009). As mentioned earlier, Leppänen et al. (ibid.) found in their study that Finnish people see English being more important than Swedish.

I will start my thesis by shortly looking at the role of languages in Finland (section 2). Then I will explain the education and language education policies in Finland (section 2.1 and 2.2). After that I will shortly take a look at the attitudes to English and

Swedish in Finland earlier (section 3.1), define the term attitude (section 3.2), and see how it can be classified and which factors affect it (section 3.3). I will then move on to the methodological section, where I will introduce the participants, data and procedures (section 4). Afterwards, I will move on to the results and discussion and lastly conclude the findings (section 5).

2 The role of languages in Finland

Finland has been a bilingual country since 1922. According to the Constitution of Finland (731/1999), Finland has two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. The Language Act (423/2003) specifies the language rights presented in the Constitution. Therefore, as stated by the Language Act, “Everyone has the right to use Finnish or Swedish before a state authority and an authority of a bilingual municipality. Similarly, a bilingual authority must serve the public both in Finnish and in Swedish and provide information in both of these languages” (ibid.). Approximately 90 per cent of the population in Finland speaks Finnish as a native language, and around five per cent Swedish (Official Statistics Finland Population structure: Language, 2018). Also, five per cent of primary and upper secondary students in Finland attend schools where the language of instruction is Swedish (Ministry of Education and Culture 2018b).

English has a strong position in Finland and is the most widely used and studied foreign language in Finland (Vipunen 2018). From 1920s on, urbanization, modernization and internationalization has gradually strengthened the position of English in Finland (Leppänen et al. 2009, 18–19), and it has become a crucial means of communication in the global world (Pietilä & Lintunen 2014, 11). English language has also become a part of many aspects of the Finnish society, whether it be in the working life, travelling or the media that has brought it to the everyday life of the Finnish people (Leppänen et al. 2009, 19; Pietilä & Lintunen 2014, 11). One major aspect that has exposed Finns to English on a daily basis, is the decision to use subtitling rather than dubbing on TV and movies (Leppänen et al. 2009, 20). The different media have unquestionably had an impact on Finns’ attitudes to English, as attitudes are mostly positive and English is not seen as a threat to the Finnish language (Leppänen et al. 2009, 20). English has become one of the most important skills in working life and knowing only one’s first language is usually not enough anymore (Pietilä & Lintunen 2014, 11).

It is good to also take a closer look at the terminology *second language* and *foreign language* from the point of view of linguistics. Swedish in Finland is technically seen as a second language, which is often defined as the other official language of a country, or a language that is widely used in a country (Pietilä & Lintunen 2014, 14). English, on the other hand, is seen as a foreign language, because it does not have an official position as a language in Finland (ibid.). Nonetheless, it could be argued that

English has a greater status in Finland and is used more commonly than Swedish, and could therefore be seen more as a second language than a foreign language (ibid.).

2.1 Education and language education policy in Finland

The Finnish education system is well-known all over the world, and education in Finland is certainly seen as a crucial element for the wellbeing and competitiveness in the society. The Finnish education policy's main goals are to provide equal opportunities to high-quality education and training, internationalization and efficiency (Ministry of Education and Culture 2018c). The two basic principles that the policy is based on, are lifelong learning and free education (ibid.).

Since the two official languages in Finland (Finnish and Swedish) are small languages and not widely spoken in the world, there is also a need for a third language that opens the way for international communication (Leppänen et al. 2009, 20). The Finnish language policy accommodates the EU language policy, where the goal is that all EU citizens would learn at least two EU languages in addition to their mother tongue (European Commission 2017). In Finland children need to study either Finnish or Swedish and a foreign language (e.g. English, German, French) in addition to their mother tongue (POPS 2014, 219). Additionally, the pupils can also choose extra languages (POPS 2014, 243). The Finnish National Agency of Education supports foreign language learning because it improves creative and critical thinking, enhances multicultural and multilingual identities and improves people skills as well as information gathering skills (POPS 2014, 242). The aim of language teaching and learning is to awaken the students' interest in the surrounding society and the diversity of cultures and languages surrounding them (ibid.). It is also important to encourage the students to communicate in authentic environments and appreciate different languages, people and their cultures (ibid.). Furthermore, the aim is to encourage the students to learn languages, despite of their gender (ibid.).

2.2 Curriculum reform in Finland in 2014

Recently, there has been a revision in the national core curriculum for pre-primary and basic education in Finland (POPS 2014). The curriculum was revised in 2014, and a local version of that curriculum was put into action in schools from August 1, 2016. The revision has affected many subjects, but for the purpose of this study, I am concentrating

on the effects that it has on language teaching and learning. According to the Finnish National Agency for Education (2015), the reason behind the revision is “to ensure that the knowledge and skills of Finnish children and youths will remain strong in the future, both nationally and internationally”. The aim of early language teaching is also to develop, add and diversify the language learning in early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and basic education (ibid.). Furthermore, as Finnish people’s Swedish skills have declined over the years, the decision to begin to study Swedish already in primary school, is hoped to have a positive impact on learning. Young students are also known to be more open to study new languages and have more positive attitudes towards them (Inha 2017).

Since the revision is fairly new, not much research about it has been done yet. The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) has conducted a study in 2017, where teacher education programmes qualified to teach Swedish in Finnish schools were evaluated (Rossi et al. 2017). Also a master’s thesis has recently been conducted by Pitkänen (2018). She studied sixth grade students’ relationship to Swedish language and studying Swedish, as well as teachers’ and principals’ experiences about the topic. The study was conducted in eastern Finland and it was a survey-questionnaire (N=153) with some interviews (N=36). She also interviewed six Swedish teachers and three principals. The results of her study show that the sixth graders’ take on studying Swedish is mostly positive or at least neutral. The students did not think that Swedish is especially important for them in eastern Finland, but they also understood that they might need it later in life. The experiences of teachers and principals were also mostly positive, even though they had been a little suspicious at first.

As already mentioned in the introduction, children in Finland have traditionally started their first foreign language studies on third grade at the latest (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019). The children begin to study either a foreign language (typically English) or the second national language, Finnish or Swedish (Association of Finnish Municipalities 2019). Some teachers feel that Swedish lessons beginning already in primary school is a positive change in the new curriculum (Rossi et al. 2017, 165). Language learning is the most efficient when it begins as early as possible and Swedish teaching benefits from earlier instruction, because before puberty and secondary school, students’ attitudes are more positive than later on (ibid.). However, it could be argued that beginning to learn a language one year earlier does not necessarily have a major impact on attitudes. Some students might already have reached puberty on

their last year of primary school, and many other factors can impact their attitudes already from early on. Therefore, the matter is not always as unambiguous.

The changes have also been criticized, since the amount of Swedish lessons has not increased, but one hour has solely been moved from secondary school to primary school. That decreases the amount of Swedish teaching in secondary schools and the lesson distribution becomes fragmented (Rossi et al. 2017, 166). Also, one hour a week is simply not enough for learning a language (ibid.). Some teachers are also concerned about the ability of classroom teachers to teach Swedish instead of subject teachers, and that beginning to learn Swedish earlier can be too much for some students (Rossi et al. 2017, 166-168). Others feel that beginning to learn Swedish earlier might negatively affect the studying of other languages, and it might be too time-consuming for young students (Pitkänen 2018, 96). Furthermore, the classroom teacher students in Finland feel that their Swedish language skills are only fairly or satisfactorily good (Rossi et al. 2017, 106). They also think that classroom teacher training studies do not prepare them to teach Swedish properly (ibid.). However, 58 % of them still feel that they are able to teach Swedish in primary schools because the contents of instruction are simple and do not require much knowledge of the language or didactics (Rossi et al. 2017, 112–113).

Learning foreign languages has become increasingly important in the globalized world and it should be encouraged also in the future. Nevertheless, even though English is the most common language in Finnish primary education, and without a doubt a *lingua franca* (language used by people with different mother tongues), it should also be taken into account that knowing any foreign language is a richness and should be encouraged. It would be important to explain and demonstrate why also Swedish is an important language to learn, and what benefits knowing it could bring to the children in their future.

3 Attitudes in language learning

In this section I will look into the theories concerning attitudes in language learning. I will start by defining the term *attitude*, explain its components and how it can be classified. Then I will introduce other factors affecting language attitudes, such as, age gender and parents' attitudes. Lastly, I will discuss the main implications of previous research on attitudes to Swedish and English in Finland.

3.1 Defining Attitudes

Attitude is not an easy term to define and the definitions vary depending on what is emphasized. Attitude has been a central concept from early on, for instance, in social psychology, and Allport (1935, 810), a pioneer in the field, offers a comprehensive definition of attitude as “A mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related”. A more current definition by Ajzen (2005, 3) states that “An attitude is a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event.” Allport and Ajzen both emphasize the individual’s response to an object or situation, but leave out the effects that social environment has on attitudes. Brown (1994, 168) offers a definition, which also takes into consideration the social environment:

Attitudes, like all aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, develop early in childhood and are the result of parents’ and peers’ attitudes, contact with people who are “different” in any number of ways, and interacting affective factors in the human experience. These attitudes form a part of one’s perception of self, of others, and of the culture in which one is living.
(Brown 1994, 168)

Another definition, which also includes the social aspect comes from Ruohotie (1998, 41) who explains that attitudes are somewhat stable characteristics that describe the learners’ stance on the attitude object (e.g. language). He describes attitudes as internal and stable, and states that they only change slowly (*ibid*). He continues to explain that whether somebody has a positive or negative attitude towards something, depends greatly on previous experiences (*ibid.*).

Perhaps the most suitable definition of attitude for the purpose of this study, comes from Baker (1992, 10–11), who has studied attitudes especially in relation to language learning and bilingualism. According to him, “attitude is a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour” (Baker 1992, 10). He continues to explain that attitudes are something that cannot directly be observed but can be deduced from external behaviour (Baker 1992, 11). He adds that attitudes can also sometimes predict and explain behaviour (ibid.). Baker (1988, 114) also argues that attitudes are fairly stable, and in order to be identified, they need to have some stability. However, he also states that attitudes can be modified by experience (ibid.). Some attitudes are more permanent than others, and attitudes acquired earlier in life seem to stay more permanent than attitudes that are developed later in life (ibid.). This is why it should be important to strengthen the positive attitudes towards learning languages from early on. Baker’s definition suits the purposes of this study because it underlines the fact that experiences can modify and change attitudes, which are often seen fairly stable and rigid. Therefore, it could be argued that the students’ previously negative attitudes could possibly be changed into more positive ones in the future, now that Swedish is taught from earlier on.

It is also important to make a distinction between related terms that might sometimes get confused with attitude, for example, the terms *opinion*, *motivation* and *belief*. Baker (1992, 14), defines opinion as “an overt belief without an affective reaction”, while attitudes, in particular, contain affective reactions. Opinions are also verbalizable whereas attitudes are seen as hidden, expressed by non-verbal and verbal processes (ibid.). The term motivation is explained by Gardner (1985, 10) as a combination of effort and desire to achieve the goal of learning and favourable attitudes towards learning a language. In other words, motivation consists of many factors and, for instance, effort alone does not lead to high motivation (ibid.). Beliefs then again are embedded in cultural and social interactions, but because each individual has their own experiences in life, beliefs are never solely social (Kalaja et al. 2015, 28).

Baker (1988, 112—113) also explains that attitudes are both *input* and *output*. On one hand, a positive attitude, for instance, to English, may prompt the desire to learn that language fluently (input). On the other hand, participating successfully in a language course might result in a positive attitude (output). Many researchers also emphasize the social context in language attitudes, and for instance, Oppenheim (1992, 178) expresses that “attitudes are acquired or modified by absorbing or reacting to the

attitudes of others.” Attitudes are developed through our personal experiences and social environment, such as the media, school and home (Garrett 2010, 22).

Many researchers agree that attitudes consist of three components: *cognitive* (thoughts and beliefs), *affective* (feelings and emotions about the attitude object) and *behavioral* components (tendency to act in a certain way) (see e.g. Baker 1992; Allport 1954; Gardner 1985). The cognitive component might, for instance, mean that a positive attitude towards a language can be a consequence of believing in the importance of that language (Baker 1992, 12). The affective component can, for example, mean a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards a language (Garrett 2010, 23). In other words, a negative affective response to something can cause an overall negative attitude towards that object (Maio & Haddock 2009, 11). Lastly, the behavioral component refers to the tendency to act in a certain way that represents the attitude towards the object or situation (Ajzen 2005, 5). It is good to keep in mind that the behavioral component is not always an indicator of external behavior, as the relationship between attitudes and behavior is neither simple nor straightforward (Baker 1992, 13).

Baker (1988, 113) points out that it is actually difficult to identify and set apart these components from each other. These components can be in concord but they can also be in discord with one another; a person can have a positive attitude towards a language, but still behave negatively (ibid.). Bohner and Wänke (2002, 5) continue to say that the components are not automatically separable from one another and do not necessarily stand for three independent factors. Furthermore, Garrett (2010, 23) also emphasizes that these components should not be equated with attitudes themselves, but they should, instead, be seen more as causes and triggers of attitudes.

3.2 Classification of attitudes

In addition to the components mentioned above, Gardner (1985, 40) argues that attitudes can, in general, be classified into three different dimensions: Dimension of *specificity/generality*, dimension of *relevance* and dimension of *educational/social attitudes*. The first dimension shows how specific or general an attitude toward something is. An attitude could be very specific, for instance attitude towards Swedish language learning, or more general, like attitude towards all foreign languages (ibid). However, the specificity/generality dimension is not always that simple, as there are many other aspects that can also affect individual’s attitudes. For instance, motivation also affects attitudes and therefore, some might like studying Swedish, because they feel that it might help

them get a job. Others, on the other hand, are motivated to learn it, because they want to identify with the Swedish language speakers (ibid.). Gardner (2010, 9) defines motivation in second language learning as a combination of three factors; the aspiration to learn a language, the attitudes to learning the language and the effort that is actually made to learn the language.

The second dimension indicates how attitudes are relevant to second language achievement (Gardner 1985, 41). Not all attitudes are equally relevant, and some attitudes affect second language learning more than others (ibid.). Having a positive attitude towards learning Swedish or feeling negatively about English lessons would be more relevant to learning those languages than having a positive attitude towards all foreign languages in general. Even though there is a common understanding that there is a correlation between attitudes and foreign language achievement, it is not always accurate. Gardner (1985, 41) states that even if a student has a positive attitude toward a language, s/he might not have good learning results, if for instance, s/he does not like the teacher, and therefore does not make the effort to study (ibid.).

The last dimension involves educational and social attitudes. Educational attitudes mean attitudes towards, for example, the teacher, course and learning the language (Gardner 1985, 41–42). In other words, they refer to the educational aspects of second language learning. Social attitudes, on the other hand, refer to attitudes towards different social groups, emphasizing the cultural aspects of second language learning (Gardner 1985, ibid.).

Gardner and Lambert (1959, 267) also introduce the *orientation index*, which classifies people, depending on the reasons why they study languages, to either being *instrumentally* (pragmatic motives) or *integratively* (social and interpersonal motives) oriented. These orientations are connected to both attitude and motivation, and they can all impact one another and are therefore sometimes difficult to classify and distinguish. Baker (1992, 31–32) explains that the classification of orientation is based on the reasons why a person believes a language is significant. An instrumental orientation to language is seen, for the most part, as self-oriented and individualistic (ibid.). It indicates practical motives and means that an individual wants some type of recognition or advantage from the attitude object (e.g. learning a specific language). It can mean a desire for personal success, status, getting social acceptance or economic benefits. Getting a good job, for instance, would be an instrumental motive to study a language (Gardner 1982, 143).

On the contrary, an integrative orientation to language learning is mainly interpersonal and social, and it is portrayed by positive attitudes to the target language community (Cook & Singleton 2014, 95). An integrative orientation refers to “the desire to be like representative member of the other language community” (Gardner & Lambert 1972, 14). It refers to the individual’s desire to connect and identify with the members of the other language group and its culture (Baker 1992, 32). For instance, wanting to be identified with other language speakers or wanting to have friendships within other language speaker communities would be examples of integrative orientation (ibid.).

Some researchers believe that students who are integratively orientated are usually more proficient in the second language that they want to learn than students who are instrumentally orientated (Gardner 1982, 134–135). However, that is not always the case, as there is a distinction between orientation and motivation that needs to be considered. As mentioned before, (Gardner 1985, 54) orientation refers to the reasons why somebody wants to, for example, learn a language. As for motivation, it refers to three different characteristics that might not in every case relate to orientations. The characteristics are attitudes toward learning a language, desire to learn a language and motivational intensity. Therefore, some people might be integratively oriented but have no motivation, hence they will not learn the new language as well. At the same time, other people might be instrumentally oriented and have high motivation, which could then lead to good results (ibid). To put it briefly, a positive attitude towards a language does not necessarily alone lead to good results, if there is no motivation to act upon it (Cook & Singleton 2014, 101). In addition, integrative and instrumental orientations are not automatically opposites or alternatives. Both instrumental and integrative orientations can appear at the same time, and the importance of them for a person may change from time to time (Baker 1992, 34–35). Context also has an impact on the interpretation of items, and the same item might be interpreted differently depending on the context (ibid.). Moreover, different people can also interpret the same item in different kinds of ways. For example, learning a language might represent an integrative attitude for some, but an instrumental attitude for others (ibid.).

3.3 Other features of learner attitudes

There are many other features that can affect attitudes, for instance, the age of the learner, gender and parents’ attitudes. Even though I am not researching all of these aspects in my

thesis, I will take a look at them to the extent that is relevant from the point of view of attitudes.

3.3.1 Age

Previous studies have shown that attitudes to language learning seem to be more positive with young learners. Leppänen et al.'s study (2009) supports this view, as the majority (80 percent) of the younger participants (15–24 years old) in the study felt that English is at least *fairly relevant* in their lives (Leppänen et al. 2009, 49). Correspondingly, about 60 percent of the older participants (45 or older) felt that English *is not very relevant or not relevant* at all to them (ibid.). These differences in the attitudes could, however, be explained by the difference in the education system of the generations, as the older generation has not had as much teaching of English as the younger generation (Leppänen et al. 2009, 148–149). Teaching has also probably been different previously, when the older generations went to school, and access to internet and other media in English has been more limited.

Also, a study about Turkish students' attitudes to learning English showed that younger students had somewhat more positive attitudes than older ones (Arda & Doyran 2017, 190–191). The study analysed 25 3rd (ages 8-10) and 25 7th (age 13) graders' attitudes to learning English. The study was conducted by interviews, questionnaires and opinion bubbles. Opinion bubbles in this study meant blank boxes at the end of the questionnaire that had happy, slightly happy or sad faces. The students then freely wrote their opinions in to the "bubble" that best represented their attitudes. The main findings of the study revealed that although the overall attitudes within both groups towards learning English were positive, the 3rd graders were more enthusiastic and had more motivation to learn English.

Some researchers argue that age is not the fundamental reason for attitude change, but more "an 'indicator' or 'holding' variable that sums up movement over time, and does not reveal the underlying reasons for that movement" (Baker 1992, 42). Furthermore, although some of the age related changes in attitudes might be due to psychological changes (e.g. maturation), they are more likely to result from environmental experiences and social interactions (Baker 1992, 106). Others again, argue that the reasons for attitude change with age might be simple maturation or that education causes people to look at issues more objectively (Gardner 1985, 44). Also, older people

tend to know more about the language and have bigger variation in failure and success, which then, might influence their attitude (ibid.).

Moreover, Heining-Boynton and Haitema (2007) also found that attitudes to language learning became more negative as the students got older. They studied American elementary school students' attitudes to foreign languages over a period of ten years. The number of pupils participating in the study ranged from 22,549 to 52,227 (for a four-year period), and the pupils were studying either French or Spanish as a foreign language. The study was a quantitative survey study that was followed up with a qualitative study with structured interviews. The participants in the follow-up study were 13 students that had attended the previous part of the study ten years ago. In the study they found out that in four years, the students liking of the foreign language had declined 17 % (Heining-Boynton & Haitema 2007, 155). Furthermore, boys started learning foreign languages with more negative attitudes and remained more negative over time, whereas girls started with more positive attitudes, which then declined over time (Heining-Boynton & Haitema 2007, 160). Boys' negative attitudes were explained with the fact that boys did not think that they would need any other language besides English outside the school environment (Heining-Boynton & Haitema 2007, 160). Therefore, it could be argued that since the students mother tongue was English and they lived in an English speaking country, they did not see a need for studying and learning a foreign language. In addition, the students probably knew that they would also manage with English if they travelled to another country.

As mentioned earlier, the younger generation does not see Swedish as important as the older generation and its position in the Finnish society is not self-evident to the Finnish youth anymore (Pitkänen & Westinen 2017, 40). One reason for the change in attitudes might be the fact that Swedish is not a compulsory subject in the matriculation examination anymore (ibid.). For that reason many students, especially boys, no longer want to take the Swedish test in the matriculation examination. That again has a negative effect on attitudes, because less contact with Swedish affects the attitudes negatively (ibid.).

3.3.2 Gender

Another feature of learner attitudes, although controversial, is gender. A number of previous studies suggest that girls would have more positive attitudes to foreign language learning than boys (see e.g. Pihko 2007; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh 2006; Heining-

Boynton & Haitema 2007; Tuokko 2009). As mentioned earlier, Pihko (2007, 87) found out that especially boys have problems with attitude and motivation when it comes to learning English. Pihko (2007) studied the affective outcomes of foreign language teaching in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. The participants in the study were 390 Finnish comprehensive school students (aged c. 15 years) and they answered a Likert-scale questionnaire, which also included some open-ended questions (Pihko 2007). The results showed that even though the overall attitude to studying languages among Finnish comprehensive school students is fairly positive, especially boys had low motivation and were more unenthusiastic towards studying English than girls (Pihko 2007, 122).

Tuokko (2009, 34-35) found out similar results; boys' attitudes in secondary school were more negative in every aspect in the study; managing, liking and assessing the usefulness of Swedish (*ibid.*). Also, girls who were planning to go to upper secondary school, had somewhat positive attitudes to Swedish and thought that it is a useful subject, but boys planning to go to upper secondary school did not have positive attitudes to Swedish and did not think it is a useful language to learn (Tuokko 2009, 35). Girls planning to go to vocational school thought knowing Swedish is somewhat useful, but they did not like the language or studying it (*ibid.*). Boys' going to vocational school did not have positive attitudes to Swedish and did not think that it is useful at all (*ibid.*).

The reasons for the differences are, however, debatable. Baker (1992, 42) argues that the difference would not be maturational or biological, but would have more to do with the socio-cultural behaviour of the genders and the individual differences that may exist between boys and girls. Some also argue that language learning is still seen as a "girls' subject", which is why girls would have more positive attitudes towards it (Heinzmann 2013, 192). Furthermore, Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh (2006, 56) found out that girls tend to score higher in many language related exercises, which could then again have a positive impact on their attitudes to languages in general.

3.3.3 Parents' attitudes

For the purpose of this study, the effect of the parents' attitudes are not really considered. However, it is a major factor in attitude research, and is therefore briefly explained here. There is a common view among researchers that children's attitudes are influenced by their parents' attitudes (see e.g. Baker 1992; Gardner 1985; Bartram 2010). Young (1994, 85—86) argues that parents can influence the child's attitude to foreign language learning

by helping with homework, encouraging the child to read in the foreign language, discussing the importance of learning another language et cetera. Gardner (1985, 109—110) agrees with the view and adds that parental influence on language attitudes can be categorized into an *active* or *passive* role. The active role can be further categorized as *negative* or *positive* (ibid.). A positive active role means that the parent shows interest in the child's language learning, encourages the child and rewards the child if they are successful (ibid.). A negative active role refers to discouraging behaviour, like openly belittling the importance of learning another language, and favoring other school subjects over languages (ibid.). In short, active role refers to how the parents interact with their child when it comes to language learning (Gardner 1985, 131). In general, it could be argued that positive support to learning in any area would leave to higher levels of achievement (Bartram 2006, 213). The passive role, on the other hand, has to do with the parents' attitudes towards the second language community (Gardner 1985, 110). For example, a parent's positive attitude to English/Swedish speakers would reinforce the child's learning of that language, while a negative attitude to those languages would diminish it (Gardner 1985, 110).

Furthermore, Hosseinpour, Sherkatolabbasi & Yarahmadi (2015, 179-180) found in their study conducted via a questionnaire to 140 Iranian parents that the parents' positive attitudes to and high level of involvement in their children's English language programs led for better achievement and learning results in the programs. A Master's thesis about the decisions to study additional languages in primary schools from the perspective of the parents (Tabell 2019), shows that parents have an influence when deciding whether to study optional languages in school or not. The parents' attitudes and thoughts about foreign language learning influenced the children's decisions to take on optional languages (Tabell 2019, 127). Some parents for instance, thought that learning other languages than English would be too difficult or not relevant to the children, and should therefore not be learned (ibid.).

It is, however, good to keep in mind that even if the children's attitudes are similar to their parents', it might also be a combination of friends', neighbors' and school environment's attitudes rather than just a result of the parents' (Baker 1992, 109). It is also possible that children have completely opposite attitudes to their parents, even though it is more common that the attitudes are similar (ibid.). In the end, attitudes are complex constructs that are affected by educational, social and individual factors which can often be difficult to separate from one another (Bartram 2010, 220).

3.4 Attitudes to English and Swedish in Finland

Attitudes towards English in Finland have been studied before, for example, in a large national study by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) in 2018. The study included 4,633 students (2,132 girls and 2,101 boys) from 132 schools and focused on students who had just started grade 7 (age 13). The study focused on evaluating the learning outcomes of English language in the A syllabus. The learning outcomes included students' language proficiency, language learning skills, students' opinions on their skills and the usefulness of English and liking English. The results of the study showed that most of the students (82 %) think that English is useful for them in their everyday life as well as in working life and studies (Härmälä et al. 2019, 94). The study also showed that most of the students had liked studying English already in primary school and that girls found English somewhat more useful than boys (Härmälä et al. 2019, 94–95). Another finding was that students who did not like studying English, also felt that they were not good at it (Härmälä et al. 2019, 99). Pihko's study (2007) also had similar results. The students' attitudes to learning English in Content and Language Integrated Learning classrooms (CLIL) and in English as a Foreign Language classrooms (EFL) were clearly positive, and there were only 2–3 percent of students who did not care for the English language (ibid.).

Attitudes to the Swedish language are more controversial and public discussion about obligatory Swedish has been quite heated over the years. Some say that learning Swedish is important for the purpose of maintaining relationships between Nordic countries, but others feel that it prevents people from learning other more useful languages and is mostly a relic from history and not relevant in the present day (Saukkonen 2011). Among secondary school students the interest towards Swedish language has also diminished over the years, which might be a consequence of the strong position of English and the fact that Swedish is not a compulsory subject in the matriculation examination anymore (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2012; Pitkänen & Westinen 2017, 42-43). The Finnish National Board of Education (Tuokko 2009) studied the learning outcomes in Swedish in the final 9th grade of compulsory basic education. The study consisted of receptive language skills and writing test ($N=5,306$) as well as speaking test ($N=795$), and the results showed that 47 % of students perceived Swedish and Swedish lessons boring or quite boring (Tuokko 2009, 33). In addition, 55 % of the students said that Swedish is their least favorite subject (Tuokko 2009, 15). The results of the study support my hypothesis of Swedish being less important to students in

Finland than English, but it would be also important to know more about the reasoning behind the attitudes. However, as Tuokko's study has been done over ten years ago, more up-to-date information is needed. Furthermore, it will be interesting to see, whether the attitudes to Swedish become more positive in the future now that Swedish starts earlier or if it has any effect at all.

According to a study about Finnish adults' attitudes to Swedish speakers and the Swedish language (Pitkänen and Westinen 2017, 13), the majority (62 %) thinks that Swedish is an integral part of the Finnish society, and it would be unfortunate if the language and culture disappeared from Finland. The study was a questionnaire survey (N= 3, 153) and all of the participants were Finnish as a mother tongue speaking adults (under 80 year-olds (Pitkänen & Westinen 2017, 6). The results of the study show that over the years the attitudes to Swedish have stayed quite stable, but some change has taken place (Pitkänen & Westinen 2017, 13). The study also shows that younger people (under 30 years old) do not see Swedish as important as older people (Pitkänen & Westinen 2017, 14), and 50 % of the Finnish speakers do not think that they have benefitted from the Swedish language and are resisting the compulsory learning of Swedish (Pitkänen & Westinen 2017, 39). Living environment and the ability to speak Swedish also seems to have a significant impact on the attitudes of people; Finnish people who have friends or work contacts who speak Swedish, have a more positive attitude to Swedish language than people who do not have any contact with Swedish language speakers (Pitkänen & Westinen 2017, 14). Negative attitudes to Swedish are clearly connected to little or no connection at all with Swedish speakers and that makes it difficult for Finnish speakers to identify with the Swedish speakers in Finland (Pitkänen & Westinen 2017, 40–41).

From the previous studies it can be seen that the attitudes to Swedish and English differ quite much in Finland. Even though Swedish is the other official language in Finland, it is not present in the everyday lives of the Finnish speaking Finns. Therefore, the attitudes towards it seem to be not as positive as attitudes to English. Swedish can remain quite distant to Finns, as it is not much used in TV shows, movies or music in Finland and it is often only heard at school. On the contrary, as stated previously, English is commonly heard in TV, movies and music, and it is also often taught from earlier on in schools than Swedish. All these factors probably have an impact on the differing attitudes towards those languages.

4 The present study

In this section, I will look at the methodology. I will start by explaining the aim of the study and present my research questions. Then I will take a brief look at attitude measuring methods in general and explain which method I am using myself. Finally, I will explain my data collection method and introduce the participants.

The aim of the study was to find out what types of attitudes sixth grade students have towards learning English and Swedish. The purpose was to compare both language groups, Swedish and English, as well as genders. As Swedish has only previously been taught from 6th grade on (from 2016 onwards), not much research about it has been conducted yet. Also, previous studies have concentrated more on studying the attitudes to Swedish and English separately, instead of comparing the attitudes. Thus, it is important to study the topic more. The first hypothesis was that the students would prefer studying English to Swedish. As mentioned earlier, previous research supports this hypothesis (see e.g. Härmälä, Hildén & Leontjev 2016; Vipunen 2018). Another hypothesis was that girls' attitudes would be more positive than boys' attitudes. That is also supported by previous research.

I was interested in finding out whether my hypotheses about attitudes to English being more favourable than attitudes to Swedish and girls' attitudes being more positive than boys' held true. The present study is a mixed-methods study, since both quantitative and qualitative data was used in order to get profound answers to the research questions. The research questions for the study are:

- 1) What kinds of attitudes do the students have towards learning English and Swedish?
- 2) What types of reasons do the students give for their attitudes?
- 3) What kinds of differences are there in the attitudes of boys and girls?

The first research question (Q1) aims to find out what are the overall attitudes of the students towards English and Swedish. Are the attitudes positive, negative, neutral or something else? It is important to see which types of attitudes the students have, in order to draw conclusions about the status of foreign languages in the students' lives. The second research question (Q2) aims to specify the reasons behind the attitudes. Why do they prefer one language to another, why they might not like studying languages or why is language learning important to them? The reasons behind the attitudes are important

because they might be helpful in the future when teaching languages. For instance, reasons for why Swedish is generally a less popular language compared to English, might help find out what could be done in order to make Swedish more appealing to students. Finally, the third research question (Q3) concentrates on the attitudes of the genders. Q3 seeks to find out whether there are differences between girls' and boys' attitudes to learning Swedish and English and if so, what the differences are.

4.1 Data collection method

Attitudes can be measured by using many alternative methods, directly or indirectly. Direct measures include, for example, self-report questionnaires, Likert-scaling, interviews etc. (Maio and Haddock 2010, 9). Direct methods have been used widely in researching attitudes over the years and proved to be useful, but nonetheless, they also have limitations. Sometimes people might not be aware of their underlying attitudes, which can cause problems in the reliability of the results (Maio and Haddock 2010, 11), and people might be affected by the perceived purpose of the research or the researcher (Baker 1992, 19). One issue is also the *halo effect*: the respondent may answer in a way that presents them in a favourable, more positive way (Baker 1992, 19). The represented attitudes might not be what the respondent actually thinks about the matter but more about what is politically or socially seen as acceptable (ibid.). Indirect measures of attitudes, such as the implicit association test and evaluative priming, include using computer programs to obtain, for instance, response latencies (Maio and Haddock 2010, 11-16). For the purpose of this study, I am using direct measures because they are the best way to collect large amount of data from many participants in a convenient and fast way.

Especially quantitative research has been used in language attitude research, since large amount of data is possible to be managed with it, and the results should be generalizable, easily analyzed and controlled. Furthermore, qualitative aspects have also been incorporated to attitude research by using, for example, open-ended questions and interviews. With qualitative aspects it is possible to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena. Quantitative and qualitative methods are not seen as opposites but rather as complimentary (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2015, 136).

In the present study, I conducted a mixed-methods study by using a questionnaire. A mixed methods study includes both quantitative and qualitative ways of measuring attitudes. A mixed-method study is suitable here because in addition to numeric data, reasonings for the results can be given. A questionnaire was chosen because

I wanted to have an overall view of the attitudes towards the two languages, and the aim was to compare the differences in the attitudes between the two languages, English and Swedish. Questionnaires are a good way to include many participants in a fairly convenient way and also to ask many questions at the same time (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010, 6). They can also be used successfully in many different situations, with different types of people (ibid.). Questionnaires are also convenient because once they are done they save time and efforts and can be sent out to almost as many people as possible (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2015, 195). The results are also usually easy to analyze with computer programmes (ibid.). Nevertheless, there are also some downsides to using questionnaires. The results can remain superficial, and it is not possible to be sure how seriously the participants have answered the questions or how well the given answers (e.g. in multiple choice questions) suit the participants' real opinions (ibid.). Therefore, it needs to be made sure that the questions are simple and straightforward so that everyone will be able to understand them (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010, 7). The participants can also leave out answers either by mistake or on purpose and it is difficult for the researcher to correct those mistakes afterwards (ibid.).

All of the students who participated in the study, filled in the questionnaire twice, once for questions about English and once for Swedish. The questions were the same in both questionnaires. The English one was filled in during their English lesson and Swedish one during their Swedish lesson. The students had about 20 minutes to answer the questions. The questionnaire was in Finnish, to make sure that all the participants would understand the questions and be able to answer them properly (see Appendix 3). I have translated the questionnaires into English for the purpose of discussing them in this study. The data was collected in May 2019 in a primary school in southern Finland during their English and Swedish lessons. Permission to conduct the study was asked from the municipal manager, the school principal, teachers and the students' parents. The questionnaire was sent to the teachers, who then printed them and handed them out for the students to fill in. All of the quantitative data from the questionnaire has been transformed into a computer analysing programme *IBM SPSS version 25* (SPSS) for easier data analysis.

4.2 The questionnaire and research participants

The questionnaire consisted of eight questions with three different types of questions: Likert-scale (5-point scale), open-ended questions and multiple choice questions. I chose

to use different types of questions, so that in addition to closed questions, the students would also have the option to answer freely, without any suggestions from the researcher.

Different types of questions have different advantages and disadvantages. Open-ended questions are good for free and spontaneous answers but they can be time-consuming, slow to process and require more effort from the participants (Oppenheim 1992, 115). Closed questions, on the other hand, are easy to process and fast to fill in as the participants do not have to write much. They are also good for making group comparisons and testing specific hypotheses (ibid.). However, they do not allow spontaneous responses and the answer options might be bias (ibid.).

The questionnaire for this research had three Likert-scale questions (question 1, 2 and 5. See Appendix 1), where the participants answered to statements depending on the degree that they either agreed or disagreed with the statement. The Likert-scale questions also had specifying *why* questions, where the participants were able to explain their answers freely. The questionnaire also included three qualitative open-ended questions (questions 3, 4 and 7. See Appendix 1), in order to get more extensive responses from the participants, and finally two questions (questions 6 and 8) with multiple answer options (see Appendix 1). The subject matter in the questions was about the importance of the two languages, whether the students like the languages, most important reasons for studying the languages, whether learning the languages is easy and if they have used those languages outside the school environment. The questionnaire was based on a previous study by Leppänen et al. (2009), to be sure that the questions were suitable for studying attitudes.

Altogether, the study included 92 participants, of which 38 were girls, 50 boys and 4 participants did not want to define their gender. Only age and gender were asked in the background information about the students, which made the students stay anonymous throughout the whole study. All participants attended sixth grade in a primary school in southern Finland, were either 11 or 12 years old and had begun to study Swedish in August 2018 and English on 3rd grade in 2015. The school was chosen because I myself have attended the same school, which is why it was easy to ask for permission to conduct a study there. All sixth graders in the school the day of the data collection (the school had four sixth grades) answered the questionnaire, so that the amount of participants would be as high as possible. The same students answered the questionnaire twice; once during English lesson and once during Swedish lesson. The questions in the questionnaires were same, but they needed to answer based on the language in question. The first

questionnaire had questions about attitudes to English and the second questionnaire about attitudes to Swedish. However, four participants' answers had to be eliminated because they had not answered most questions. Hence, the final number of students attending the study was 88.

The material collected from the questionnaires was converted into an SPSS file. The data was analyzed by quantitative and qualitative measures. First, Pearson's Chi-Square tests were conducted to see whether the results were statistically significant or not. Chi-Square tests are often used with categorical data, like gender, age groups and native language (Mackey & Gass 2005, 278). In addition, I used crosstabulation in order to find out correlations between the language groups and genders. Crosstabulation is often used when information about the relationships between variables is needed. According to the Chi-Square tests the results in questions 1,2,5 and 7 were statistically significant (p -value < 0.05) when comparing the two languages, Swedish and English. However, when comparing the genders, the results were not statistically significant and cannot therefore be generalized.

For the qualitative questions, content analysis was used. Content analysis is a method that can be used to analyze qualitative data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 91). It is used to describe qualitative data (e.g. verbal, written) in a quantitative and objective way (Crano, Lac & Brewer 2015, 303). In content analysis, the researcher systematically classifies the data according to, for instance, a theme or different characteristics that are meaningful for the purposes of the study (ibid.). Content analysis can, however, be very time-consuming and people might categorize and interpret data differently (Weber 1990, 7).

In the present study, I have used content analysis by categorizing the students' answers and then comparing the results between the language groups. First, I read through the answers once and divided the answers to negative and positive ones. Altogether, the students had 22 different positive and 17 negative answers to why they liked or disliked learning English, and 13 positive and 15 negative ones about learning Swedish. After that I went through the answers again and calculated how many times similar answers occurred in the students' answers. For the English results, I ended up with six different categories for positive answers and four for negative ones. For the Swedish ones, there were three different categories for positive and four for negatives ones. From those categories, I then selected the three that had got the most answers. All of the open-ended questions were analyzed similarly.

5 Students' attitudes towards studying English and Swedish

In this section, I will discuss the results of the study. First, I will discuss the students' opinions about studying English and Swedish and see how they describe those languages (questions 1 and 4). Then I will move on to discuss the importance of studying English and Swedish (questions 2 and 3) and the level of difficulty of the languages and whether or not the students think that they are needed in Finland (questions 5 and 7). Lastly, I will discuss the students' use of English and Swedish outside the school environment and how they use the languages in their free time activities (questions 6 and 8).

5.1 Liking of Swedish and English

I will start by discussing the students' personal opinions about liking to study English and Swedish and also the reasons for why they like or dislike it and how they would describe the languages in question. As can be seen in Figure 1, 27.3% of students answered that they like studying English *very much*, whereas only 6.8% of students gave a similar answer regarding Swedish. *Quite much* got the highest amount of answers regarding English as over half of the students (51.5%) chose that option. From the Swedish results, *not very much* was the most frequently chosen option (31.8%).

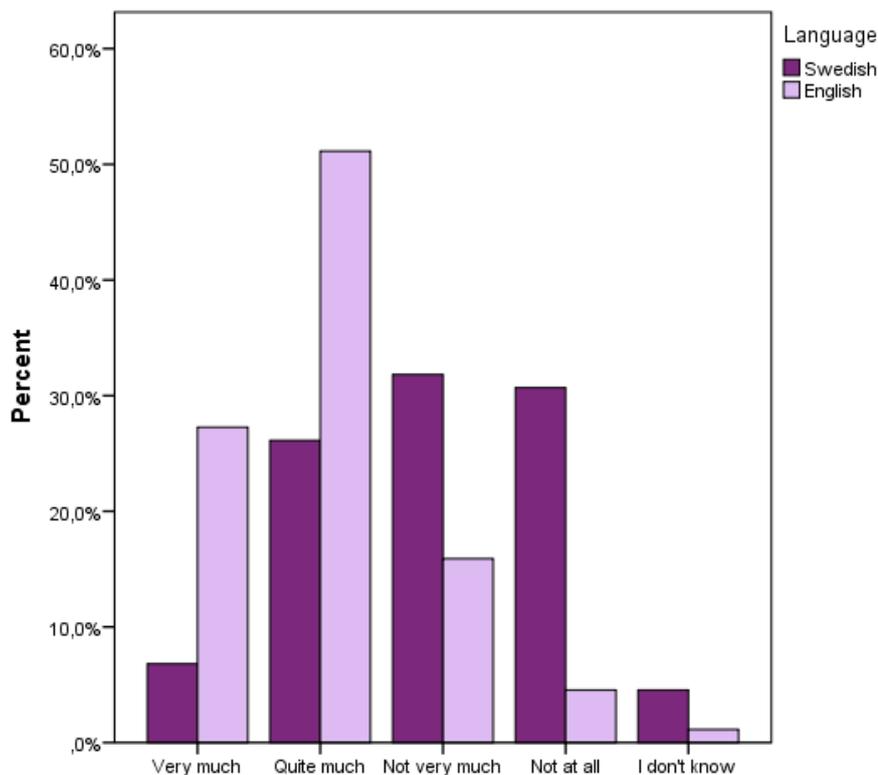


Figure 1 Responses to Q1 "Do you like studying Swedish or English?" (N=88)

As already mentioned earlier, it has been acknowledged that boys' tend to have more negative attitudes to language learning than girls'. Similarly in this study, boys liked studying Swedish less than girls, however, the differences were minor and not statistically significant here. The majority of boys answered that they do not like studying Swedish *at all* (37.7%) or they *do not like it much* (35.8%) (see Appendix 1). Only 1.2% liked it very much. Fifth of the girls did not like studying Swedish at all, 34.3% liked it quite much and 14.3% liked it very much. The students' opinions about liking to study English were very similar with both genders and the results showed nearly no differences (see Appendix 5). Both genders liked studying English mostly *quite much* or *very much*.

The question about liking the language also included a *why*- question, where the students needed to elaborate why they liked or disliked English or Swedish. The answers were divided into positive and negative ones, and I will present the three most frequent ones that appeared on the students' answers. The students explained that they like studying Swedish, because it is *enjoyable* (16/88 students), *easy* (15/88 students) and because *they like to learn new languages* (5/88 students). The students who answered that they do not like studying Swedish much, explained that it is *boring* (16/88 students), *difficult* (15/88 students) and *not needed much anywhere* (12/88 students). Some students also felt that Swedish is hard for them and contains many grammar rules and difficult words which is why they do not like it. Also, they thought that one could easily use English instead of Swedish. For instance, Koivunen & Koskela (2018, 65) found similar results in their study about sixth and ninth graders' attitudes and motivation to studying Swedish. In the results the usefulness of Swedish and English being enough for them was also emphasized.

The three most common reasons for why the students liked studying English were that it is *nice* and *fun* (22/88 students), *useful* in many places and in the future as an adult (17/88 students) and *easy* (7/88 students). The students also said, for instance, that they like studying English because it is spoken almost everywhere and because it is nice to be able to speak other languages.

(1) *English is interesting and important, and I am also pretty good at it, which makes studying it more fun.*

[Englanti on mielenkiintoista ja tärkeää ja olen aika hyvä siinä minkä takia se on hauskeempaa.] (P8)

However, not everyone liked studying English. Some students said that learning English is *boring* (11/88 students), *difficult* (5/88 students) and that they are *not good at it* (5/88 students). Some students also said that English is sometimes too easy for them and some felt that they get too much homework. I would argue that boredom during lessons could, with some students, be a result of exercises being too easy for them, as especially some students already have very good English skills. Keeping the skillful students busy and at the same time giving enough attention to the weaker ones can, however, be a difficult task.

(2) *I don't like studying English, because I'm so bad at it and I don't understand anything.*

[En tykkää enkun opiskelusta, koska oon huono siinä enkä ymmärrä mitään.] (P20)

5.2 Describing English and Swedish

The students were asked to describe Swedish and English language with three adjectives to see which types of associations they have about the languages. The students had altogether 19 different positive and 23 different negative adjectives to describe the Swedish language. Positive adjectives that they used the most were; *easy* (16/88 students), *enjoyable/fun* (15/88 students) and *important/useful* (7/88 students). *Boring* was the most used negative adjective as 52 students described Swedish with that. The students also described Swedish as *difficult* (21/88 students) and *useless* (20/88).

Students used 22 different positive adjectives to describe English, and the three most frequent ones were *important* (47/88 students), *enjoyable* (30/88 students) and *easy* (20/88 students). Also, *interesting*, *fun* and *useful* got many answers. In addition, students had 11 negative adjectives to describe English. Similar to the Swedish results, *boring* was the most frequent answer when describing English (23/88 students). Additionally, the students described English as *difficult* (12/88 students) and *weird* (8/88 students). Other adjectives were, for instance, *annoying*, *complicated* and *stupid*. As can be seen, Swedish was described with more negative and less positive adjectives than English. The results also suggest that from early on, the students seem to find learning Swedish less enjoyable than learning English. That again, might be a consequence of the general attitudes to Swedish and the sometimes quite negative public conversations about it which occur especially in media.

5.3 The importance of studying Swedish and English

The perceived importance of a language has been studied to have an effect on the attitudes towards that language (Heinzmann 2013, 182–183; Baker 1992, 10), and the results of the present study support these claims. As Figure 2 shows, the students preferred English over Swedish, as 68.2% of the students answered that they think studying English is *very important*, but only 3.4% of the students thought the same about Swedish. None of the students answered that studying English would not be important at all, however, 23.9% thought that studying Swedish would not be important at all. Majority of the students (38.6%) answered that studying Swedish is not very important to them.

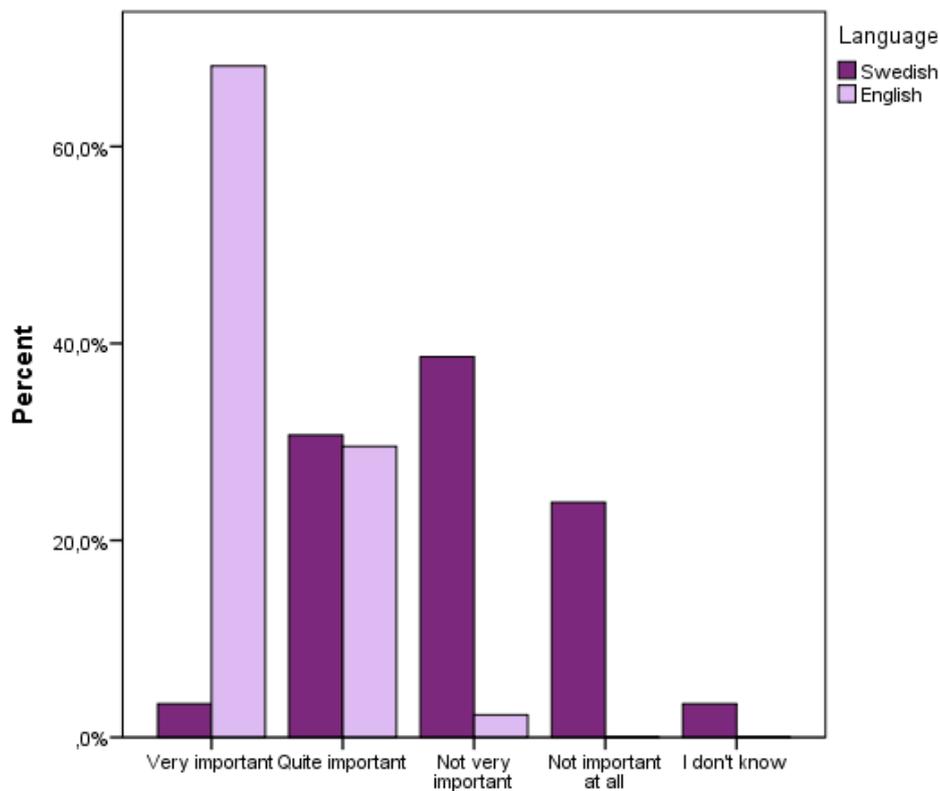


Figure 2 Responses to Q2 “How important is studying Swedish or English?”

In order to get a deeper understanding of the importance of the two languages here, students were also asked to explain what the main reasons to study Swedish and English are. When it came to Swedish, the students were quite unanimous, as almost half (40/88) of them answered that bilingualism is the most important reason to study Swedish. Swedish-speaking Finns and the overall amount of Swedish speakers in Finland was the second most common reason why the students thought that it is important

to learn Swedish (10/88). Travelling to Sweden and Sweden being Finland's neighboring country got the third most answers (8/88). Furthermore, the students pointed out that you might need Swedish in some jobs, especially if you work in the Swedish speaking areas of Finland like Vaasa and Porvoo, or if you want to move to Sweden. Also, some wanted to get good grades and keep their parents satisfied by learning Swedish, which shows that they are more instrumentally than integratively oriented. In addition, 12 students also answered that there are no good reasons to study Swedish. It would, therefore, be important to promote the benefits that knowing Swedish could have for the students. Nowadays, almost everyone can speak English and therefore, knowing other languages can be a major advantage and a way to stand out.

It seems that the students have realized the importance of Swedish from the point of view of bilingualism in Finland. However, the contact with Swedish-speaking Finns is quite limited and does not really activate the students to study Swedish. The closeness of Sweden to Finland also seems to positively affect the students' attitudes to learning Swedish. However, the usefulness of Swedish also in other places (e.g. jobs) should be more emphasized for the students, in order for them to see its importance more clearly.

When asked about the most important reasons to study English, the fact that English is spoken in many places/countries, was the most frequent answer (36/88). Travelling was the second most frequent answer (30/88), and students also felt that English might be needed in many jobs (10/88). Contrary to the Swedish results for this question, none of the students answered that there would be no valid reasons to study English or that one does not need English in life. It seems that the students have acquired English as an integral part of their lives and its usefulness and presence in many places has made learning it important for the students.

(3) If you want to travel to another country, you need to know other languages so that you can communicate with others.

[Jos vaikka haluaa matkustaa toiseen maahan niin täytyy osata muita kieliä että voi puhua muiden kanssa]. (P=24)

5.4 The easiness of Swedish and English and the need for those languages in Finland

English has been seen as quite an easy subject previously, and for example Härmälä et al. (2019, 93) discovered in their study that the majority of 7th grade students in Finland (age 13) found English to be a fairly easy subject. Swedish, on the other hand, has been found to be more difficult in some studies (e.g. Tuokko 2009, 33). The results of the present study are similar to previous studies about the easiness of English, but differ on the perceived easiness of Swedish. The students were asked how easy is it for them to learn Swedish or English. As can be seen in Figure 3, *quite easy* was the most frequently chosen option for both languages, as 43.7% answered that about English and 40.2% about Swedish. However, 34.5 % of students also thought that learning Swedish is not very easy for them.

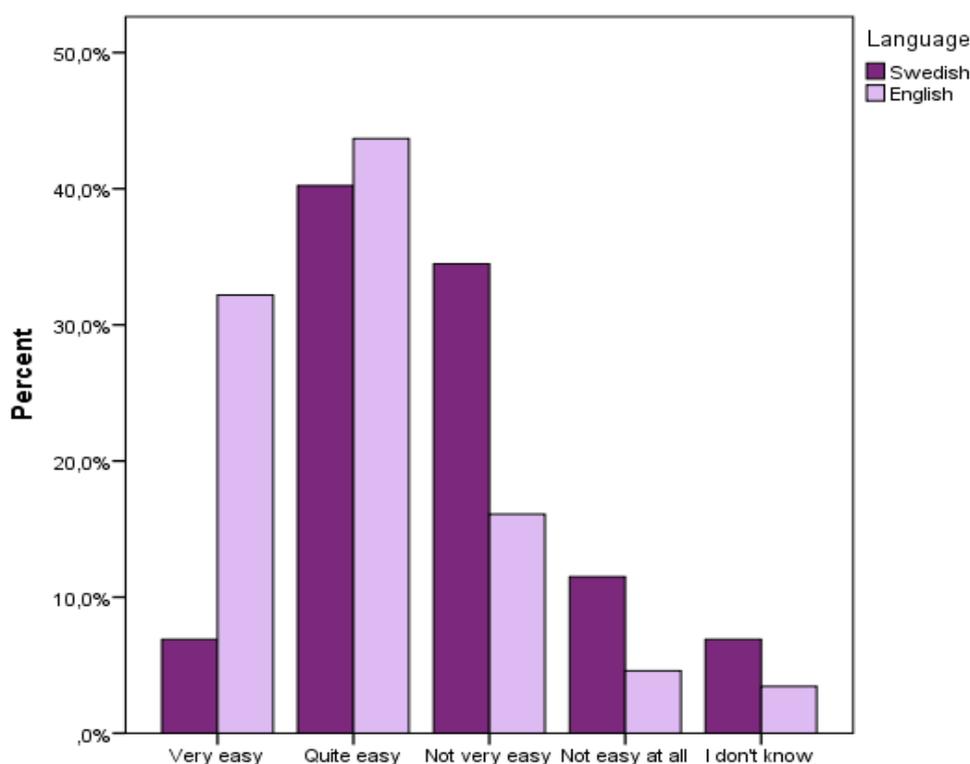


Figure 3 Responses to Q5 “How easy for you is it to learn Swedish or English?”

The question about the easiness of English and Swedish also included a *why*-question. Many students were, however, not able to explain their answer here and only replied with *I don't know*. The ones that were able to explain their answer, said that it is easy, because it is similar to English or some other languages (12/88), and that it is a

simple language that has easy vocabulary. Students who thought that learning Swedish is not so easy for them said that it is difficult to learn the vocabulary (11/88) and the grammar structures are hard (8/88). A couple of students also admitted that they do not make any effort to study Swedish, which makes it difficult for them to learn. The same question about why English is easy or not easy for them got more answers. Eight students said that English is so commonly used everywhere that it is easy to learn. Also nine students said that video games, tv-shows, movies and videos have helped them to learn it. In addition, seven students said that the fact that they have learned English for so long has made it easy for them. Nevertheless, there were also fifteen students who thought that learning English is not easy for them because of difficult vocabulary and different types of problems in relation to it. A couple of students also said that the pronunciation is difficult and that they are simply bad at learning English.

The results concerning the question about then need for English and Swedish in Finland were somewhat surprising (see Figure 4). The majority (62.1%) of the students answered that Swedish is important in Finland. The result is surprising because the students did not think that studying Swedish is very important to them and they did not like studying Swedish that much. However, they seem to think that Swedish is still needed in Finland. Unsurprisingly, 96.5% of the students also thought that English is needed in Finland. Again in the results here, the popularity of English over other languages in Finland can be seen.

In their answers for why Swedish is important in Finland, the majority (34/88) answered that because Finland is a bilingual country. The students who did not think that Swedish is important, said that you can use English instead of Swedish. The biggest reasons for why English is important in Finland were that you might need it in many jobs (30/88) and you can use it with foreigners/tourists (22/88). Similar answers seem to come up with most of the questions in this study. The importance of other languages besides English appears to stay relatively unclear for the students. More promotion of Swedish and cooperation with school and families at home, could perhaps have some impact on that matter in the future.

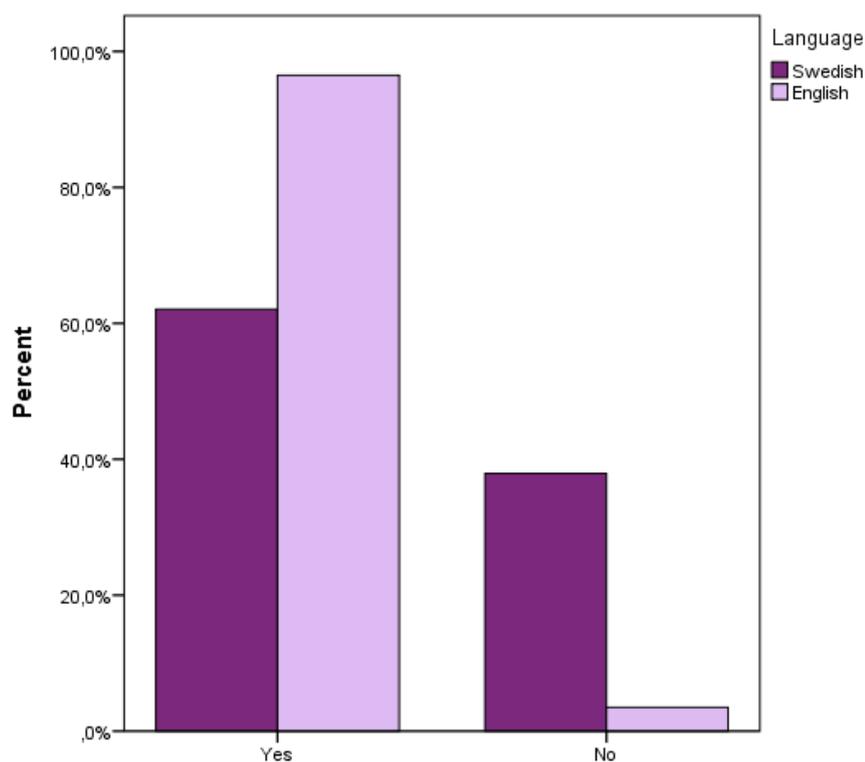


Figure 4 Responses to Q7 “Do people need Swedish or English in Finland?”

5.5 Use of Swedish and English outside the school environment

As mentioned previously, English is very present in Finland in the media, TV, music etc., which makes it easy for the students to come across with it also on their free time. Swedish, on the other hand, although available, is not as present, and the minor use of Swedish outside the school environment can be seen here in the results. The students were asked if they have used English or Swedish outside the school environment. Out of the whole 88 students that participated in the study, only three students said that they have not used English outside school (see Figure 5). The place where the students had used English most frequently was when travelling to another country and in computer games. Other answers included places like the supermarket, restaurants and when helping a tourist.

The Swedish results were quite different compared to the English ones. As can be seen from Figure 5, 47 students answered that they had not used Swedish outside the school environment at all. 26 students had used Swedish at home, 17 abroad and 20 with friends. The difference of the use of English was notable especially when playing

computer games and using internet, which is most probably a repercussion of English being dominant on different kinds of media. However, TV-shows, music and other media are available in Swedish and could be more eagerly introduced to the students. In the modern world, many things happen online and children like using different kinds of apps and tools. There are many ways to learn languages online and maybe introducing them to the students would make them more interested in language learning. I would argue that encouraging and guiding the students to use these tools, would have a positive effect on their learning.

The different use of English and Swedish on students' free time has been reported in other studies as well. Härmälä, Hildén and Leontjev (2016) studied Finnish 9th graders' (15-16 years old) study practices and use of English, Swedish and French, both at school and on their free time. They found that students used English more on their free time than they did Swedish or French. The study also revealed that English TV shows and other media affected students language skills in a positive way. Swedish language skills were positively impacted mostly with students who had Swedish speaking relatives or friends with whom they talked on their free time.

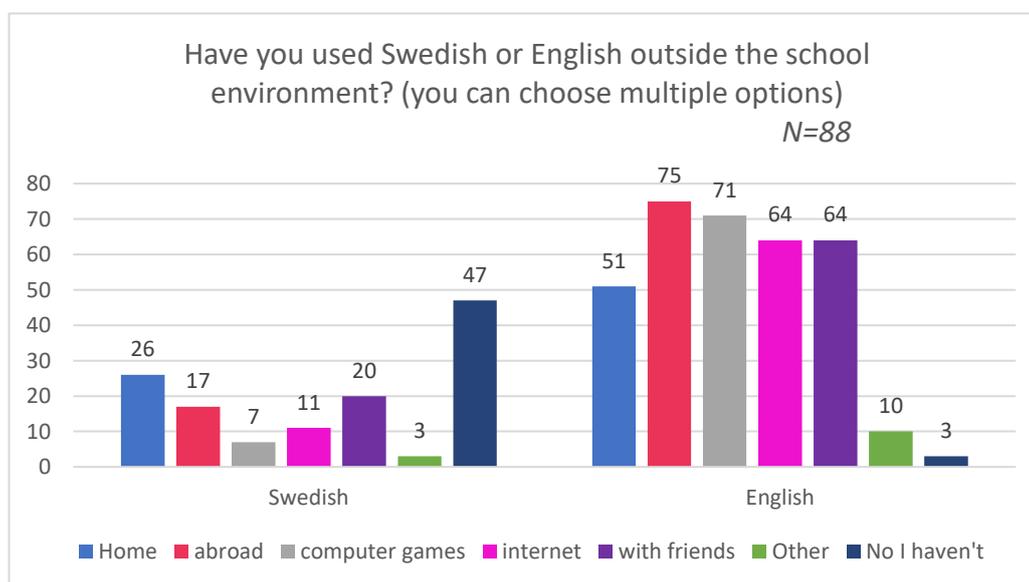


Figure 5 Responses to Q6 “Have you used Swedish or English outside the school environment?” (you can choose multiple answers)?”

As can be seen from Figures 6 and 7, there is a major difference between the use of the languages on the students' free time. Students use much more English in their free time than they do Swedish, and most students do not use any Swedish in their

free time. English is used mostly when watching, for example, YouTube videos or other videos online. Also, listening to music in English is popular among the students. Many students reported using English daily in many cases, whereas only one student reported listening to Swedish music daily.

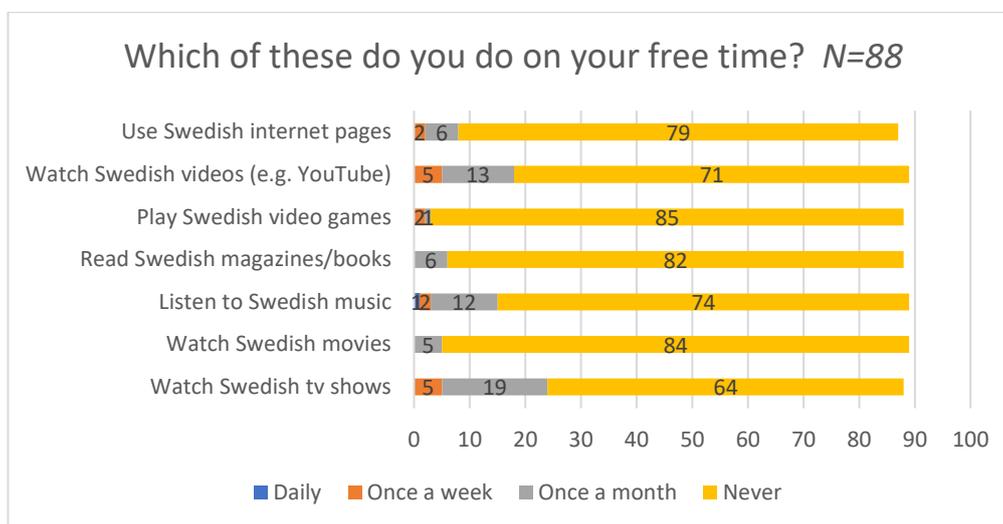


Figure 6 Answers to Q8 “Which of these do you do on your free time?” (Swedish results) (N=88)

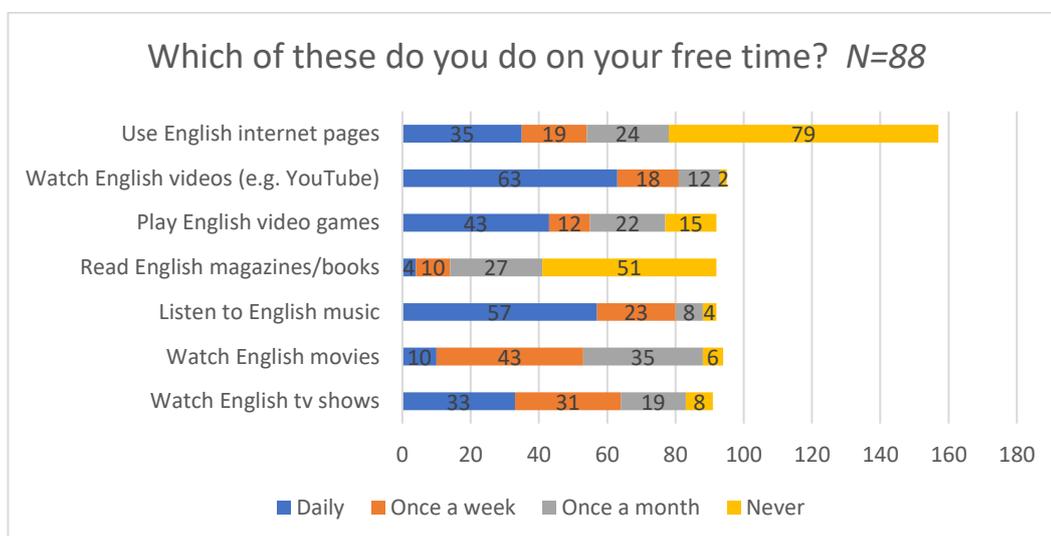


Figure 7 Answers to Q8 “Which of these do you do on your free time?” (English results) (N=88)

6 Discussion

In this section, I will answer the research questions of the study and discuss the results and their implications on the basis of the analysis above. I will also discuss the limitations of the research and suggest further research ideas for the future.

6.1 Evaluation of the results

The purpose of this study was to find out which types of attitudes sixth grade students have towards learning English and Swedish. The purpose was also to see how students explain their attitudes, and if there are differences between the attitudes of boys' and girls'. Therefore the study aimed at answering the following questions:

- 1) What kinds of attitudes do the students have towards learning English and Swedish?
- 2) What types of reasons do the students give for their attitudes?
- 3) What kinds of differences are there in the attitudes of boys and girls?

On the basis of this study it can be said that English is a popular language among Finnish primary school students and the attitudes to English are mainly positive. Similar results have been found previously in many studies (see e.g. Härmälä et al. 2019), and the popularity of English as the most studied foreign language in Finland seems to stay strong (vipunen.fi 2018). From year 2000 on, over 60 % of students in Finland have chosen English as their syllabus A language (language starting on grades 1-6 on basic education) (ibid.). In comparison, only a little over 4 % of students have chosen Swedish as their syllabus A language during those years (ibid.). In the present study, a majority (78.4%) of the students liked studying English *very much* or *quite much* and described it, for instance, as fun, useful and easy. The results also reveal that attitudes to Swedish are not as positive as attitudes to English. When asked if the students liked studying Swedish, 62.5% answered that they do not like it very much or that they do not like it at all. The results were similar to the FINEEC's study in 2008, where about half of the students did not like studying Swedish (Tuokko 2009, 33).

My first hypothesis that the attitudes to English would be more positive than attitudes to Swedish was proved right in this study. The students' attitudes to English were overall more positive than their attitudes to Swedish; they felt that English is more important than Swedish, English is more useful around the world and they liked studying English more than Swedish. In other words, the attitudes were more positive to English because the students see the usefulness of English in their everyday lives. The results are in line with previous research, where the attitudes to English were also found to be more positive than the attitudes to Swedish (see e.g. Tuokko 2009; Leppänen et al. 2009.). My second hypothesis that girls would have more positive attitudes to language learning than boys was, however, proved wrong. Even though girls' answers were more positive on average in the study, the difference was not statistically significant in the results between the genders. These results are opposite to many previous studies, where it has been argued that girls' attitudes would be more positive than boys' (Wright 1999; Pitkänen & Westinen 2017; Pitkänen 2018). It is difficult to say why there was no significant difference in the attitudes between the genders in the present study. I could argue that the world might have become more equal and teaching acknowledges both genders more equally than earlier. However, those kinds of conclusions need to be researched to be proven right.

The students described English and Swedish with a similar amount of positive adjectives (22 for English, 19 for Swedish), but there was a difference in the amount of negative ones (11 for English, 23 for Swedish). *Boring* was the most used negative adjective for both languages. Over half of the students (52 students) felt that Swedish is boring, which affected their overall attitudes to Swedish negatively. Around a third of the students also described English boring (23 students), and previous studies have found that boredom is one of the most common emotions expressed by students (see e.g. Pekrun et al. 2010). Some students explained in more detail that the lessons are boring and not so much the language itself. Lessons were found boring because some felt that they only read and do the same types of exercises every time.

The generally positive attitudes to English might be caused by its prevalence in the students' lives both in school and outside the school environment. Boredom during lessons might then not be specifically towards English lessons, but more towards school in general. The more negative attitudes to Swedish could be a consequence of only encountering Swedish during Swedish lessons, and not on free time. Again, it may not be that the Swedish lessons would be any more boring than any other lessons, but the overall

negative attitude to Swedish could make the lessons feel boring. However, perhaps language lessons could be made more appealing by having content which would be more in line with the students' own interests and free time activities. Also, the lessons could be made less monotonous by having different types of activities, more interaction between the students and less of only listening to the teacher.

It would also be important to guide the students to use Swedish on their free time, so that they would understand that they are not learning it for school but for life in general. The revised national curriculum for basic education (POPS 2014) emphasizes language awareness and action-based learning. Therefore, different types of activities, like language events, language theme days and visits to companies where languages other than Finnish are needed, could help the students to understand the importance of languages and become more interested in them. Languages could also be integrated to other subjects by cooperating with other teachers. Moreover, comparing languages to one another and seeing similarities between them could perhaps make them feel less difficult and easier to approach.

The revised national curriculum (POPS 2014) also encourages teachers to use varying and functional ways in teaching, and the students' differing interest should be taken into account. Language and communication technologies are offered and students are guided to seek information in the languages they know (ibid.). The new curriculum also emphasizes the use of drama, games and songs in teaching as well as versatile channels for communication (ibid.) Hopefully those factors will pique the interest of students also to other languages besides English, and make language lessons more enjoyable and less boring. Apps for learning vocabulary and different types of games online could arouse the interest of some students to learn Swedish more eagerly.

The importance of English became evident in this study, as it was most frequently described with the adjective *important* (47/88) and the majority (68.2 %) of them thought that studying English is important for them. Traveling, English being a widely spoken language and the need for English in future jobs were the biggest reasons for why English was important to the students. Students also reported using English quite frequently on their free time, for example, in computer games and abroad. Listening to music and watching videos in English was also common among the sixth graders, and many were in contact with those daily or weekly (see Figure 7). The results are consistent, for instance, with a recent study by FINEEC (Härmälä et al. 2018, 94), in which around 80% of 7th grade students felt that they will need English in the future in jobs, school and

everyday life. Nearly all of the students in that study also considered being able to speak English important (ibid.). The positive results concerning the importance of English could be a result of the visible position of English in Finland in working life, media, games etc. (vipunen.fi 2018; Pietilä & Lintunen 2014, 11–12; Leppänen et al. 2009, 17–20), and it could therefore be argued that considering a language important and exposure to the language affects the attitudes towards learning that language positively. Students also already use English on their free time and notice that it is used and needed in many places, which makes understanding its importance easy. Furthermore, as travelling has become more common and easier, English was seen important in order to be able to communicate with foreigners in Finland and when visiting other countries. Also, the internet is a major part of people’s lives nowadays and people watch videos in English, which exposes them to English regularly.

Swedish, on the other hand, was not seen as important as English. As argued earlier, the fact that the students do not use or hear Swedish almost at all outside the school environment, quite surely has an effect on the perceived importance of the language. Over half of the students in this study had not used Swedish at all outside the school environment. Similar results have been found in earlier studies (e.g. Ministry of Education and Culture 2012; Pitkänen 2018), and previous studies also confirm that the lack of contact with Swedish speakers and not hearing Swedish outside the school environment, affects the attitudes to Swedish negatively (Pitkänen & Westinen 2017). Bilingualism, Swedish-speaking Finns and Sweden being Finland’s neighboring country were mostly seen as the reasons for why it would be important to learn Swedish, but unlike English, Swedish was not seen as a way to communicate with foreigners or use when traveling (except if travelling to Sweden). Also, Swedish music, internet pages or video games were not that popular among the students, which of course can also be a result of the fact that they are not as easily available or present as English ones are. Teachers could try to encourage students to seek more information in Swedish and perhaps introduce Swedish TV-shows, singers and movies to students, and maybe that way they would get interested in studying Swedish more. The benefit that knowing Swedish would have in many jobs, could also be emphasized more because concrete examples could be a better way to impact the students.

It was interesting to see that even though the students did not like studying Swedish that much and did not use it much on their free time, they still found Swedish being quite necessary in Finland and quite easy to learn. Some previous studies have,

nonetheless, come up with different results. For example, the previously mentioned study by FINEEC revealed that around half of the students found Swedish difficult to learn (Tuokko 2009, 33). The reason for that could, however, be the different stages in the learning. The students in the present study were in the very beginning of their Swedish language studies and had only studied Swedish for about a year. Therefore, they probably had not faced that many difficult issues yet. The students in the FINEEC's study (ibid.) had already studied Swedish for at least three years and were attending the final year of compulsory basic education, and in that time the grammar, vocabulary etc. had most probably become more difficult. Similarly, English was also found to be a necessary and easy language to learn, which students justified, for example, by saying that it is heard everywhere and they have studied it for so long. Vocabulary and difficult grammar structures were one of the main reasons that made both languages hard for some students.

I would argue that some of the reasons behind the attitudes are caused by the different positions of Swedish and English in Finland (see section 2). As can be seen from questions about the use of Swedish and English outside the school environment and about their free time activities (see section 5.5), the students use and hear more English in their free time than they do Swedish. That is probably a result of English being much more present in many aspects of their lives. English is present in TV-shows, movies, music, online etc., and the students see and hear it even without conscious effort. Swedish, on the other hand, is many times only used and heard in school, even though Swedish music, TV shows and movies would be easily available for instance online.

The aim of the study was also to compare the attitudes between the genders. Many previous studies have shown that girls tend to have more positive attitudes to language learning than boys (see e.g. Wright 1999; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh 2006; Pitkänen & Westinen 2017). Even though the results of this part of the study were not statistically significant, some differences between the genders were found (see Appendix 4). Girls' attitudes were slightly more positive than boys' attitudes in general, but boys found learning English somewhat easier than girls. Girls' and boys' answers were very close to one another in all of the questions concerning English, but differed slightly more in questions about Swedish. It should be then considered why that is the case? The reasons are hard to examine, but boys seemed to think more that Swedish is not important to them in the future and they can manage solely with English. Girls were more able to see that they might need Swedish, for instance, in some jobs. This should be taken into consideration in the future during Swedish lessons, so that the usability and advantage of

knowing Swedish would become more evident also for boys. This can, however, be somewhat difficult with young students, who are not able to think that much ahead of life.

The findings of the present study offer a basis for knowing how primary school students feel about learning Swedish in addition to learning English. From the results it can be seen that English continues to be the most popular foreign language to learn, and that attitudes to Swedish are more neutral and/or negative. That finding offers an understanding for future pedagogic implications. It would be important to continue to encourage the children to also study Swedish and find ways that would make it seem more important and interesting for students. The results also imply that perhaps the ways to teach languages should be changed to some extent; during lessons more different media could be used, which could then again awaken the students' interest to also use those media in e.g. Swedish on their free time. Perhaps that way boredom during language lessons could also be diminished. Furthermore, as the results show, English is seen as important and students use and hear it often. The increasing English skills that students will have in the future, should be taken into consideration in teacher training, so that language teaching can keep up with the students' growing language skills.

6.2 Limitations of the present study and ideas for future research

As every study, also this thesis has some limitations. Similarly to other studies based on questionnaires, it has to be taken into account that individuals might answer the questionnaire in a way that they think they should, instead of how they really feel. This is why it was emphasized that the study is completely anonymous and does not affect their grade in any way. It is also possible that people answering a questionnaire might misunderstand some of the questions, and therefore answer in a different way than they were supposed to. There are also many other factors that can affect students' attitudes (peers, teachers, parents, age etc.), which were not studied in this thesis. Therefore, it can be challenging to find out the real reasons behind the attitudes. Although the number of participants (88) was sufficient for the purposes of this study, it only included sixth graders from one school, and therefore the results cannot be generalized. However, the results can be considered as indicative, and the more attitudes are studied, the more we are able to understand also the reasons behind the attitudes.

Since the revised curriculum was put into action only recently (in 2016), more research is needed in order to give insight into the students' attitudes and the effects

that the revision will have in the future. The effects that this change might have, will be shown gradually in the future and should then be studied more. It would be interesting to see for instance, if the attitudes to Swedish become more positive now that it begins in primary school on grade 6, instead of secondary school on grade 7. Beginning to study Swedish previously took place in the beginning of their puberty (age 13), which is known to be a phase in the students' lives when they face major physical and psychological changes. Those changes can affect their interest to learning negatively (see e.g. Pfenninger & Singleton 2017), thus it would be interesting to see if the earlier age for learning Swedish would have a positive effect on attitudes. It would also be important to study more deeply the reasons behind the attitudes and what affects them, in order to use that information for the benefit of future language lessons. Also, revising the curriculum so that Swedish now begins already on grade 6, means that in some schools classroom teachers teach Swedish instead of subject teachers. This has caused some concerns about classroom teachers' abilities and willingness to teach Swedish (Rossi et al. 2017, 166-168). Those challenges could be studied in the future to determine whether the concerns are justified or not.

As mentioned earlier, the revision also affects the first compulsory foreign language (syllabus A1, most often English), which will begin already on grade 1 from year 2020 on. It would be important to study the effects that the early English language teaching has on learning. The results from students who have begun to learn English earlier, could then be compared to students who did not begin to study as early. That way it could be seen, if early language teaching has an effect on learning results.

7 Conclusion

This study aimed to find out which types of attitudes 6th grade students have towards Swedish and English. The aim was to discover if the students preferred one language to the other, and also to compare the attitudes of boys and girls. The study was conducted by using a questionnaire that included eight questions, both open and closed ones (Likert scale). Altogether 92 students participated in the study, of which 88 were then included in the actual study. The students were attending a medium sized primary school in southern Finland and filled in the questionnaire during their English and Swedish lessons. Some students answered the questionnaire regarding both languages. The study included both quantitative and qualitative measures, in order to get a profound understanding of the phenomena. The quantitative data was analyzed by using a computer program SPSS, and correlations were measured with crosstabulation and chi-square tests. Qualitative data was analyzed with content analysis.

The results for the first and second research question showed a difference in the attitudes towards English and Swedish. The students preferred English over Swedish and had more positive attitudes to learning English than Swedish. English was seen as a more useful language when travelling, in the future in jobs and when communicating with foreigners. Students also used English in their everyday lives, whether it be on the internet or while listening to music. Swedish was mostly only seen useful when travelling to Sweden, and the students did not use Swedish almost at all on their free time. From the results it can be concluded that the greatest reason for the negative attitudes to Swedish is its perceived uselessness. The results for the last research question showed that even though there was no statistical significance, girls did have overall slightly more positive attitudes to learning English and Swedish than boys. The differences were greater on questions about Swedish than on English, as boys had more negative attitudes to Swedish than English. Similar findings have been made previously in numerous studies (e.g. Pihko 2007; Pitkänen & Westinen 2017), but it would be necessary to study more the reasons behind these differences, and especially why boys' and girls' attitudes to Swedish differ more than their attitudes to English.

Even though attitudes to languages have been studied widely in the past, the effects that the revision of the national curriculum in Finland will have, have not been extensively studied yet. Therefore, the present study contributes to the research in that field. In order to find out if early teaching of Swedish has a positive effect on students'

attitudes and language skills, more research over time is needed. Also, the effects that earlier English teaching will have on students, and how teaching and teacher training has to adjust to the changes will be seen in the future. As the present study showed, students see the importance of English in their lives, but the same does not concern Swedish. Therefore, it would be important to find ways to promote also Swedish in the future and change the students' attitudes towards it to more positive.

The results of the present study offer an understanding for future implications. In order to get students to become excited about Swedish, it would be important to encourage children to, for example, watch TV shows in Swedish and introduce them to Swedish music. This could be done during Swedish lessons at school, but also maybe during other lessons, so that Swedish would be integrated into the students' lives more comprehensively. It would also be important to inform parents and encourage them to also support their children's language learning at home. After school clubs and optional subjects could also be a way to integrate more language lessons to students lives and awaken the students' interests to languages other than English. Also, the results showed that the students are not aware of the situations and places where Swedish would be useful. It is therefore important to emphasize and point out the possibilities where knowing Swedish would be beneficial. For young students these places could mean, for instance, when visiting Sweden or when communicating with Swedish-speaking Finns. For older students, it could be emphasized that knowing Swedish might help them in the future when they are looking for, for instance, a summer job. Perhaps also some kinds of collaborations could be done between Finnish and Swedish speaking schools.

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Appendix 1. The questionnaire in Finnish (concerning English).

(I have removed the space for answers to save space in here)

KYSELYLOMAKE (englannin kieli)

Ikä: _____

Sukupuoli: (Ympyröi vaihtoehto) Tyttö/Poika

1. Pidätkö englannin kielen opiskelusta? Ympyröi vastaus.

- a) todella paljon
- b) jonkin verran
- c) vähän
- d) en ollenkaan
- e) en osaa sanoa

Miksi?

2. Kuinka tärkeänä pidät englannin kielen opiskelua?

- a) todella tärkeänä
- b) jonkin verran tärkeänä
- c) vähän tärkeänä
- d) en ollenkaan tärkeänä
- e) en osaa sanoa

3. Mitkä ovat mielestäsi tärkeimmät syyt opetella englantia?

4. Kuvaile englannin kieltä kolmella adjektiivilla.

5. Kuinka helppoa englannin opiskelu mielestäsi on?

- a) erittäin helppoa
- b) jonkin verran helppoa
- c) vähän helppoa
- d) ei ollenkaan helppoa
- e) en osaa sanoa

Miksi?

6. Oletko käyttänyt englannin kieltä muualla kuin koulussa? Kyllä / En.

Missä? (Voit ympyröidä useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon.)

- a) Kotona
- b) Ulkomailla
- c) Tietokonepeleissä
- d) Internetissä
- e) Ystävien kanssa
- f) Muualla, missä?

7. Tarvitaanko sinusta Suomessa englannin kieltä? Ympyröi vastaus. Kyllä/Ei.

Miksi?

8. Mitä näistä teet vapaa-ajallasi? Rastita valitsemasi kohta.

	Päivittäin	Muutaman kerran viikossa	Muutaman kerran kuukaudessa	En koskaan
Katson englanninkielisiä tv-sarjoja				
Katson englanninkielisiä elokuvia				
Kuuntelen englanninkielistä musiikkia				
Luen englanninkielisiä lehtiä/kirjoja				
Pelaan englanninkielisiä tietokonepelejä/konsolipelejä				
Katson videoita englanniksi Internet-sivuilla (esim. YouTube)				
Käyn muilla englanninkielisillä Internet-sivuilla				

KIITOS VASTAUKSISTASI!

Appendix 2. The questionnaire in Finnish (concerning Swedish).

KYSELYLOMAKE (ruotsin kieli)

Ikä: _____

Sukupuoli: (Ympyröi vaihtoehto) Tyttö/Poika

1. Pidätkö ruotsin kielen opiskelusta? Ympyröi vastaus.

- f) todella paljon
- g) jonkin verran
- h) vähän
- i) en ollenkaan
- j) en osaa sanoa

Miksi?

2. Kuinka tärkeänä pidät ruotsin kielen opiskelua?

- f) todella tärkeänä
- g) jonkin verran tärkeänä
- h) vähän tärkeänä
- i) en ollenkaan tärkeänä
- j) en osaa sanoa

3. Mitkä ovat mielestäsi tärkeimmät syyt opetella ruotsia?

4. Kuvaile ruotsin kieltä kolmella adjektiivilla.

5. Kuinka helppoa ruotsin opiskelu mielestäsi on?

- f) erittäin helppoa
- g) jonkin verran helppoa
- h) vähän helppoa
- i) ei ollenkaan helppoa
- j) en osaa sanoa

Miksi?

6. Oletko käyttänyt ruotsin kieltä muualla kuin koulussa? Kyllä / En.

Missä? (Voit ympyröidä useamman kuin yhden vaihtoehdon.)

- g) Kotona
- h) Ulkomailla
- i) Tietokonepeleissä
- j) Internetissä
- k) Ystävien kanssa
- l) Muualla, missä?

7. Tarvitaanko sinusta Suomessa ruotsin kieltä? Ympyröi vastaus. Kyllä/Ei.

Miksi?

8. Mitä näistä teet vapaa-ajallasi? Rastita valitsemasi kohta.

	Päivittäin	Muutaman kerran viikossa	Muutaman kerran kuukaudessa	En koskaan
Katson ruotsinkielisiä tv-sarjoja				
Katson ruotsinkielisiä elokuvia				
Kuuntelen ruotsinkielistä musiikkia				
Luen ruotsinkielisiä lehtiä/kirjoja				
Pelaan ruotsinkielisiä tietokonepelejä/konsolipelejä				
Katson videoita ruotsiksi Internet-sivuilla (esim. YouTube)				
Käyn muilla ruotsinkielisillä Internet-sivuilla				

KIITOS VASTAUKSISTASI!

Appendix 3. The questionnaire in English

Questionnaire

Age: _____

Gender: (circle the answer)

Girl/Boy

1. Do you like studying English/Swedish? (circle the answer)

- k) very much
- l) quite much
- m) not much
- n) not at all
- o) I don't know

Why?

2. How important is studying English/Swedish to you?

- k) very important
- l) quite important
- m) not very important
- n) not at all important
- o) I don't know

3. What are the most important reasons to study English/Swedish?

4. Describe English/Swedish with three adjectives.

5. How is studying English/Swedish is?

- k) very easy
- l) quite easy
- m) not very easy
- n) not easy at all
- o) I don't know

Why?

6. Have you used English/Swedish outside the school environment? Yes/No.

Where? (You can choose more than one option.)

- m) Home
- n) Abroad
- o) Computer games
- p) Internet
- q) With friends
- r) Somewhere else, where?

7. Do you think English/Swedish is needed in Finland? (Circle the answer.) Yes/no.

Why?

8. Which of these do you do on your free time? Tick the box.

	Daily	Couple times a week	Couple times a month	Never
Watch English/Swedish TV shows				
Watch English/Swedish movies				
Listen to English/Swedish music				
Read English/Swedish books/magazines				
Play English/Swedish computer games				
Watch videos in English/Swedish on the internet (e.g. Youtube)				
Visit other English/Swedish internet pages				

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ANSWERS

Appendix 4. Crosstabulations by gender Swedish answers

			Do you like studying Swedish?					Total
			very much	quite much	not much	not at all	I don't know	
What is your gender?	Female	Count	5	12	9	7	2	35
		% within What is your gender?	14.3%	34.3%	25.7%	20.0%	5.7%	100.0%
	male	Count	1	11	19	20	2	53
		% within What is your gender?	1.9%	20.8%	35.8%	37.7%	3.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	6	23	28	27	4	88	
	% within What is your gender?	6.8%	26.1%	31.8%	30.7%	4.5%	100.0%	

			How easy learning Swedish is to you?					Total
			very easy	quite easy	not very easy	not easy at all	I don't know	
What is your gender?	Female	Count	3	18	9	3	2	35
		% within What is your gender?	8.6%	51.4%	25.7%	8.6%	5.7%	100.0%
	male	Count	3	17	22	7	4	53
		% within What is your gender?	5.8%	32.7%	40.4%	13.5%	7.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	6	35	31	10	6	88	
	% within What is your gender?	6.9%	40.2%	34.5%	11.5%	6.9%	100.0%	

			Is Swedish needed in Finland?		Total
			yes	no	
What is your gender?	Female	Count	25	10	35
		% within What is your gender?	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
	male	Count	29	24	53
		% within What is your gender?	55.8%	44.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	54	33	88	
	% within What is your gender?	62.1%	37.9%	100.0%	

Appendix 5. Crosstabulation by gender English results

			Do you like studying English?					Total
			very much	quite much	not very much	not at all	I don't know	
What is your gender?	Female	Count	11	19	6	2	0	38
		% within What is your gender?	28.9%	50.0%	15.8%	5.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	male	Count	13	26	8	2	1	50
		% within What is your gender?	26.0%	52.0%	16.0%	4.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	24	45	14	4	1	88	
	% within What is your gender?	27.3%	51.1%	15.9%	4.5%	1.1%	100.0%	

			How important is learning English?			Total
			very important	quite important	not very important	
What is your gender?	Female	Count	28	9	1	38
		% within What is your gender?	73.7%	23.7%	2.6%	100.0%
	male	Count	32	17	1	50
		% within What is your gender?	64.0%	34.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	60	26	2	88	
	% within What is your gender?	68.2%	29.6%	2.2%	100.0%	

			How easy is learning English for you?					Total
			very easy	quite easy	not very easy	not easy at all	I don't know	
What is your gender?	Female	Count	10	18	5	3	2	38
		% within What is your gender?	26.3%	47.4%	13.2%	7.9%	5.3%	100.0%
	male	Count	18	21	9	1	1	50
		% within What is your gender?	36.7%	40.8%	18.4%	2.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	28	39	14	4	3	88	

	% within What is your gender?	31.8%	44.3%	15.9%	4.5%	3.4%	100.0%
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			Have you used English outside the school environment?		
			yes	no	Total
What is your gender?	Female	Count	36	2	38
		% within What is your gender?	94.6%	5.4%	100.0%
	male	Count	49	1	50
		% within What is your gender?	98.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Total	Count		85	3	88
	% within What is your gender?		96.6%	3.4%	100.0%

			Is English needed in Finland?		
			yes	no	Total
What is your gender?	Female	Count	38	0	38
		% within What is your gender?	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	male	Count	47	3	50
		% within What is your gender?	94.0%	6.0%	100.0%
Total	Count		85	3	88
	% within What is your gender?		96.6%	3.4%	100.0%

Appendix 5 Finnish summary

Suomenkielinen tiivistelmä

Johdanto

Asenteiden vaikutusta kielten oppimiseen on tutkittu laajasti ympäri maailmaa (ks. Gardner 1985; Baker 1992; Bartram 2012). Tässä pro gradu-tutkimuksessa on tarkoitus selvittää kuudesluokkalaisten opiskelijoiden asenteita englannin ja ruotsin kielen opiskelua kohtaan. Tarkoituksena on myös selvittää, onko sukupuolten välisissä asenteissa eroja. Kiinnostus aiheen tutkimiseen on herännyt uuden perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman pohjalta. Uuden opetussuunnitelman perusteet on otettu käyttöön 1.8.2016 vuosiluokilla 1-6. Vuosiluokilla 7-9 käyttöönotto on tapahtunut porrastetusti vuosina 2017, 2018 ja 2019. Uusi opetussuunnitelma on vaikuttanut kielten opetukseen siten, että aiemmin viimeistään 7. luokalla alkanut ruotsin kielen opetus alkaa jatkossa jo viimeistään 6. luokalla. Vuodesta 2020 eteenpäin myös A1-kielen (useimmiten englannin kieli) opetus varhentuu alkamaan jo 1. luokan keväällä. Tutkimuskysymykseni ovat:

1. Millaisia asenteita oppilailla on englannin ja ruotsin kielen opiskelua kohtaan?
2. Miten oppilaat perustelevat asenteensa?
3. Millaisia eroja tyttöjen ja poikien asenteissa on?

Tutkimuksessa yhdistyy sekä määrällinen että laadullinen menetelmä, jotta oppilaiden asenteista saataisiin mahdollisimman kokonaisvaltainen kuva. Tutkimus toteutettiin kyselylomakkeella, joka sisälsi avoimia ja suljettuja kysymyksiä asenteisiin liittyen. Aineiston kvantitatiiviset osat analysoitiin käyttämällä tilastollisia menetelmiä ja kvalitatiiviset osat analysoitiin sisältöanalyysin avulla.

Oppilaiden asenteet englannin ja ruotsin kielen opiskelua kohtaan

Asenteiden on tutkittu vaikuttavan kielten oppimistuloksiin. Asenne voidaan määritellä monin eri tavoin, riippuen mitä osa-aluetta halutaan painottaa. Brownin (1987) mukaan asenteet kehittyvät varhaislapsuudessa ja ovat seurausta muun muassa vanhempien, ikätovereiden ja muun sosiaalisen ympäristön asenteista. Baker (1992) taas on tutkinut asenteita erityisesti kaksikielisyyden ja kielen oppimisen näkökulmasta ja määrittelee asenteen hypoteettisena käsitteenä, jonka avulla ihmisen käyttäytymisen suuntaa ja jatkuvuutta pyritään selittämään. Baker korostaa, että asenteet muovautuvat ja muuttuvat kokemusten perusteella. Asenteiden sanotaan usein koostuvan kolmesta eri osa-alueesta, jotka ovat kognitiivinen (ajatukset ja uskomukset), affektiivinen (tunteisiin liittyvät tekijät) ja behavioraalinen (käyttäytymiseen liittyvät tekijät). Ihmiset voidaan myös esimerkiksi Gardnerin ja Lambertin (1959) mukaan jakaa joko instrumentaalisesti tai integratiivisesti orientoituviksi. Instrumentaalisesti orientoitunut ihminen haluaa oppia, jotta hyötyisi siitä jotenkin, esimerkiksi saamalla hyvän työpaikan. Integratiivisesti orientoitunut ihminen taas haluaa tuntea yhteenkuuluvuutta kohdekielen puhujiin sekä heidän kulttuuriinsa.

Asenteisiin vaikuttavat myös monet muut tekijät, kuten esimerkiksi oppijan ikä, sukupuoli ja vanhempien asenteet. Asenteiden kielten oppimista kohtaan on todettu olevan positiivisempia nuoremmilla oppijoilla ja muuttamalla negatiivisemmaksi etenkin teini-iässä (ks. Heining-Boynton & Haitema 2007). Myös sukupuolella on monien tutkimusten perusteella vaikutus asenteisiin. Naispuolisten oppijoiden asenteiden on havaittu olevan usein positiivisempia kuin miespuolisten (esimerkiksi Tuokko 2009; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh 2006). Lasten asenteisiin vaikuttavat myös vanhempien asenteet, jotka voivat tukea tai lannistaa lasten kielenoppimista (Gardner 1985).

Aikaisemmissa tutkimuksissa asenteet englannin kielen opiskelua kohtaan ovat olleet enimmäkseen positiivisia ja englannin kieli nähdään tarpeellisena ja tärkeänä kielenä sekä Suomessa että muualla maailmassa (ks. Härmänen ym. 2019). Englannin kielen asema Suomessa on suuri, ja ihmiset kohtaavat sitä päivittäin erilaisissa mediavälineissä, kuten televisiossa, musiikissa, internetissä ja muissa mobiililaitteissa. Ruotsin kieli on Suomen toinen virallinen kieli, mutta asenteet sitä ja sen opiskelua kohtaan ovat negatiivisemmat kuin asenteet englannin kieltä kohtaan. Erityisesti ruotsin kielen pakollisuus koulussa on aiheuttanut julkista keskustelua, osan vastustaessa sitä ja osan pitäessä sitä tärkeänä osana suomalaisuutta. Erityisesti nuoret eivät pidä ruotsin kieltä yhtä tärkeänä kuin vanhempi ikäpolvi, ja puuttuvat kontaktit ruotsinkielisen väestön kanssa kasvattavat ennakkoluuloja ruotsin kieltä kohtaan (ks. Pitkänen ja Westinen 2017).

Aineisto ja metodit

Tutkimus toteutettiin kyselylomakkeella, jotka oppilaat täyttivät englannin ja ruotsin kielen tuntien aikana. Kyselylomake oli sama molemmille kielille ja kyselyn alussa pohjatiedoiksi kysyttiin oppilaan ikä ja sukupuoli. Kysely koostui avoimista kysymyksistä, Likert-asteikko -kysymyksistä sekä monivalintakysymyksistä. Tutkimuksen tulokset analysoitiin käyttämällä SPSS-ohjelmaa ja ryhmien välisten erojen p-arvot laskettiin Pearsonin khiin neliöllä. Avoimet kysymykset analysoitiin käyttämällä laadullista sisältöanalyysia.

Tutkimustulokset

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että oppilaiden asenteet englannin ja ruotsin kieltä kohtaan erosivat jonkin verran. Suurin osa oppilaista (51,1%) vastasi pitävänsä englannin opiskelusta melko paljon. Oppilaat opiskelivat mielellään englantia, koska se oli heidän mielestään muun muassa hauskaa, helppoa ja tarpeellista. Jotkut oppilaat kuvailivat englannin opiskelua myös kuitenkin tylsäksi ja vaikeaksi. Ruotsin kieleen oppilaat suhtautuivat hieman negatiivisemmin ja isoin osa (36,8%) oppilaista vastasi pitävänsä ruotsin kielen opiskelusta vain vähän. Oppilaat pitivät ruotsin opiskelusta, koska se oli muun muassa helppoa ja mukavaa. Osa oppilaista taas kuvasi ruotsin opiskelua tylsäksi, vaikeaksi ja turhaksi.

Oppilaat pitivät englannin opiskelua hyvin tärkeänä. 68,2% vastasi, englannin opiskelun olevan todella tärkeää, eikä yksikään oppilas vastannut ettei se olisi ollenkaan tärkeää. Oppilaat perustelivat englannin kielen opiskelun tärkeyttä sillä, että sitä puhutaan monissa paikoissa ja maissa, sitä tarvitaan matkustellessa ja siitä on hyötyä monissa työpaikoissa. Oppilaat eivät pitäneet ruotsin opiskelua yhtä tärkeänä, ja suurin osa oppilaista (38,6%) vastasikin ruotsin kielen opiskelun olevan vain vähän tärkeää. Tärkeänä ruotsin kielen opiskelua pidettiin suomenruotsalaisten vuoksi ja koska Ruotsin

on Suomen naapurimaa. 12 oppilasta oli myös sitä mieltä, ettei ole olemassa yhtäkään hyvää syytä opiskella ruotsia.

Sekä ruotsin että englannin kieltä pidettiin suhteellisen helppoina aineina. Ruotsia kieltä piti helppona 40,2% oppilaista, koska usean mielestä se muistutti englannin kieltä ja muita kieliä. 34,5% oppilaista piti ruotsin kieltä vaikeana muun muassa sanaston ja kieliopin vuoksi. 43,7% oppilaista piti englannin kieltä melko helppona, koska sitä kuulee esimerkiksi televisiossa ja muussa mediassa paljon. Sanasto ja lausuminen teki englannin opiskelun kuitenkin hankalaksi osalle. Suurin osa oppilaista koki, että sekä ruotsin että englannin kieltä tarvitaan Suomessa.

Oppilaiden kielen käytössä vapaa-ajalla oli suuria eroja kielten välissä. Oppilaat käyttävät paljon englannin kieltä muun muassa kotona, internetissä, kavereiden kanssa ja matkustellessa. Iso osa oppilaista käyttää englannin kieltä päivittäin esimerkiksi katsomalla englanninkielisiä videoita, kuuntelemalla englanninkielistä musiikkia ja pelaamalla englanninkielisiä videopelejä. Ruotsin kielellä tilanne on toisenlainen. Oppilaat käyttävät huomattavasti vähemmän ruotsin kieltä kotona, kavereiden kanssa sekä matkustellessa. Suurin osa oppilaista myös vastasi, ettei koskaan kuuntele ruotsinkielistä musiikkia, katso ruotsinkielisiä ohjelmia tai pelaa videopelejä ruotsiksi.

Pohdinta

Englannin kielellä on Suomessa vahva asema ja se näkyy oppilaiden asenteissa englannin kieltä kohtaan. Asenteet olivat suurimmaksi osaksi positiivisia ja englantia pidettiin tärkeänä osana jokapäiväistä elämää. Ruotsin kieltä kohtaan asenteet olivat hieman negatiivisempia ja oppilaiden oli vaikeaa ymmärtää miksi ruotsin kieli olisi tärkeää. Tyttöjen ja poikien välillä erot asenteissa olivat hyvin pieniä.

Englanti on vahvasti läsnä televisiossa, musiikissa ja peleissä, minkä vuoksi oppilaiden on helppo ymmärtää sen osaamisen tärkeys. Oppilaat myös pitivät englannin opiskelua helppona, koska kuulevat sitä jatkuvasti ja ovat opiskelleet sitä kauan. Tutkimuksessa tuli kuitenkin myös ilmi, että englannin kielen tunteja pidetään tylsinä. Tulevaisuudessa olisikin hyvä kiinnittää huomiota siihen, miten tunneista saisi houkuttelevampia ja mukavampia, jotta kiinnostus englannin kielen opiskelua kohtaan pysyisi korkeana. Oppilaat mainitsivat muun muassa samanlaisten tehtävien teon tylsistymisen syyksi, ja siihen voitaisiinkin vaikuttaa ottamalla tunneille erilaisia tehtävyytyyppejä, kuuntelemalla oppilaiden ideoita ja yrittämällä liittää tuntien aiheita oppilaiden omaan elämään. Tulevaisuudessa (vuodesta 2020 eteenpäin) englannin opiskelun alkaessa usein jo 1.luokalla on tärkeää myös pohtia sen vaikutuksia opetukseen. Oppilaiden kasvavat englannin kielen taidot täytyy ottaa huomioon, ja

Ruotsin kieltä taas ei käytetä eikä kuulla usein kouluympäristön ulkopuolella, mikä vaikuttaa oppilaiden asenteisiin sitä kohtaan. Vaikka ruotsinkielistä materiaalia on hyvin saatavilla eri medioissa, lapset eivät tämän tutkimusten tulosten perusteella käytä niitä. Opettajat voisivat tulevaisuudessa entistä enemmän ohjata lapsia ja nuoria ruotsinkielisten TV-sarjojen, elokuvien ja musiikin pariin. Niiden avulla oppilaat saattaisivat innostua ruotsin kielestä uudella tavalla. Ruotsin kielen opetuksen alkaessa jatkossa jo 6.luokalla on toivottavasti myös vaikutus oppilaiden asenteisiin sen opiskelua kohtaan. Tutkimusten mukaan teini-ikässä oppimismotivaatio laskee, joten ennen yläasteelle siirtymistä alkanut ruotsin opiskelu saattaa vaikuttaa positiivisesti

oppilaiden asenteisiin (ks. Arda & Doyran 2017, 182). Tulevaisuudessa voisikin tutkia esimerkiksi aikaisempia asenteita verrattuna varhennetun ruotsin opiskelun jälkeisiin asenteisiin.

Tutkimuksen tulosten perusteella tyttöjen ja poikien välisissä asenteissa ei ollut huomattavia eroja. Tyttöjen asenteet olivat jonkin verran poikien asenteita positiivisempia, mutta perusteluja tälle ei löytynyt. Aikaisempien tutkimusten perusteella tyttöjen varhempi kehittyminen, yhteiskuntarakenteet ja se, että tyttöjen on helpompi nähdä kielten hyöty tulevaisuudessa on sanottu vaikuttavan sukupuolten välisiin eroihin (ks. Baker 1992, 42; Heinzmann 2013, 192). Asiaa pitäisi kuitenkin tutkia enemmän, jotta syy-seuraussuhteelle löydettäisiin vastauksia.

Tutkimuksen rajoituksena voidaan nähdä, että se keskittyi vain yhden koulun kuudesluokkalaisten oppilaiden asenteisiin. Tätä kompensoitiin tutkimalla jokaista kyseisen koulun kuudetta luokkaa, jotta saataisiin mahdollisimman suuri otos tutkimusta varten. Tutkimustulosten yleistämiseksi tarvittaisiin kuitenkin laajempaa tutkimusta aiheesta.

Yhteenveto

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää kuudesluokkalaisten asenteita englannin ja ruotsin kielen oppimista kohtaan. Tarkoituksena oli selvittää pitävätkö oppilaat toisesta kielestä enemmän kuin toisesta ja onko sukupuolten välisissä asenteissa eroja.

Tutkimuksen tuloksissa ilmeni englannin kielen suosio, sillä asenteet sitä kohtaan olivat pääsääntöisesti positiivisia. Englantia pidettiin tärkeänä, hyödyllisenä ja mukavana oppiaineena. Englannin kieli nähtiin tärkeänä muun muassa matkustellessa, ulkomaalaisten kanssa puhuessa sekä tulevaisuuden työpaikoissa. Oppilaat myös käyttivät englantia paljon vapaa-ajalla, esimerkiksi videopeleissä, musiikin kuuntelussa ja tv-sarjoja katsellessa. Ruotsin kieltä oppilaat eivät pitäneet kovin hyödyllisenä, sillä sen käyttö nähtiin rajoittuvaksi lähinnä Ruotsiin. Oppilaat eivät myöskään kuulleet eivätkä käyttäneet ruotsin kieltä paljoakaan koulun ulkopuolella. Poikien asenteet olivat hieman negatiivisempia varsinkin ruotsin kielen opiskelua kohtaan, kuin tyttöjen asenteet. Sukupuolten välillä ei kuitenkaan ollut tilastollisesti merkitsevää eroa.

Varhennettu kielen opetus on otettu vasta käyttöön, minkä vuoksi sen vaikutuksia ei ole voitu vielä suuresti tutkia. Tulevaisuudessa olisikin tärkeää tutkia millaisia vaikutuksia kielen opiskelun varhentumisella on oppilaiden asenteisiin ja kielitaitoon sekä millaisia haasteita se asettaa tulevaisuudessa kielen opettajille ja kielten opettajien koulutukselle.