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Addressing linguistic and social sustainability: morphological awareness among multilingual students with varying first-language literacy levels

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Abstract: English reading comprehension skills are essential in Finland, as English has become the dominant foreign language learned in schools and it is widely used in Finnish society. Therefore, acquiring adept English skills is essential to ensure equal education and job opportunities. Generally speaking, children with a migrant background may face many challenges in reading comprehension (Grabe & Yamashita 2022; Kaukko et al. 2022), putting their linguistic and social sustainability at a disadvantage compared to children born to Finnish-speaking parents. They often have to navigate in several languages, depending on how long they have been in the Finnish education system.

This study explores adolescents' (ages 13–14, N=62) morphological awareness with varying first language literacy levels. As morphological awareness is considered a key contributor to reading comprehension, we assume that low morphological awareness will result in low English reading comprehension proficiency. To investigate this assumption, tests to measure morphological awareness and English reading comprehension were administered and the obtained data were analyzed quantitatively. The results of the study support our assumption. Although the results indicate immense variation in test scores, a positive correlation was found in the impact of morphological skills on English reading comprehension. The results of the study will be used to develop better ways to address morphological awareness in EFL classrooms and thereby contribute to increased social sustainability.

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Zusammenfassung: Englischs Leseverständnis ist in Finnland unerlässlich, da Englisch zur dominierenden Fremdsprache geworden ist, die in Schulen gelernt wird, und in der finnischen Gesellschaft weit verbreitet ist. Daher ist der Erwerb versierter Englischkenntnisse unerlässlich, um gleiche Bildungs- und Beschäftigungschancen zu gewährleisten. Generell können Kinder mit Migrationshintergrund mit vielen Herausforderungen beim Leseverständnis konfrontiert sein (Grabe & Yamashita 2022; Kaukko et al. 2022), was ihre sprachliche und soziale Nachhaltigkeit im Vergleich zu Kindern finnischsprachiger Eltern benachteiligt. Sie müssen sich oft in mehreren Sprachen zurechtfinden, je nachdem, wie lange sie schon im finnischen Bildungssystem sind.

Diese Studie untersucht das morphologische Bewusstsein von Jugendlichen (13–14 Jahre, N=62) mit unterschiedlichen Erstsprachenkenntnissen. Da das morphologische Bewusstsein als ein wichtiger Faktor für das Leseverständnis angesehen wird, gehen wir davon aus, dass ein geringes morphologisches Bewusstsein zu einer geringen englischen Leseverständniskompetenz führt. Um diese Annahme zu überprüfen, wurden Tests zur Messung des morphologischen Bewusstseins und des englischen Leseverständnisses durchgeführt und die gewonnenen Daten quantitativ analysiert. Die Ergebnisse der Studie stützen unsere Annahme. Obwohl die Ergebnisse auf eine immense Variation der Testergebnisse hindeuten, wurde eine positive Korrelation im Einfluss morphologischer Fähigkeiten auf das englische Leseverständnis festgestellt. Die Ergebnisse der Studie werden genutzt, um bessere Wege zu entwickeln, um das morphologische Bewusstsein in EFL-Klassenzimmern zu adressieren und so zu mehr sozialer Nachhaltigkeit beizutragen.

Résumé : Les compétences de compréhension écrite en anglais sont essentielles en Finlande, car l'anglais est devenu la langue étrangère dominante apprise à l'école et il est largement utilisé dans la société finlandaise. Par conséquent, l'acquisition de compétences en anglais est essentielle pour garantir l'égalité des chances en matière d'éducation et d'emploi. D'une manière générale, les enfants issus de l'immigration peuvent être confrontés à de nombreux défis en compréhension de la lecture (Grabe & Yamashita 2022; Kaukko et al., 2022), ce qui compromet leur durabilité linguistique et sociale par rapport aux enfants nés de parents finnophones. Ils doivent souvent naviguer entre plusieurs langues, en fonction de leur ancienneté dans le système éducatif finlandais.

Cette étude explore la conscience morphologique des adolescents (13–14 ans, N = 62) avec différents niveaux de littératie dans leur langue maternelle. Comme la conscience morphologique est considérée comme un facteur clé de la compréhens-

sion en lecture, nous supposons qu'une faible conscience morphologique entraînera une faible maîtrise de la compréhension écrite en anglais. Pour étudier cette hypothèse, des tests mesurant la conscience morphologique et de la compréhension écrite en anglais ont été administrés et les données obtenues ont été analysées quantitativement. Les résultats confirment notre hypothèse. Bien qu'une grande variation ait été observée dans les résultats des tests, une corrélation positive a été identifiée entre les compétences morphologiques et la compréhension écrite en anglais. Ces résultats serviront à développer de meilleures approches pour intégrer la conscience morphologique dans les cours d'anglais langue étrangère (EFL) et contribuer ainsi à une durabilité sociale accrue.

1 Introduction

English reading comprehension (ERC) skills are essential in Finland, as English has become the dominant foreign language learned in schools, and it is widely used in the working world and more generally in Finnish society. Therefore, acquiring adept English skills is essential to ensure equal education and job opportunities. Children with a migrant background in Finland face many challenges in ERC (Kauko et al. 2022). Their challenges include but are not limited to non- or low literacy in their first language¹ (L1), learning to read in a second language (L2), Finnish in this case, which may differ significantly from their L1 in structure, and learning English (L3) through Finnish, putting their linguistic and social sustainability (Maijala et al. 2024) at a disadvantage compared to children born to parents of Finland's national languages².

Morphological awareness plays a significant role in the language learning process (Bowers et al. 2010; Deacon et al. 2014; Levesque & Deacon 2022; Tong et al. 2011), and L1 literacy skills seem to be highly determinant in foreign language (FL) learning (Dufva and Voeten 1999). *Literacy* in the present study refers to the ability to decode and decipher meaning from text and its constituents, as well as to produce text in writing, at a functional level appropriate for one's age. Although Eng-

1 For the purposes of this study, L1 refers to the home language, i.e. heritage language, which is a minority language spoken in the home and with immediate relatives and friends who also speak the same language as an L1 (Ennser-Kananen and King 2018).

2 Finland has two official languages: Finnish and Swedish. Sámi is a language spoken by the indigenous people of Finland. The other indigenous minority languages spoken in Finland are Finnish Romani, Finnish sign language, Finland-Swedish sign language and Karelian. The rights of the speakers of Sámi, Finnish Romani, Finnish sign language, Finland-Swedish sign language and Karelian have been stipulated by law. See the Institute for the Languages of Finland.

lish morphology is somewhat simpler than Finnish morphology, both are highly morphological languages in both similar and different ways. For example, both languages add affixes to nouns and verbs which can alter meaning and word class. However, Finnish contains numerous grammatical cases where a preposition would be needed in English, making Finnish and English quite different in this respect (Vannest et al. 2002). The situation becomes more complicated for students with a migrant background, as the morphological structures in their L1 may differ significantly from both Finnish and English. For this reason, understanding morphological structures and how they impact meaning is imperative (Grabe and Yamashita 2022; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2011). The present study therefore investigates the level of morphological awareness in multilingual adolescents with varying self-reported³ levels of literacy in their L1 and the relationship it may have on their English reading comprehension skills in the Finnish context.

Interestingly, Finland's National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014) makes no specific mention of morphological awareness in language instruction. Given the significance of morphological awareness in language learning (Bowers et al. 2010; Carlisle et al. 2010; Kuo and Anderson 2006; Levesque et al. 2018; Levesque and Deacon 2022) and the fact that literacy among young people in Finland has declined at an alarming rate (Hiltunen et al. 2023), morphology and development of morphological skills deserve more attention in language classrooms.

To gain a more comprehensive picture of the morphological skills multilingual adolescents with varying levels of L1 literacy in Finland have, this study investigates their level of morphological awareness and English reading comprehension proficiency to underline the complexities involved in teaching multilingual students with a migrant background. A total of 62 adolescents aged 13–14 with a migrant background, who speak a language other than Finland's national languages as their L1, took part in the study.

Multilingual learners are a unique population of learners because they bring to the learning process a hegemony of linguistic experiences that monolingual or bilingual learners may not have (Rothman 2007; Valdés 2001). Multilingual adolescents are also a unique population of readers, because they have experience in learning to read but they have not yet reached full literacy (Tiffin-Richards and Schroeder 2015). Moreover, multilingual learners often have varying levels of literacy in the languages they know, including their L1. They may, indeed, be very

³ Self-reported data are not 100 % reliable due to the subjectivity of the responses (Dörnyei 2003). See, however, Durik and Jenkins (2020) concerning the relationship between certainty and interest in self-report responses. For the purposes of this study, formal L1 testing was not possible to organize due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic at the time of data collection (February and October 2020).

proficient in speaking, but their literacy skills may not be equally developed (Rothman 2007). The challenge for teachers is to harness these experiences and utilize them in the teaching process.

Although it seems to be generally accepted that children and adolescents with a migrant background, living in an environment where their L1 is not spoken, are not expected to know their L1 as well as someone living in the environment where the language in question is spoken, there are numerous potential social and linguistic consequences that can arise (Rothman 2007). These could cause problems, both educationally and professionally, later in life. As noted above, L1 literacy is a key factor in learning foreign languages (Dufva and Voeten 1999), which are needed in many professions in Finland (Sajavaara 2010; Vieltojärvi 2023). Multilingual and multicultural children and adolescents possess immense potential that could benefit the society they live in. Ensuring they are provided opportunities to develop all their language skills in a sustainable, consistent manner can strengthen their multilingual and multicultural identity. This, in turn, will provide them with a stronger springboard for success in the society in which they live.

With the assumption that low morphological awareness will result in low reading comprehension proficiency, the purpose of this quantitative study is to uncover what this age group understands about morphological awareness and how L1 literacy level may impact the level of their morphological skills. The study also seeks to find a correlation between morphological skills and English reading comprehension to raise awareness about the importance of enhancing morphological skills and pave the way for new didactical practices in teaching English in Finland. Thus far, studies addressing the morphological skills of adolescent students with a migrant background in the Finnish context do not exist.

To unravel the complex phenomena of multilingualism, literacy proficiency, linguistic and social sustainability, and English reading comprehension, Section 2 discusses morphological awareness and its relationship to reading comprehension and multilingualism. This section also discusses derivational and inflectional morphology and why they must be considered when developing a morphological awareness measure. Furthermore, the authors will briefly discuss how English morphological skills are essential to reading skills from a linguistically and socially sustainable point of view and why linguistic distance may impact reading comprehension. Section 3 introduces the research questions in more detail and explains the methodology used to derive the results of the study. Section 4 presents the results of the study, while Section 5 discusses the impact of the results and the limitations of the study.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Literacy and reading comprehension

Early experiences with reading and language lay a strong foundation for successful L1 reading comprehension (Willingham 2017). Verhoeven and Perfetti (2022) state that learning to read involves certain universal skills, regardless of language. These include understanding that the sound system in a language corresponds to certain graphemes (phonological awareness) and that print carries meaning (semantic awareness), distinguishing the boundaries between words and units of words (morphological awareness) and perceiving the structure of the given language (syntactic awareness). Along with phonological awareness, morphological awareness is considered essential in reading development and a strong indicator of reading comprehension in alphabetic languages (Kuo and Anderson 2006). When learning languages beyond the L1, the process becomes more complex.

In L2 and L3 learning, readers must not only activate their working memory and prior knowledge of the topic of a text, but they must also apply their reasoning skills and the abovementioned linguistic components and sound systems of language to understand the new language itself (Breadmore et al. 2019; Tiffin-Richards and Schroeder 2015; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2022). Differences in individuals' reading comprehension skills are the result of differences in these processing skills (Tiffin-Richards and Schroeder 2015; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2022). As a decoding skill, morphological awareness is one of the key factors in learning to read proficiently and comprehending text in alphabetic languages. Furthermore, morphological awareness becomes a greater predictor of reading comprehension as children grow older (Kuo and Anderson 2006). Hence, the focus on morphological awareness and adolescents in the present study.

2.2 Multilinguals' morphological awareness

Morphological awareness involves the ability to consciously decompose and manipulate the constituents of a word and understand the meanings the constituents give to words (Deacon et al. 2014; Guo et al. 2011; Kenn Apel 2014; Kuo and Anderson 2006; Tong et al. 2011; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2011). A number of studies have indicated that morphological awareness contributes to reading comprehension across a wide range of ages and languages and when controlling for variables such as phonological awareness, verbal and non-verbal intelligence, and vocabulary (Deacon et al. 2014; Deacon and Kirby 2004; Desrochers et al. 2018). Studies have also indicated that, combined with other forms of learning literacy, practice in morphological

awareness enhances reading and writing skills across different languages (Bowers et al. 2010; Desrochers et al. 2018; Goodwin and Ahn 2013). This follows that multilingual learners could essentially benefit from such systematic practice in their L1, L2 and L3 and beyond.

Morphology consists of inflectional and derivational morphemes, the former indicating case, number and person agreement without changing the meaning of the word, and the latter often changing syntactic category and word meaning (Tong et al. 2011; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2011). See Table 1 for an example:

Table 1: Differences between inflectional and derivational morphemes.

Inflectional morpheme	Derivational morpheme
play (v.) + -ed -> played	play (v.) + -ful -> playful
Here, the inflectional morpheme -ed is added to the verb 'play' to form the past tense. The basic meaning of the word does not change.	In this example, the derivational morpheme -ful is added to the verb 'play' to form the adjective 'playful', changing the word's word class.

Children tend to learn inflectional morphology at an earlier age than derivational morphology due to the more complex cognitive skills needed to understand shifts in word meaning and syntactic class (Kuo and Anderson 2006). Derivational morphology, in particular, seems to be a determinant for reading comprehension (Kahn-Horwitz and Saba 2018; Kieffer and Lesaux 2008), which is the focus of the present study alongside inflectional morphology.

People who speak multiple languages have more recourse to linguistic resources to draw from when comparing morphology in different languages than those who speak one language, if they are able to apply their knowledge of those languages (Leonet et al. 2020). An important aspect to consider in foreign language reading comprehension among multilinguals is *linguistic distance*⁴ between the L1 and the foreign language. Linguistic distance refers to how phonologically, morphologically, orthographically, semantically and syntactically different the languages are—the further the distance, the more time and effort will be needed to comprehend text in the foreign language (Grabe and Yamashita 2022). As stated above, both Finnish and English are highly morphological languages, using both inflectional and derivational morphemes to create meaning (Vannest et al. 2002). However, syntactically, the languages are very different. This could potentially either facilitate or inhibit English reading comprehension for English language learners who have weak

⁴ Although linguistic distance is an important factor in foreign language learning, it does not fall within the scope of this study as a variable. However, this may be an issue to consider in future studies.

L1 reading skills (Grabe and Yamashita 2022; Menken and Kleyn 2010; Montrul 2013; Rothman 2007), because they may have not developed the skills to make distinctions in meaning based on morphology. Linguistic distance between the L1, Finnish and English could therefore add to the challenges in English reading comprehension (see Table 2 for a list of the languages the respondents in the present study reported having skills in).

By being aware of students' multilingual competencies, harnessing their linguistic repertoires to work in favor of their English reading comprehension skills and making morphology a more integral and eminent part of language teaching, teachers can help their students cultivate their cognitive processes, understand the role morphology plays in creating meaning, and develop strategies to improve their English reading comprehension skills.

Regarding orthography, e.g. Desrochers et al. (2018), orthographic awareness also seems to be a factor in morphological awareness. For example, Goodwin et al. (2013) discovered a mediating function of morphological awareness in reading vocabulary. Later, Kahn-Horwitz and Saba (2018), studied how cross-linguistic influence affects acquisition of reading in English as a foreign language (EFL). They found that L1 phonological, morphological and orthographic awareness predicted EFL word recognition. Their results indicate that morphological awareness seems to act as a mediator between L1 phonological and orthographic awareness and EFL reading comprehension. For this reason, morphological skills in the L1 are necessary.

In their study of university students, Au et al. (2002) found that mere exposure to a heritage language (L1 in the present study), Spanish, can lay the foundation for learning the heritage language at a later age. However, exposure did not have an impact on developing morphosyntactic skills. In contrast, Montrul's (2005) study of Spanish as a heritage language in the United States found a relationship between early exposure to the language and later morphosyntactic competence. The significance of these studies lies in the notion that exposure to and learning of the L1 develops morphological awareness, which in turn, facilitates reading comprehension not only in the L1 but also in the L2 and subsequent languages (Deacon et al. 2014; Deacon and Kirby 2004; Desrochers et al. 2018; Goodwin et al. 2013; Kuo and Anderson 2006; Leonet et al. 2020; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2011). Furthermore, purposeful instruction in morphology enhances foreign language reading comprehension (Amirjalili and Jabbari 2018; Bar-Kochva and Hasselhorn 2017; Bowers et al. 2010; Goodwin and Ahn 2013). The next section discusses this aspect of morphological awareness development.

2.3 Teaching morphology

Multilingual learners bring an abundance of linguistic knowledge to the classroom. Teaching morphological awareness has the potential to help them better understand the structure of words and how they can use that knowledge to create word- and sentence-level meaning and, in the end, comprehend text. Morphological skills are basic linguistic skills which contribute to development of analytical skills, increasing the ability to identify problems and find logical solutions (Kuo and Anderson 2006, Levesque and Deacon 2022, Levesque et al. 2018). Morphology plays a different role in reading and writing in different languages, but its function in word formation and lexical processing seems to be similar (Carlisle et al. 2010). Although small children gradually and unconsciously learn to identify morphemes as they learn their L1, it is not until they learn to read that they fully understand morphemic functions. Moreover, studies have indicated that, through teaching, morphological awareness increases as children grow older and contributes to academic success among university students (Anglin 1993; Stoffelsma et al. 2020). In their literary review, Bowers et al. (2010) found that teaching morphology benefits weak readers, in particular, and renders more impact when combined with other modes of literacy teaching, such as phonological awareness. Additionally, Jeon (2011) found that teaching morphology in English L2 has a significant impact on English reading comprehension. However, instruction did not seem to improve reading comprehension among fifth- and sixth-grade children who were weak readers and who spoke German as their L2 (Bar-Kochva and Hasselhorn 2017). The reasons for this difference could be many, but one possible reason could be differences in teaching methods, for example, a factor that does not fall under the scope of the present study.

2.4 Linguistic and social sustainability: the Finnish context

The sustainability dimensions are divided into four categories (ecological, economic, social and cultural, (Burford 2013, Duxbury and Gillette 2007, Giddings et al. 2002, Sund et al. 2020), but here we will only concentrate on the social and cultural dimensions. The social dimension of sustainable development covers topics related to human rights and equality, while the cultural dimension, including linguistic sustainability, focuses on multiculturalism, multilingualism, and the preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage (e.g., Maijala et al. 2024). Linguistic and social sustainability are thus both closely linked to language learning.

Language skills are key factors in social and societal participation, inclusion and democratic citizenship. They are essential to all individuals. This notion is also highlighted in the Council of Europe's Language Policy publication (Council of Eur-

ope 2015) and the Finnish Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014, 28). Accordingly, individuals should have equal opportunities to acquire and develop their language skills. This involves using their language skills, including their L1 and its dialects, as well as any additional languages they have learned (i.e. linguistic repertoire), as a means of communication. However, language should not be seen solely as a product, but as a process shared and exchanged alone or together with others who may be in different times or places (van Lier 2008). To do this, language learners must have the opportunity to build upon and access their language repertoires, which can be made easier through linguistically and socially sustainable teaching.

Language skills contribute to social sustainability by enhancing intercultural understanding and communication among individuals from different linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Dos Santos 2021). They facilitate understanding between people, which in turn can advance the achievement of democracy goals (e.g., Barili and Byram 2021). Moreover, linguistic practices in schools have an influence on multilingual students. If schools do not support the learning and use of their L1, it could have a detrimental effect on their cultural identity, ability to communicate with people of the same culture and their desire to learn and maintain their L1 (Cummins 2001). By addressing certain universals in language teaching, such as morphology, as it is a component in all languages (e.g., Perfetti and Verhoeven 2017), schools can better support students' linguistic and social sustainability, through improved language skills, and reinforce their sense of belonging in (Finnish) society.

The Finnish Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014) highlights the significance of multiple linguistic and cultural identities. It requires teaching to support students' multilingualism by utilizing all the languages or linguistic resources available to them, particularly in language subjects, such as Finnish/Swedish Language and Literature and Finnish/Swedish⁵, all of which are mandatory subjects. In recent decades, multilingual classrooms in Finland have given rise to translanguaging pedagogy in language teaching. This approach allows for flexible use of languages in the classroom (Creese and Blackledge 2010), particularly in contexts where students use their L1, the community language (e.g., García et al. 2017), and possibly other languages they know, such as English.

Finland is one of the few European countries with a special L1 curriculum for learners with a migrant background. This provides them with the opportunity to study and maintain their L1. Moreover, the lessons are integrated in Finland's free basic education system. However, the education department in individual municipi-

5 Finnish-speaking Finns learn Swedish as a compulsory language in grades 7–9, and Swedish-speaking Finns learn compulsory Finnish in the same grades.

palities decides whether these lessons are included in the school curriculum as an optional subject (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014, 463). Therefore, L1 lessons for all learners with a migrant background may not always be available. The number of participants in L1 lessons has however increased in almost all languages (Vipunen 2024). The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (2024) aims to strengthen language education for students with migrant background—not only their language skills, but also their other academic skills, such as study skills.

Adolescents with a migrant background have varying levels of L1 literacy (Rothman 2007). Rothman (2007) points out that students with a migrant background are an exceptional group of learners because they often speak proficiently in their L1 but may have varying levels of literacy—from not being able to read in their L1 at all to being able to read proficiently. The reasons for this are many: varied exposure to L1 text (some have access to text in their L1, while others may not, due to unavailability); availability of L1 lessons and active participation in them (some actively attend L1 lessons, while others may not have the opportunity to attend due to lack of enough students or municipal decisions); and family policy, to mention a few (see, e.g., Ahlholm et al. 2021; Piippo 2017). This is also the case in the present study.

All the adolescents in the present study reported attending early childhood education, at which time they were exposed to Finnish, at the latest. However, this is not the case with all children with a migrant background, putting these children at a disadvantage when starting school at the age of seven. Keeping in mind that not all children starting school have had access to text in their L1, the children learn to read in Finnish, a language which may differ significantly from their L1. This could potentially pose problems in reading comprehension, as they may not be able to perceive similarities and differences between the languages. Further, children in the first grade are also exposed to a foreign language, as it became mandatory in 2020 (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019). The majority of children begin learning English as their first foreign language. The next section delves into the mentioned complexities of multilingual learners and their reading comprehension in the Finnish context.

3 Methodology

3.1 Aims of the study and research questions

The premise behind the present study is the notion that closer attention should be given to developing multilingual students' morphological awareness due to its positive impact on English reading comprehension (Levesque et al. 2018; Levesque and Deacon 2022). Intervention could also prompt them to employ their linguistic reper-

toires more consciously. Moreover, learning that the constituents of different words carry meaning and understanding the ways in which the constituents may change the meaning or word class of a word could be a more effective way of learning new words, as opposed to merely memorizing their semantic meaning (Amirjalili and Jabbari 2018) or learning by rote what a foreign word or expression is in the native language.

This study aims to determine the level of morphological awareness among adolescents ages 13–14 with a migrant background and varying proficiency in self-reported L1 literacy. The study also seeks to discover any correlations between their level of morphological awareness with their English reading comprehension (ERC) skills. The purpose is to ascertain possible connections between morphological skills and ERC skills in the context in Finland. The research questions are as follows:

- RQ1: What is the level of morphological competence among adolescents with a migrant background with varying levels of self-reported L1 literacy?
- RQ2: What is the correlation between the adolescents' morphological skills and their ERC proficiency?

3.2 Participants

The respondents in the study comprise 62 adolescent students ages 13–14 with a migrant background. They represent the second generation of their culture, and therefore they have all begun their education in Finland. Of the 62 participants, 57 reported having attended preschool and came into contact with the Finnish language at the age of six, at the latest. Five respondents reported not having attended preschool at all. Preschool was not mandatory until 2015 (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019), and therefore it did not apply to the respondents in this study.

All the respondents were multilingual. They spoke Finnish as their second language and English as their first foreign language (beginning from grade 3). In addition, 17 respondents reported either understanding or speaking foreign languages that they had learned either as a result of their family circumstances or attending lessons at school or language club due to special interest (see Table 2). With this in mind, Finnish may not be their second language as such. However, it is considered their second language for the purposes of this study, because it is their language of schooling (see Council of Europe 2014). The respondents had also begun studying Finland's second official language, Swedish, as it is mandatory to start in the 7th grade (at the age of about 13). All the respondents in the study, except one, reported using English while playing online games, reading texts in English and speaking it with friends either in messages/social media or verbally. The respondents who reported being able to read in their L1 stated that they read in the L1 from less than

one hour per day to four hours per day (social media, blogs, printed books, poems and news articles). Those who reported having weak L1 literacy skills stated that they read less than an hour per day (social media, comics and short texts). Since Finnish is their language of schooling and the surrounding environment, the amount of time they read in Finnish surpasses both English and their L1.

Table 2: L1s and number of speakers and other languages spoken by the respondents in the study.

L1s reported by the respondents	Number of speakers (in the study)
Albanian	20
Arabic	7
Bengali	1
Bosnian	4
Dari	1
Kurdish	10
Pashto	1
Persian	2
Russian	2
Somali	6
Urdu	1
Vietnamese	7

Other language skills reported by the respondents: Arabic⁶, Azerbaijani, Bosnian, Cantonese, Croatia, Dari, Dinka, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Persian, Serbian, Spanish, Swahili, Turkish and Ukrainian

The left-hand column in Table 2 indicates the languages the respondents in the study reported as their first language. The second column indicates the number of respondents who speak the language in question. Some respondents reported speaking more than one additional language either in the home or having learned it at school/language club. These languages are listed at the bottom of the table.

The respondents attend the same highly multicultural, urban school in the southwestern part of Finland. The school observes the principles of *language re-*

⁶ Arabic as a second language.

sponsiveness whereby students are encouraged to apply their knowledge of all the languages they speak to their learning. Multilingualism and applying linguistic knowledge to learning are therefore part of the students' everyday life.

3.3 Data collection

Before collecting data, the students and their guardians were informed about the study and given the opportunity to decline from participating in it. In all, 62 students consented to taking part in the study. To ensure anonymity their teacher assigned them codes, which they used on the questionnaire and tests. During the testing session, the respondents were first given a background questionnaire to complete. Here, they provided information related to their cultural background, L1 literacy level, the languages they speak, attendance in early childhood education and experiences with reading in their L1, Finnish and English. They rated their level of L1 literacy on the following scale (Figure 1):

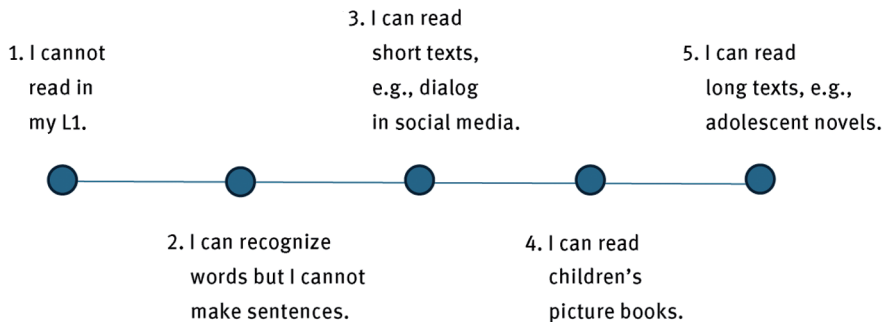


Figure 1: Respondents' self-reported L1 literacy level scale.

This particular item was carefully explained to the respondents to ensure they understood why they were being asked to rate their L1 literacy level, i.e., L1 literacy is considered to have an impact on second and foreign language learning (Jessner 1999). Using statements such as those on the scale was deemed an easier way for the respondents to rate their L1 literacy level, as opposed to merely rating it using numbers only, e.g. on a scale of one to five. The responses to this question were combined⁷ and used to place the respondents into three groups based on this self-report

⁷ Responses 1 and 2 were combined to form the “non-/low literacy” group and responses 3 and 4 were combined to form the “moderate literacy” group. Response 5 formed the “full literacy” group.

of their L1 literacy skills: non-/low literacy (LL1⁸), moderate literacy (LL2), full literacy (LL3). The respondents who placed themselves in the non-/low literacy group, LL1 (n=14), reported that they either cannot read at all in their L1, or they can recognize words, but they cannot form sentences. The moderate literacy group (LL2, n=18) reported being able to read short texts, such as dialog, comics or children's picture books. The full literacy group (LL3, n=30) reported being able to read at a level appropriate for their age, e.g., adolescent novels.

Self-reports can be seen as problematic due to the subjectivity and thereby weaker reliability of the responses (Dörnyei 2003). However, Durik and Jenkins (2020) conclude that self-reported responses generally reflect the information the respondents have at the time of data collection. They highlight the importance of interpreting the results while bearing in mind the circumstances under which the responses were given. As regards the respondents in this study, the fact that they could not be given an L1 proficiency test due to the prevailing pandemic was explained to them, and importance of answering this item as truthfully and reliably as possible was emphasized.

The background questionnaire was followed by a piloted and modified English morphological awareness test (MAT). The original test had a list of 20 non-words based on a modified idea from Laxon et al. (1992) where the respondents, who were not subsequently in the actual study and attended a different school, had to locate affixes in non-words. The pilot study revealed, however, that using non-words was too difficult for the respondents, and a new test containing 20 English words students usually know at ages 13–14 was created (Appendix 1). The words contained both inflectional and derivational morphemes (see Section 2.2).

The idea of the test was explained to the respondents using an example from Finnish, thereby making it easy for the respondents to understand what they were to do. The test was both on paper (pre-COVID-19 pandemic) and online in a Word document (during COVID-19)⁹, and the respondents had to draw a line between the base word and the affix. The words contained 1–2 affixes. One point was given for each correct answer, half a point for finding a prefix and half a point for finding a suffix. If a word had only a prefix or a suffix, a full point was deducted for an incorrect answer.

The third task was to complete an English reading comprehension test (Appendix 2). The texts were test material from Key English 7 (Kangasponna et al. 2003), a

⁸ “LL” refers to literacy level.

⁹ The number of respondents who completed the MAT on paper and online was 21 and 41, respectively. The average score for the MAT on paper was 16 points and 14 points for the online MAT. Although the scores were higher for the paper MAT, the online MAT had nearly double the respondents, making the scores less comparable.

textbook commonly used for this age group, but which was no longer in use. Therefore, the texts were similar to those in the respondents' current textbooks but were ones they had not seen before. The task comprised three different types of reading comprehension exercises – sequencing, multiple choice and true-false – all of which were familiar types of exercises to the respondents. Because no one method is capable of reliably testing reading comprehension (Alderson 2000), multiple exercises were used. The maximum number of points was 26, with each item rendering one point for a correct answer. The next section illuminates the analyses of these tests by first exploring L1 literacy level and then describing the relationship between L1 literacy level, morphological awareness and ERC.

4 Results

4.1 General overview of the results

An exploratory analysis of the data was first conducted to obtain a general overview of the respondents and their scores on the morphological awareness test (MAT) and the English reading comprehension test (ERCT). Table 3 shows the data's (N=62) descriptive statistics using the SPSS statistical software program.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics by literacy group, and their MAT and ERCT scores.

Group	MAT scores (min-max) Total points: 20	MAT mean score	ERCT scores (min-max) Total points: 26	ERCT mean score
LL1 (<i>n</i> =14)	5–20 SD: 5.30	13.14	8–26 SD: 5.97	18.50
LL2 (<i>n</i> =18)	6–20 SD: 4.21	15.22	8–25 SD: 4.94	20.28
LL3 (<i>n</i> =30)	5–20 SD: 4.95	14.70	9–26 SD: 5.23	19.70

The high standard deviation results indicate high within-group variation, which addresses RQ1. This can also be seen in the range of test scores for both the MAT (LL1: 5–20 points, LL2: 6–20 points and LL3: 5–20 points) and the ERCT (LL1: 8–26, LL2: 8–26 and LL3: 9–26). The scores for both tests are similar in all three groups, tentatively indicating similar skills regardless of L1 literacy level. This is in contrast to the general assumption that the better the literacy skills in the L1, the better the reading comprehension skills in the foreign language (e.g. Bowers et al. 2010; Deacon et al.

2014; Deacon and Kirby 2004; Desrochers et al. 2018; Goodwin and Ahn 2013). Therefore, Section 4.2 takes a closer look at individual scores.

Despite the high variation in test scores, the correlation between the MAT scores and the ERCT score is significant at the 0.01 level, which answers RQ2 (Table 4).

Table 4: Correlation between MAT scores and ERCT scores.

		Correlations	
		MAT	ERCT
MAT	Pearson Correlation	1	.352**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	62	62
ERCT	Pearson Correlation	.352**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	62	62

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The positive correlation indicates that morphological awareness is indeed a facilitating factor in reading comprehension proficiency, which is in line with the general understanding (Bowers et al. 2010; Deacon et al. 2014; Deacon and Kirby 2004; Desrochers et al. 2018; Goodwin and Ahn 2013). The next section takes a more detailed look at the variation among the L1 literacy level groups.

4.2 Varying proficiency groups

Since the test scores for all three groups were similar, LL1 and LL2 were further combined into one group, leaving two groups for comparison: G1 (n=32) and G2 (n=30)¹⁰. This way, the groups were more comparable in number. Close examination of the scores revealed four types of proficiency groups:

1. Low skills group (LS): This group comprises respondents, in both G1 (n=6) and G2(n=6), whose scores were weak on both the MAT and the ERCT.
2. Expected skills group (ES): This group comprises respondents, in both G1 (n=13) and G2 (n=15), whose scores were in line with the notion that the higher the morphological awareness, the better the reading comprehension and vice versa.¹¹

¹⁰ G2 comprises the members of the LL3 group. See Table 3.

¹¹ The scores on the MAT test exceeded 10 points out of 20 points.

3. High skills group (HS): This group comprises respondents, in both G1 (n=8) and G2(n=6), whose scores were high on both the MAT and the ERCT.
4. Low MAT¹²-High ERCT skills group (LM-HR¹³): This group comprises respondents, in both G1 (n=5) and G2 (n=3), whose scores were low on the MAT but high on the ERCT.

Table 5 shows the minimum and maximum scores and the mean scores for G1 (combined LL1 and LL2) and G2 (LL3) in all four score groups.

Table 5: Range and mean scores for non-/low literacy group (G1) and full literacy group (G2); (LS = Low Skills, ES = Expected Skills, HS = High Skills, and LM-HR = Low Morphological skills-High Reading comprehension skills).

Group	MAT scores min-max / mean / SD	ERCT scores min-max / mean / SD
LS: G1 (n=6), G2 (n=6)	G1: 5–13 / 9.67 / 3.08 G2: 5–14 / 9.67 / 3.83	G1: 8–16 / 11.33 / 3.08 G2: 9–17 / 12.50 / 3.08
ES: G1 (n=13), G2 (n=15)	G1: 13–19 / 15.92 / 2.06 G2: 12–20 / 16.53 / 2.90	G1: 11–25 / 19.46 / 4.37 G2: 9–25 / 20.27 / 4.22
HS: G1 (n=8), G2 (n=6)	G1: 18–20 / 19.38 / .744 G2: 18–20 / 19.17 / .753	G1: 22–25 / 23.50 / 1.07 G2: 23–26 / 24.33 / 1.03
LM-HR: G1 (n=5), G2 (n=3)	G1: 6–9 / 7.60 / 1.14 G2: 6–7 / 6.67 / .577	G1: 19–26 / 23 / 2.74 G2: 18–26 / 22 / 4.00

Table 5 shows more clearly how the within-group and between-group test scores vary. The SD figures consistently indicate high variation in test scores, although the variation among the respondents achieving high scores (HS) on the MAT (G1: .744 and G2: .753) and the ERCT (G1: 1.07 and G2: 1.03) is much less than in the original groups. The same is partially true for the low morphological awareness and high English reading comprehension (LM-HR) scores (MAT: G1: 1.14 and G2: .577, ERCT: G1: 2.74 and G2: 4.00). G2's standard deviation of 4.00 still indicates high variation as in the overall scores in Table 3. Interestingly, the figures for all proficiency groups, i.e. LS, ES, HS and LM-HR, indicate higher within-group variation than between-group variation, once again suggesting that L1 literacy level does not have an impact on English reading comprehension in this particular study. Moreover, the figures for the LM-HR group may be an indication that the members of the group lack the skills needed to analyze constituents of words, which substantiates the need for more focused, systematic teaching in morphology.

¹² The scores on the MAT were 10 points or less out of 20 points.

¹³ Low morphological awareness-high reading

In summary, the results support two generally accepted perceptions, according to which 1) children with a migrant background are extremely heterogeneous in their language skills, and 2) morphological skills correlate with reading comprehension, whether they be in the L1 or subsequent languages. However, the results are in controversy with the overall understanding, as mentioned above, that proficient reading comprehension skills in the L1 lead to proficient reading comprehension skills in a foreign language, which is English in this case (Deacon et al. 2014; Deacon and Kirby 2004; Desrochers et al. 2018; Goodwin et al. 2013; Kuo and Anderson 2006; Leonet et al. 2020; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2011). Section 5 discusses these issues in more detail.

5 Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this study was two-fold: 1) to examine the morphological awareness skills of adolescents ages 13–14 with a migrant background with varying levels of self-reported L1 literacy; and 2) to determine whether a correlation exists between their morphological awareness skills and their English reading comprehension proficiency. In response to RQ1, the respondents' morphological skills proved to be extremely heterogeneous in all three initial literacy groups. This is most likely due to the varying proficiency in their L1 which is in line with the current understanding of the L1 competences people with a migrant background have, meaning their L1 is most often a minority language in the society they live in. Moreover, there may not be the same opportunities to learn and maintain the language as the people who live in the country where the L1 is spoken (Rothman 2007). Thus, there could be an imbalance in L1 language skills, resulting from non- or low literacy in the L1, learning to read in a second language, and learning foreign languages through the second language (De Angelis & Selinker, 2001), as is the case with some of the respondents in this study. This imbalance could affect the respondents' ability to decompose and manipulate, i.e., analyze, the morphemes in a word (Apel et al. 2013; Deacon et al. 2014; Guo et al. 2011; Kuo and Anderson 2006; Tong et al. 2011; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2011). Mindful, systematic teaching of morphology and encouraging multilingual students to use their linguistic repertoires more consciously could help them make comparisons and ultimately make connections between morphemic structures more easily. In addition, language responsive teaching (e.g., Wernicke 2019) has the potential to narrow the gap between weak students and proficient students.

Breaking the larger sample down into smaller groups based on the achieved MAT and ERCT scores revealed the respondents' levels of proficiency more clearly. Interestingly, some of the respondents who had reported knowing how to read at a level appropriate for their age, meaning they had proficient reading comprehension

skills in their L1, did not achieve high scores on either the MAT or the ERCT. One reason for this could be their response to the self-reported literacy level item on the background questionnaire. These respondents may have assessed their L1 literacy skills higher than they actually are. The responses were thus strictly subjective, as formally testing their L1 literacy skills was not possible at the time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Another reason for the low scores on the MAT and the ERCT could be the linguistic distance (De Angelis & Selinker, 2001; Grabe & Yamashita, 2022; Ringbom, 2007) between the respondents' L1 (see Table 2) and English and/or Finnish. Understanding how morphemes change word meanings may be challenging if one cannot compare word structures to one's L1. Differences in cognitive processes may also explain the low scores on both tests, e.g., some of the respondents' decoding skills may be less developed than others and in due time will learn them as their language studies progress.

Another interesting result was that of the LM-HR group. The respondents in this group scored quite low on the MAT test but high on the ERCT test. One reason for this could be the respondents' engagement with English in their free time (see Section 3.2). This could have had an impact on their reading competence. However, additional investigation into this issue would be needed. Also needing further investigation would be the non-/low-literacy group's excellent MAT and ERCT scores. This could also be an indication of using English elsewhere than in school.

With regard to RQ2, the scores of most of the respondents, regardless of L1 literacy level, were expected, meaning their level of morphological awareness corresponded with their level of English reading comprehension skills. The positive correlation of all the MAT scores with the ERCT scores supports previous studies whereby morphological awareness contributes to reading comprehension proficiency (e.g. Bowers et al. 2010; Deacon et al. 2014; Deacon and Kirby 2004; Desrochers et al. 2018; Goodwin and Ahn 2013; Kuo and Anderson 2006). However, the result indicating that L1 non-/low literacy does not have an impact on English reading comprehension skills was an unexpected result, as previous studies have indeed claimed that proficient reading skills in the L1 result in proficient reading skills in subsequent languages. The idea behind this is that being a proficient reader in the L1, a person has already internalized many of the skills needed to read in another language, as learning to read in any language generally draws on the same cognitive processes (Tiffin-Richards and Schroeder 2015; Verhoeven and Perfetti 2022). It follows, then, that non-/low literacy would impede literacy development in a second or foreign language. In the case of the non-/low literacy respondents in the present study, Finnish could have an impact on their morphological skills, as Finnish is a highly morphological language. These respondents have learned to read in Finnish, and therefore they have developed morphological skills and are evidently able to apply them to their reading in English.

This study contributes to previous research, supporting the notion that morphological skills correlate positively with reading comprehension skills. It should be noted, however, that the study has its limitations and similar studies in the future should consider them. Firstly, the sample size was comparatively small, especially in the proficiency groups, and a larger sample size could yield different results. Secondly, this study applied only one type of morphological awareness test. To obtain more robust results, using multiple measures would be purposeful. Thirdly, the respondents' L1 reading comprehension skills were not formally tested. Rather, the respondents subjectively evaluated their own L1 skills. Formal L1 testing, again, could have possibly placed the respondents in different literacy groups, compared to their self-report. Despite its limitations, the study provides insight into the multilingual mind, how varied migrant students' language skills can be and how important addressing these variations is. The study paves the way for new linguistically and culturally responsive teaching and learning to ensure a linguistically and socially sustainable future for our youth.

Proficient reading comprehension and language skills and developing a critical approach to reading texts are essential in today's information-saturated society. They are also key factors in maintaining linguistic and social sustainability. For a democracy to work and for the multitude of different people in society to have equal opportunities for services, societal participation and inclusion, proficient reading and language skills are essential. This study highlighted how truly varied multilingual children's reading comprehension and language skills are. This can be both a resource and a hindrance, depending on how well the gaps in their knowledge are addressed and how well they are able to apply the linguistic skills they have as a result of their multilingualism.

Ensuring children with a migrant background learn and maintain their L1, L2 and L3 allows them to maintain close bonds with the culture and family of the L1, consolidates their feelings of belonging in the society of the majority language (Finnish) and helps them excel not only in navigating the internet, but also renders them access to better educational and professional opportunities where English may be the primary language used. In summary, the significance of proficient (multiple) language skills, literacy and reading comprehension especially, lies much deeper than a compulsory subject at school or learning a new language as a hobby. Being able to navigate in today's societies, where multilingualism is typically the norm, is essential. Equipped with proficient language skills, we can ensure that democracy and inclusion are upheld, and people can live in smooth cohabitation.

Appendix 1: Morphological awareness task

Forming words¹⁴

The words below have 1–2 affixes, either a prefix or a suffix or both. Place a slash to separate the affixes you find in each word. **See the example.**

This is an example from Finnish.¹⁵

Word 'EPÄSUORASTI' = EPÄ/SUORA/STI

(prefix)

(suffix)

1. WAITER
2. UNHELPFUL
3. FOOLISH
4. HANDY
5. FREEDOM
6. FEELING
7. MISSED
8. SADNESS
9. IMPOSSIBLE
10. MISTRUSTED
11. SUBMARINE
12. SPECIALIST
13. COSTS
14. DISRESPECTFUL
15. CLEVERLY
16. CHILDHOOD
17. BICYCLE
18. REPAY
19. REASONABLE
20. VISITOR

¹⁴ The original task instructions were in Finnish because it was the respondents' language of schooling.

¹⁵ The example is in Finnish because the respondents' language of schooling is Finnish, and it would be easier for them to understand what they needed to do. The example in English is IN-DIRECT-LY.

Appendix 2: Reading comprehension task¹⁶**Reading comprehension exercise**

This exercise contains three different texts. Read each text carefully and answer the questions that follow. The questions and the answer alternatives are in English. Please ask if you do not understand something.

A. The Best of Friends

Read the text and decide whether the statements are true or false.

Karen

Jane and I are friends because we like doing the same things. We are in the same football and volleyball teams, and that's great fun. We used to go jazz dancing and swimming together but not any more. What I like about Jane is that she is caring and always reliable. I really like her personality. She cheers me up. She is always there when I need to talk to someone, and she is the best listener in the world. I don't think she would ever hurt me or let me down.

1. Jane and Karen spend their free time together.

True

False

2. Karen thinks that Jane is a loyal friend.

True

False

3. Jane and Karen often go swimming together.

True

False

4. There is no better listener than Jane.

True

False

5. Karen is sure that Jane would never hurt her.

True

False

¹⁶ The original task instructions were in Finnish because it was the respondents' language of schooling. Also, the task was in digital format, and the respondents clicked on the answer they felt was correct.

Jake

I can't remember when I met Ian. Our parents have always been friends, too. When we were children, we used to play hide-and-seek with their dog, climb trees and make huts in his bedroom. Nowadays, when he is over at my place, we play cards, board games and computer games. We have a lot in common. We like the same games and the same TV programs. And we both share the same taste in music. Ian is good fun to be with. He's cool and relaxed – a real mate who's also a very good guitar player.

1. Jake met Ian for the first time at his parents' house.

True

False

2. Jake's mom and dad know Ian's mom and dad.

True

False

3. Jake likes the same kind of music as Ian.

True

False

4. Jake thinks Ian is too easy-going sometimes.

True

False

5. Jake and Ian play guitar in the same band.

True

False

Lucy

Sue and I met on the first day of seventh grade, and it didn't take long until we noticed that we like the same sorts of things. We have our own little jokes that no one else understands. Sue has a silly smile and mine is even sillier. On Friday evenings, we often go to the movies and after that we like to spend time at hamburger restaurants. When there is a disco at school, we usually get ready for it together. She is dead easy to talk to, and I'm sure she would never betray me or laugh at me behind my back.

1. Lucy met Sue at school.

True

False

2. Lucy and Sue have the same sense of humor.

True

False

3. Lucy and Sue go to the movies every Friday.

___ True

___ False

4. Sue is a bit hard to talk to.

___ True

___ False

5. Lucy is sure she can trust Sue.

___ True

___ False

How well do you feel you understood the text, *The Best of Friends*?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 I understood everything

B. Mrs Jenkins at the Cinema

Read the text and number the events (1–6) in the order they happened: what happened first, what happened second, etc. Select the number from the drop-down menu.

Number 1 = This happened first and 6 = This happened last.

Mrs Jenkins was shopping in town one Friday afternoon when it started to rain. She didn't have her umbrella with her, and she didn't want to go home, so she went to the cinema. She found a good place at the back and just before the film began, two men walked in. One of the men had very long hair, and it was difficult to see his face. When he sat down next to her, Mrs Jenkins saw that it wasn't a man at all – it was a big dog. She was very surprised but didn't say anything. The film was two hours long, but the dog didn't bark or move. He just watched the film. Mrs Jenkins thought it was very funny, and she spent more time watching the dog than the film.

When the film was over, Mrs Jenkins turned to the dog's owner. "You have a fine dog," she said. "Did he like the film?" "Yes," said the man. "But I'm surprised that he did."

"Why?" Mrs Jenkins asked. The man looked at his dog and answered, "He didn't like the book at all."

1. Mrs Jenkins talked to the dog's owner.

2. Two men sat beside Mrs Jenkins.

3. The dog's owner said his dog liked the film but not the book.

4. It was raining.

Select

5. Mrs Jenkins noticed that one of the men was actually a dog.

Select

6. Mrs Jenkins went to the cinema.

Select

How well do you feel you understood the text, *Mrs Jenkins at the Cinema*?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 I understood everything

C. Let Me Introduce Myself

Read the text and choose the most appropriate ending to each sentence below.

My name is Nina Normann and I'm 13 years old. I come from Norway, and I go to a large comprehensive school in Oslo. I'm in grade seven, and it has been much more difficult than in primary school. There are twenty-five students in my class, and we have lots of homework. I've had problems in some of the subjects. But that's because I have been ill twice with heavy colds. I have missed almost two weeks of school already, but I have done alright in English, IT and home economics. My worst subjects so far have been French, Norwegian, religion and maths. And I have had to do extra homework in social studies. My favourite subjects are gymnastics and food and nutrition. That's because the teachers have been really great.

I have got up at six-thirty nearly every morning this term since school has usually started at eight and we haven't finished until half past two in the afternoon. So, I have been quite tired sometimes. Fridays have been OK, though, because we start at half past eight and finish at two.

I haven't enjoyed my lunches because, unlike primary school, there hasn't been any school food. So, I have

brought my own with me, which hasn't been so good. I usually eat an apple, some crisps and a ham or cheese roll. But it hasn't been enough. So, my friends and I often have a hamburger after school. Tasty but not so healthy. So, what about you?

- The 7th grade has been difficult for Nina because...
 - ___ her class is big, and she has a lot of homework.
 - ___ she hasn't made any friends.
 - ___ she isn't doing well in any subject
- Nina has missed about two weeks of school because ...
 - ___ it's too cold in the school.
 - ___ the school has been closed because it's so cold outside.
 - ___ she has been sick.

3. Nina had to do extra homework in social studies because...
 - ___ she forgot to do it at home.
 - ___ she was away from school for almost two weeks.
 - ___ she fell asleep during the lesson.
4. Nina has liked Fridays because...
 - ___ the school day is shorter.
 - ___ they have good lunches on Fridays.
 - ___ she is always energetic on Fridays.
5. Nina has brought her own lunch to school because...
 - ___ the lunches aren't as good as in the primary school.
 - ___ there isn't enough food for everyone.
 - ___ there is no lunch at school.

How well do you feel you understood the text, *Let Me Introduce Myself*?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 I understood everything

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