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DIFFERENTIATION IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: TEACHER PERSPECTIVES, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

Students come in to the foreign language classroom with very different learning profiles, that is, readiness, interests, learning styles, social backgrounds and emotional needs. In order to respond to these differences and needs, and consequently promote students' growth to their full potential as both human beings and FL users, teachers need to differentiate their teaching. This is also in the requirements of the Finnish Core Curriculum (2004) and the amendments of 2010, as differentiation is an integral means of providing general support for all students. Research has been done on differentiating foreign languages, but there is space for a more encompassing study exploring differentiation in the FL classroom in the comprehensive schooling system in general.

This study aims at increasing understanding and knowledge on differentiation in the foreign language classroom as a phenomenon and spread awareness of diverse, truthful and respectful means of differentiation that FL teachers could apply in their everyday work. In other words, the main question of this study is what should and could differentiation in the FL classroom be like. For the should I turn to theoretical literature while for the could I explore FL teacher perspectives, practices and experiences from my data. The theoretical basis is formed by the synthesized theory and ideology of differentiation as well as theories on individual differences in second/foreign language learning derived from applied linguistics and psychology. For providing a deeper insight into the phenomenon, qualitative phenomenology was chosen as the methodology, and thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six comprehensive school English and Swedish teachers about their perspectives, practices and experiences on differentiation. The data was then analyzed using qualitative content and thematic analyses.

On the basis of the theory, the shoulds of differentiation in the FL classroom were compiled: it should concern all students, enhance appreciation of diversity, be supportive of students maximum growth and self-beliefs and informed by teacher knowledge on student differences, respond to student differences in readiness, interests, learning profile, personality, social background and emotional and motivational needs, practice weaknesses and capitalize on strengths, provide freedom of choice and be respectful and flexible.

On the basis of the data, the coulds were constructed. These coulds show which practices the informants find possible to use in regards to their know how and resources, and perhaps, which practices they deem effective and good. All of the informants differentiated their teaching in several theoretically informed but also innovative ways by utilizing whole-group and individual differentiation: materials, methods, evaluation, the learning environment and flexible grouping. The best practices were books, proactive education, classroom assistants and divided lessons. Differentiating by readiness was the most pronounced orientation in the data, as well as the academic literature. However, it was not the main orientation for two teachers: one emphasized the supporting of students' self-efficacies and differentiated by learning styles, interests, motivational needs and readiness, while the other highlighted the supporting of students' emotional needs and differentiating by them as well as interests. Nevertheless, readiness was not seen as a unitary construct by the interviewees, but consisting of several different competencies that vary from one student to another. Motivation enhancing practices were emphasized in the theory, but not in the data, while the theory and the informants were quite unanimous that the existence of individual learning styles could be questioned. In general, the informants of the study could aspire to differentiate more by interest, apply more diverse methods in organization and grouping, allow more variety in products and show that they have high expectations for all their students. Not using some of the practices suggested by the theory can be related to some of the challenges experienced: feelings of inadequacy, and lack of time, resources and knowledge. Some differences between differentiation in English and Swedish were noticed. Also, as classroom teachers know better their students, they might be more apt to teach FLs and differentiate effectively. All in all, the study provides an array of theoretically and practically informed ideas for differentiation in the FL classroom.

Keywords
differentiation, comprehensive school, foreign language learning, language aptitude, learning difficulties, learning strategies, learning styles, motivation, self-beliefs
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Tekijä</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Tämä tutkielma siis pyrkii lisäämään ymmärrystä ja tietämystä eriyttämisestä vieraiden kielen opetuksessa ilmiöön sekä levittämään tietoisuutta monopuolisuudesta, tulkisillisuudesta ja oppilaille merkityskeliisistä eriyttämisen tavoista, joita vieraiden kielen opettajat voivat soveltaa kokapäiväisessä työssään. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on kehittää eriyttämisen pedagogisiä ja psykoologisia työkaluja. Tekemällä yhteyttä vieraiden kielen eriyttämisestä ja yleiseen tiedekuntaan, opettajien ja oppilaiden sosiaalisiin, psykoologisiin ja motivatiokokoontumisiin, kertoo hanke olevan yksi tärkeimmistä yleiseen tiedekunnan kulttuurissa ja ympäristössä. Aineisto analysoitiin kvalitatiivisesti sisällönanalyyseina ja taustatietoja hyödynnetään.

Teoreettinen viitekehyksen pohjalta kokotieto on, että eriyttäminen vieraiden kielen opetuksessa on oikeutetua ja tärkeää. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on kehittää eriyttämisen pedagogisia ja psykoologisia työkaluja. Tekemällä yhteyttä vieraiden kielen eriyttämisestä ja yleiseen tiedekuntaan, opettajien ja oppilaiden sosiaalisiin, psykoologisiin ja motivatiokokoontumisiin, kertoo hanke olevan yksi tärkeimmistä yleiseen tiedekunnan kulttuurissa ja ympäristössä. Aineisto analysoitiin kvalitatiivisesti sisällönanalyyseina ja taustatietoja hyödynnetään.
1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................... 1

2. THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS .................................................................................................................... 5
  2.2. Differentiation ............................................................................................................................................... 5
    2.2.1 Defining Differentiation .......................................................................................................................... 5
    2.2.2 Theory Base of Differentiation .................................................................................................................. 8
    2.2.3 Differentiation and the Finnish School Policies ...................................................................................... 10
  2.3 Individual Differences in FLL ......................................................................................................................... 12
    2.3.1 Language Aptitude .................................................................................................................................. 13
    2.3.2 Cognitive and Learning Styles .............................................................................................................. 16
    2.3.3 Language Learning Strategies ............................................................................................................... 20
    2.3.4 Motivation ............................................................................................................................................... 22
    2.3.6 Learning Difficulties ............................................................................................................................... 25
  2.4 Differentiated Instruction in the Classroom ..................................................................................................... 28
    2.4.1 Assessing Needs and Defining Objectives .............................................................................................. 29
    2.4.2 Strategies for Differentiating by Orientation ......................................................................................... 32
    2.4.3 Evaluating .............................................................................................................................................. 40
    2.4.4 Organization and other Management Strategies .................................................................................. 41
  2.5 Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................... 44

3. RESEARCH .................................................................................................................................................... 48
  3.1 Research objectives and questions ................................................................................................................ 48
  3.2 Research methodology .................................................................................................................................... 48
    3.2.1 Phenomenology ..................................................................................................................................... 48
  3.3 Data collection ............................................................................................................................................... 49
  3.4 Informants .................................................................................................................................................... 50
  3.5 Data analysis ............................................................................................................................................... 52

4. RESULTS ...................................................................................................................................................... 54
  4.1 Understanding differentiation ......................................................................................................................... 54
    4.1.1 Meaning of Differentiation ..................................................................................................................... 54
    4.1.2 Objectives of FL Differentiation ............................................................................................................ 56
    4.1.3 Importance of FL Differentiation ........................................................................................................... 57
    4.1.4 Focus group of FL Differentiation ......................................................................................................... 60
  4.2 FL Differentiation in Practice ......................................................................................................................... 63
    4.2.1 Differentiating by Emotional Needs and Personalities .......................................................................... 63
    4.2.2 Differentiating by Readiness .................................................................................................................. 65
    4.2.3 Differentiating by Interest ..................................................................................................................... 73
    4.2.4 Differentiating by Learning Styles ....................................................................................................... 74
    4.2.5 Differentiating Evaluation .................................................................................................................... 78
    4.2.6 Organization and Grouping .................................................................................................................... 81
  4.3 Teacher Experiences on Differentiation ......................................................................................................... 84
    4.3.1 Good Practices in FL Differentiation ..................................................................................................... 84
    4.3.2 Challenges and Problems in FL Differentiation .................................................................................... 86

5. DISCUSSION ............................................................................................................................................... 88
  5.1 Supporting Students’ Self-beliefs ................................................................................................................... 88
    5.1.1. Dilemma of Labels in Differentiation ................................................................................................. 89
    5.1.2. Dilemma of Learning Styles .............................................................................................................. 92
  5.2 Shoulds of Differentiation in FL classroom .................................................................................................... 93
  5.3 Evaluating Coulds or Teachers’ Common and Individual Perspectives, Practices and Experiences .......... 94
  5.4 Further studies ............................................................................................................................................. 107
  5.5 Quality of the research .............................................................................................................................. 108
    5.5.1 Validity .................................................................................................................................................. 108
1. INTRODUCTION

This research is interested in the perspectives and practices of foreign language (FL) teachers on differentiation in the comprehensive school. My interest in the topic came about because I had a hypothesis that while many elementary school teachers differentiate systematically and regularly their math and literacy teaching, it is unclear whether and how teachers differentiate their FL teaching (FLT). Furthermore, as a future elementary school and English teacher I have been teaching English as well as giving special education classes. I have pondered how to help a few dyslexic students who read very slowly and phonologically, are timid to read aloud and have also major difficulties in spelling. On the other hand, I have wanted to challenge students who seem to be advanced in English compared to the majority of their classmates and seem to get bored and restless during classes. Then, there have been students who seem to enjoy doing exercises in the book, whereas some find it utterly boring and enjoy playing and talking instead. Some students are fascinated by texts related to animals, while others would like to read about sports. My question has been how to teach within these differences in readiness, styles and interests so that everyone would enjoy learning English without being negatively labeled or without the teacher creating 23 different lesson plans and chaos in the classroom. On the other hand, I am of the opinion that FL classroom has great potential in providing for different learners, although it might not be easy and simple for the teacher. In other words, what should and could differentiation in the FL classroom be like? With this research I wish to find some answers to my question on the phenomenon; for should I turn to theoretical literature, while for could I explore teacher perspectives and practices from my data.

Knowing foreign languages, and especially English, is nowadays considered basically an integral civics skill. Furthermore, it is written in the Finnish Basic Education Law (1 § 2 clause) that education shall be provided according to the pupil's age and capabilities so as to promote healthy growth and development in the pupil. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers differentiate their FLT so that the differing needs of students are responded to in order to avoid loss of self-belief and growth to their full potential. Unless FLT is differentiated, many students might develop a negative language learner image, lose interest in learning languages and thus lose those opportunities that language skills can bring in their professional and personal life.
Several theses in the University of Jyväskylä (Hirvonen, 2008; Huovinen, 2005; Roiha, 2012; Valta, 2010; Viskari, 2005) have been written on differentiation in English language teaching (ELT) and teachers' views on the topic, and the results will be brought together and reflected on in this research. However, it is beneficial to map out the perspectives and practices of other language teachers, as well. If students are taught other foreign languages besides English, why not invest in them just like in English. Naturally, learner differences are also prevalent in other languages than English. Furthermore, while the earlier theses have concentrated on either differentiating English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching in the upper secondary school, differentiating EFL teaching to immigrant students or to gifted language students in the elementary school or differentiation in the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), this research is more encompassing exploring differentiation in the FL classroom in the comprehensive schooling system in general. Potential differences between perspectives and practices between elementary and secondary schools are, of course, mapped out, too.

Consequently, the aim of this research is to increase understanding and knowledge on differentiation in the foreign language classroom as a phenomenon and spread awareness of diverse, fruitful and respectful means for differentiation that FL teachers could apply in their everyday work. Qualitative methodology phenomenology was chosen for providing a deeper insight into the phenomenon, while semi-structured interviews were seen as being suitable data for this kind of methodology.

In order to be able to reach my goal, my theoretical research questions are:

1) What is differentiation?
2) What are individual differences in language learning?
3) What is differentiated instruction in the classroom?

From the empirical data I wish to find some answers to the following questions:

4) How do FL teachers understand differentiation?
5) How do FL teachers differentiate their instruction in practice?
6) How do FL teachers experience differentiation?

The empirical data is analyzed with qualitative content and thematic analyses, as thematic analysis is suitable for interpreting thematically organized, semi-structured interviews,
while content analysis has the potential to bring coherence into the analysis. The answers from the theoretical research will be reflected to the one from the empirical data throughout the analysis in order to gain some understanding on the theoretical connections to the perspectives, practices and experiences of the informants.

Finally, based on my theoretical and empirical findings I try to evaluate how the teachers' perspectives, practices and experiences in differentiation match with the theory on differences in FL and objectives and recommended practices set for FL differentiation by the academic literature. Then, I hope I will have answers to my main question: what should and could differentiation in the FL be like? Many of the examples, such as the practices of organizing special education come from Finnish schooling, and therefore, the primary context for this research is Finland and the Finnish schooling system.

Differentiation is not a theory itself but a synthesis of several theories. From the researcher's point of view, differentiation boils down to understanding of how students are different, what they need to learn, what they need as learners and how those differences and needs can be taken into consideration in the classroom in regard to the content, process, product and learning environment of teaching and learning, so that students maintain and gain self-efficacy and positive learning experiences, which all lead to further learning motivation and better learning results. Thus, the theoretical part of the research, ch. 2., aims at exploring in ch. 2.2., how differentiation can be defined, what are its various objectives, what kind of theoretical foundations differentiation has been built on and what Finnish school policies say on differentiation. Furthermore, in ch. 2.3., the research tries to understand individual differences in FLL: is there such as thing as language aptitude, what kind of different cognitive and learning styles, intelligences as well as learning strategies individuals can have, how motivation can affect on language learning and what kind of learning difficulties individuals can have in FLL? Finally, in ch. 2.4., the focus is moved to what differentiation is specifically in the FL classroom.

In ch. 3., in the empirical part of the research, first, in ch. 3.1., the research objectives and questions are reviewed. Then in ch. 3.2., 3.3., 3.4. and 3.5., the research methodology, data collection, informants and analysis are introduced. After that the research moves forward to the results itself in ch. 4. after which in ch. 5 the empirical results and their connection to theory and the quality of the research are discussed. Finally, in ch. 6. the study is concluded. My challenge is integrating two different theoretical
approaches: differentiation and applied linguistics, or foreign/second language learning to be more exact, and comparing them to my empirical findings.
2. THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS

In the theoretical part, the thesis aims at exploring what differentiation in the FL classroom should be like. In more detail, the following chapters discuss how differentiation can be defined, what are its various objectives, what kind of theoretical foundations differentiation has been built on and what Finnish school policies say on differentiation. For theoretical foundations, zone of proximal development, cognitive constructivism and socio-constructivism have been chosen, as they have been discussed in the academic literature on differentiation and seem to provide justifications for the importance of differentiation. Intelligences, learning styles, differences in abilities, which can be seen as being part of the theoretical foundations, are, however, discussed later on the chapter 2.3 Individual differences in FLL. That chapter discusses if there is such a thing as language aptitude, what kind of different cognitive and learning styles, intelligences or learning strategies individuals can have; how can motivation affect language learning; and what kind of learning difficulties individuals can have in FLL. Finally, the focus moves on to the practicalities of differentiation in instructional contexts.

2.2. Differentiation

2.2.1 Defining Differentiation

Differentiation as a concept and phenomenon is very broad, since it can concern the objectives, contents, teaching methods, materials, the amount and time used for doing exercises, learning environments and evaluation practices of teaching. Tomlinson (1999, 1) and Viljanen (1975, 10) define differentiated instruction as the efforts of teachers to respond to the variances among learners in the classroom, while Hellström (2008, 63) defines it as actions that adhere to the didactic principle of individualism.
Differentiation is not a theory in itself but a synthesis of several theories and an ideology. The ideologies of inclusive education and individualism, and theories, such as multiple intelligences-theory by Gardner and theory on Zone of proximal development by Vygotsky, as well as cognitive constructivist and socio-constructivist theories can be seen to have affected to the development of differentiation as a theory and ideology. The most recent literature on differentiation has been mainly produced by a North American author Carol Ann Tomlinson. (Tomlinson, 1999, 2001, 2003.)

In differentiation, no longer is the individual entirely oppressed by the authority of the society and the teacher, but a more individualistic approach is enhanced; every individual has a human worth (Viljanen, 1975, 9). Article 29, moment 1a of United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNa, 1990, 9) states that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Inclusive education, with its ideals on egalitarianism and social justice, could be seen as supporting the most struggling students. Here, one of the main purposes of differentiated instruction is to decrease the tendency and need to “educate” children with disabilities in a specialized classroom. It has the potential to empower those with different learning modalities, all of whom should be functional and equal members of the mainstream society without the dangers of being subverted or oppressed. (Shyman, 2012, 66.) For instance, the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) calls on all governments to give the highest priority to inclusive education, while the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNb, 2006) calls on all States Parties to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels.

Hellström (2008, 63-64) specifies the different ideologies and objectives on differentiation and divides them in two: harmonizing (yhtenäistävä) differentiation and differentiating (erilaistava) differentiation. Harmonizing differentiation attempts at everyone reaching quite the same objectives. Viljanen (1975, 12) brings up another similar concept called Mastery Learning, which argues that despite everyone’s different prerequisites for learning, they can all reach the same goals, and even more. This is mostly because mastery learning strongly contributes individual differences to the learning environment instead of only innate abilities. Thus, with modifying the environmental factors, the differences can be mostly done away with. Viljanen (1975, 12) writes that harmonizing differentiation has been criticized for standardizing learning outcomes too much, while to it could be thought that Mastery learning is allowing more variance in
learning outcomes in that when provided with high expectations, students can reach as high as they can. On the other hand, differentiative differentiation does not expect everyone to produce the same learning outcomes, i.e. the objectives are differentiated. This approach could be criticized because it does not believe enough in everyone’s potential to reach the same learning objectives, as it believes that everyone has innately different abilities.

Tomlinson’s (1999, 2003) work and also the present Finnish core curriculum on differentiation seem to have characteristics of all the ideologies; the curriculum could be seen as promoting harmonizing differentiation, as it expects everyone to reach the same standards. Tomlinson again is more for mastery learning in a way that he argues for setting high expectations for all students. In a similar vein to Tomlinson, Thesein (n.d., 2) argues that everyone has potential for learning:

_Differentiated instruction is not merely a set of strategies and activities that challenges the learner in a variety of ways, but rather a belief system that proclaims that learners—with all their diversity—come to our classes with potential ready to be tapped... A differentiated classroom offers a variety of learning options to tap into different readiness levels, interests and learning profiles._

This argument also seems to derive from what the harmonizing approach to differentiation states: it acknowledges that straightforward definitions of ‘weakness’ and ‘fixed intelligence’ are not legitimate terms since all students should be provided a kind of a classroom environment that responds to their diverse needs.

Furthermore, Tomlinson, Brimjoin & Narvaez (2008, 3) state that:

_All differentiation can be seen to have one, mutual goal: the best, possible academic success to the broadest group of people; differentiation should not only concern the weakest students but all students in the class and it should be the starting point for all planning._

In other words, along the tenets of mastery learning, students are not expected to reach a specific set of standards but to achieve as much as they have potential for. For some students it might mean lower standards than the curriculum sets, while for some students it might mean higher standards. E.g. the Finnish core curriculum allows individualized study
plans with differentiated learning objectives and special areas of emphasis for struggling
costudents. Consequently, a middle road between harmonizing and differentiating
differentiation and mastery learning would be that, although the goals of essential
knowledge, understanding and skill remain bedrocks for the class as a whole, the teacher
makes adaptations in time, support, materials and routes of access to ensure that each
learner finds success at the end of hard work and achieve more than they thought they
could. (Tomlinson, 1999, 2.)

All in all, there must be nothing disputable in that a teacher reaches out to an
individual or small group to vary his or her teaching in order to create the best possible
learning experiences for all. When educators employ responsive and effective methods in
addressing student differences, all their students will have the opportunity to be fully
engaged and interested, they will be provided with a developmentally appropriate and
stimulating education based on their abilities and learning channels, and lastly, they will be
given the opportunity to work up to their greatest potential.

So, if the goal of differentiation is to respond to the different needs of the
students, its most extreme form would mean assigning each student only individual
exercises that they could do at their own pace with a private teacher. However, this
approach would most probably serve only one of the basic needs, competence, but not for
example psychological relatedness (see Deci & Ryan, 2002). Extremely individualistic
approach to differentiation would not either allow students to learn to adapt to and accept
extrinsic requirements and try their best within those requirements, even though in life we
need to learn to make compromises between our individual needs, wants and motivations
and societal expectations. Thus, differentiation is also about compromising. (Viljanen,
1975, 9.)

2.2.2 Theory Base of Differentiation

Cognitive constructivism, socio-constructivism and the concept of zone of proximal
development by Vygotsky are included in this research as they are considered as one of the
theoretical foundations for differentiation. Cognitive constructivist learning theory is
learner-centered, as it is interested in what goes on “inside the learner’s head”. Thus,
learning can be defined as information processing, where a person actively chooses, interprets and contracts information in relation to his or her previous knowledge, expectations, goals, stage of cognitive development, cultural background, and so forth. In other words, the approach regards learners as individuals. (Kauppila 2007, 48–52.)

Chunked information is organized around categories and ideas that increase the information’s meaningfulness. The brain constantly seeks to connect parts to wholes, and individuals learn by connecting something new to something they already understand. The brain doesn’t respond much to things that carry only a surface meaning. It responds far more effectively and efficiently to something that carries deep and personal meaning, something that is relevant, important, or taps into emotions and previous experiences. (Tomlinson, 1999, 18-19.) Therefore, instead of drilling knowledge into students, the teacher provides necessary resources and guides learners as they assimilate new knowledge to old and to modify the old to accommodate the new. The teacher needs to take into account the knowledge learners currently possess and thereby, construct teaching. (Berkeley Graduate Division, n.d.)

In addition to taking individualism into account in differentiation, the social nature of language learning cannot be neglected. Socio-constructivist learning theory has developed on the basis of constructivism. According to the approach, learning takes place in specific socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, the importance of communality and cooperation in learning is emphasized, since social interaction is regarded as necessary for learning and construing information. In other words, learning is both an individual and a communal construct. Furthermore, according to Vygotsky, language develops first to be a tool for social interaction and gradually, from there, it becomes a tool for thinking. (Kauppila 2007, 48–52.)

According to Vygotsky (Vygotsky 1978; 1982) the zone of proximal development refers to the distance between the actual development level and potential development level of the student. In other words, the exercises and problems that are on the zone of proximal development are the kind that the student cannot solve independently but needs the teacher’s support and guidance. Zone of proximal development is linked to differentiation in a way that in differentiation, the actual developmental levels of students are attempted to map out and adopt teaching so that it would provide challenge to each student. As a consequence, in an ideal differentiation situation each student would work on their zone of proximal development since individuals learn best when they are in a context that provides a moderate challenge. (Tomlinson et. al. 2008, 4.)
In other words, when a task is far too difficult for a learner, the learner feels threatened and "down-shifts" into a self-protection mode. A threatened learner will not persist with thinking or problem solving. On the other hand, a simple task also suppresses a learner's thinking and problem solving. He or she coasts into a relaxation mode. Put another way, students who consistently fail lose their motivation to learn. Students who succeed too easily also lose their motivation to learn. (Tomlinson, 1999, 19.) The reasons for providing moderate challenge can also be found from theories on motivation, such as goal theory and expectancy-value theory, which claim that in order for the goal to be attractive and rewarding, it needs to have a promise of challenge but so that the learner can expect success and coping. The topic of motivation will be discussed more in the later chapter on Motivation.

2.2.3 Differentiation and the Finnish School Policies

Modern Finnish inclusive school policies, which aim that all students would go to their nearby schools regardless of their physical, mental or linguistic characteristics, has partly resulted in a situation where general classes have more and more heterogeneous student material, and teachers might have to simultaneously teach very diverse students. Therefore, one of the main factors in making the teaching successful is differentiation. Indeed, the importance of differentiation is frequently brought up in educational research publications and literature, but it is still quite a vague concept. E.g. this is why Roiha (2012, 96) suspects why the teachers in his study interpreted the concept so differently. Therefore, it is important for schools to have clear guidelines for differentiation. This might increase the systematic use of differentiation. The Finnish Core Curriculum and quite recent amendments to the curriculum (see POPMT, 2010) and Basic Education Act in regard to organizing special support (Basic Education Act, as amended by Act 642/2010) provide guidelines for schools and teachers to start constructing their practices in differentiation.

The Finnish national core curriculum (2004) does not deal with differentiation in much detail. It is stated that the curriculum is based on a learning approach according to which learning is dependent on learner’s individual dispositions (OPS, 2004, 18). In the chapter "General support of learning" it is written that the learning of individual students and means of differentiation, such as supportive teaching, can be
planned and recorded by using personal learning plans (oppimissuunnitelma). However, the role of learning plan is left quite open, as it is just stated that plans can be made for all students if the local curriculum advises so and for students with special needs if needed (OPS, 2004, 22-23).

However, the recent three-step support model (Basic Education Act, as amended by Act 642/2010) has been developed to increase consistency, flexibility and continuity of support, decrease student transfers to special classes and to enhance inclusiveness. The first two steps, called general and intensified support, have been developed so that students can be supported without individualizing their syllabi and learning objectives. In the final step, called special support, the student will be made an individual learning plan (HOJKS–henkilökohtainen opetuksen järjestämistä koskeva suunnitelma). Differentiation is one of the most important methods of support in each step (POPMT, 2010, 9). What has followed the implementation of the new support model is that now by law teachers are required to provide general support to all students. Indeed, the model brings clarity to the earlier quite ambiguous situation of student support and differentiation.

What is more, for students in intensified or special support it is possible to take special areas of emphasis on learning into use without yet officially individualizing and lowering learning objectives. This means that the criterion for learning is still the same as in the curriculum. The purpose is to help the student master the contents that are the most important considering the progression of learning. By concentrating on the essentials, the student will have more energy to be used for strengthening the skills of learning. (Opetushallitus, n.d.)

Moreover, additions to the core curriculum made in 2010 take a stance on differentiation in much greater detail, as it clearly states that it is a primary method of taking different student needs into account in the classroom. The view on student differences is broad, as it is written that attention should be paid to the inherent learning styles, strategies, rhythm of learning, readiness and interests as well as emotional needs of students. Furthermore, the connection of differentiation to self-esteem and motivation is acknowledged and further well clarified by writing that differentiation provides students challenges, experiences of success and possibilities to develop and learn according to one’s strengths. (POPMT 2010, 9.)
The additions continue by explaining that from teachers, differentiation requires knowledge of the processes of learning and human development and evaluating of the development of the classroom atmosphere and student learning (POPMT, 2010, 12). It is clarified, similarly to Tomlinson (1999), that differentiation can be focused on the width and depth of the contents, materials and homework, and pace of learning, while the learning environment and methods can be modified by e.g. providing opportunities for choosing and participation, organizing the use of space and flexibly grouping students (POPMT, 2010, 8-9). Other means for differentiation are remedial education, defining special areas of emphasis on learning and classroom assistants (POPMT, 2010, 13).

Similar to what Tomlinson writes, it is explained that continuous and individual feedback is of utmost importance. Physical, psychological and social learning environments, such interaction, need to guide students to become aware of their learning profiles and ways to affect on their learning e.g. by setting personal goals and evaluating their actions. (POPMT, 2010, 12.) Then, learning difficulties need to be taken into account in the assessment. This also refers to students who have mild difficulties in their learning and have not been transferred to special support. These mean that certain kinds of assessment methods need to be used where the students are able to show their know-how and development, however, without putting down students' grades. (POPMT, 2010, 54.)

2.3 Individual Differences in FLL

We could all agree that all learners are different; they have different learning profiles. However, what are these differences made of, and how do they affect language learning? The variety of characteristics that scholars are researching are language aptitude, cognitive and learning styles, intelligences, temperament, learning strategies and motivation but also gender, personality and social and cultural backgrounds, to name a few. The following chapters explore more what these individual differences are, and language aptitude, cognitive and learning styles, intelligences, temperament, learning strategies, motivation and learning difficulties are taken under closer inspection.
2.3.1 Language Aptitude

The ability to learn a foreign language is called *language aptitude*. Language aptitude differs from one's language proficiency in that it refers to one's ability to learn a foreign language and not what one has already learnt. In this research, the terms *gifted* and *advanced* language learner/student are used interchangeably, but whether the terms refer to a student who has high language aptitude and/or is proficient in the FL due to previous learning experiences and practice, will be explained in the context. Johnson (2001, 6, 116-117, 123) writes that some people are better in learning foreign languages than others. There is debate over to whether language aptitude is a distinct ability independent of human beings' general intelligence or related to more general abilities, such as intelligence,
and whether language aptitude is monolithic trait or consisted of several components (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005; Sternberg, 2002; Robinson, 2002).

Skehan (2002, 82) suggests that language aptitude is not monolithic but is constituted of sub-components, and these different components of aptitude are related to stages of information processing and L2 acquisition process. Phonemic coding ability can be related to noticing and input processing; language analytic ability (grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning) can be related to identifying, restructuring and manipulating the input; and memory-as-retrieval can be related to output and fluency. In other words, it could be possible that a learner's aptitude reflects strengths and weaknesses in a range of cognitive abilities that underlie the language development process.

Furthermore, analytic language ability is more connected with general cognitive abilities e.g. intelligence, while phonemic processing and memory are related to specific linguistic abilities. (Skehan, 2002, 82; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 596).

Skehan (in Ranta, 2008, 144) also participated in a longitudinal study involving 128 children who were studied in the first few years of life. Skehan was able to test these children a decade later when they had begun learning another language in school. His findings confirm the notion of language aptitude as a stable trait of the individual, but also indicate that it is influenced by early experiences at one's home environment.

Uusikylä (2003, 49) is of the same opinion on the effects of experiences: school success is often influenced more by children's social background than intelligence. Many societal factors, personal characteristics, wealth, area of residence and coincidence affect the development of different skills and gifts.

In a similar manner, Sylwester (in Tomlinson, 1999, 18) argues that neurons grow and develop when they are used actively; they atrophy when they are not used, suggesting that experiences affect individual abilities. Vigorous learning changes the physiology of the brain. Therefore, intelligence is fluid, not fixed. In other words, providing children with rich learning experiences can amplify their intelligence, and denying them such richness of experience can diminish their intelligence.

Robinson (2002) has reconceptualized the components of aptitude into a hierarchical arrangement of aptitude complexes, which are combinations of aptitude variables that jointly influence learning in particular situations. Instead of talking about a learner's overall aptitude, Robinson suggests four aptitude complexes, each made up of different combinations of ability factors. According to Robinson, these complexes involve cognitive resources (attention, working, short-, and long-term memory, basic processing
speed) as they manifest themselves in primary linguistic abilities (linguistic pattern recognition, phonological memory, grammatical sensitivity); these primary abilities cluster into sets of higher-order abilities engaged in language learning (noticing the gap, memory for contingent speech, deep semantic processing, memory for contingent text, metalinguistic rule rehearsal); and these higher-order abilities form aptitude complexes. It could be said that despite not being of the most practical utility in the classroom, Robinson's more differentiated view of aptitude promises to offer a better framework for investigating how aptitude influences learners' reactions to specific instructional activities.

In conclusion, aptitude is regarded as anti-equalitarian, in that if a fixed interpretation of aptitude or intelligence is taken, it is seen as potentially disadvantaging many learners, with no hope offered of overcoming of low aptitude and low intelligence (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 593). However, as Skehan's (in Ranta, 2008) studies have indicated, experiences have an effect on language learning abilities. Brain research suggests that intelligence, which is often claimed to be the underlying factor for successful analytic language learning, is somewhat fluid (Tomlinson, 1999, 18). Skehan (2002) and Robinson (2002) have also suggested that language aptitude is not a monolithic construct. Skehan implies that people can have aptitudinal weaknesses and strengths in different stages of information processing while in Robinson's terms, language aptitude is consisted of aptitude complexes of whose functionality depends on the teaching methods. Several teachers can also probably sign the argument that students' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening differ, too, and few people are gifted in all of these areas.

Furthermore, the theories on language aptitude can be related to theories on successful intelligence and learning styles, which suggest that there is more to the general intelligence or IQ. Then, especially motivation, in addition to aptitude, has stood up in the research field on L2 learning as a major factor predicting language achievement. Additionally, for instance, according to Oxford & Lee (2008, 307) a teacher might be able help students learn foreign languages by teaching self-regulation skills and learning strategies. These claims will be more dealt with in the next three sections on Cognitive and Learning Styles, Learning Strategies and Motivation.
2.3.2 Cognitive and Learning Styles

It is claimed that some students need to talk ideas over with peers to learn them well. Others work better alone and with writing. Some students learn easily part-to-whole. Others need to see the big picture before specific parts make sense. Some students prefer logical or analytical approaches to learning. Other classmates prefer creative, application-oriented lessons. (Tomlinson, 1999, 11.) All these preferences can be affected by cognitive and learning styles, intelligences and temperament, or, in Keefe and Perrell's words (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 602), by the individual's neurobiology, personality and development, which are a part of making a student's learning profile.

There is much debate whether learning styles even exist. For instance, Schmeck (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 607) and Reid (in Griffiths, 2008, 53) argue that learning styles and learning strategies are intertwined, as a learning style refers to a habitual, cross-situational use of a class of learning strategies. In this case it would be difficult to decide whether learning styles are independent individual differences or if the term is just an easy way to refer to certain patterns of information-processing and learning behaviors whose bases lie in a range of different factors, such as acquired abilities and skills, personality traits and previous learning experiences.

However, Dörnyei and Skehan (2005, 602) bring out a contrast between cognitive and learning styles. The former can be defined as a predisposition to process information in a characteristic manner while the latter can be defined as a typical preference for approaching learning in general. In the following chapters, mostly different cognitive styles are discussed.

Now, while there is consensus that language aptitude is the best predictor of language achievement, scholars are not unanimous on if there is a superior cognitive style that would predict and aid in better language achievement. Some claim that tests are clear on the superiority of analytic/field independent learning style, while others argue that the findings on the superiority of analytic style are false due to invalid testing and the fact that it is the most favored learning style in instruction, and that analytic styles are not helpful in real-life communication situations, but other learning styles, such as interpersonal competencies, are needed as well.
The major interpretation of cognitive style has been through the studies of the constructs of field independence and field dependence. Field independents prefer to find solutions to problems by themselves while field dependents are sociable and work well in groups. Both of these predispositions could have advantages in language learning: the former could be linked with a capacity to analyze linguistic material, and to learn systematically: the latter to engage in communicative language use, and to "talk to learn". However, the significant positive correlations between language learning achievement and style are always in favor of the field independent style.

What is more, Skehan (2002, 77-78) argues that analytic style is actually likely to be particularly important in naturalistic settings where the learner has to impose structure on the input unaided. Furthermore, consistent with Skehan's claim, in Ranta's (2008, 147-148) research, the "good language learners" demonstrated the ability to handle a variety of analytic and decontextualized tasks despite the fact that the instructional content did not promote the development of such skills. A follow-up analysis of the oral production from a subset of those learners revealed that those learners identified as being analytic had progressed more quickly to the higher stages of inter-language development than learners labeled as being "less analytic".

It is interesting, however, that the two groups were not, however, very different on the fluency measures of their speech (Ranta, 2008, 147-148). Indeed, MacIntyre (in Pawlak, 2012, xxxiii) has studied willingness to communicative in the second/foreign language, which differs from individual to another. It is affected by several variables, such as communication anxiety, perceived communication competence, perceived behavioral control, including opportunities for L2 communication or international posture.

Skehan (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 602-603) proposes that the contrast should be between an analytic orientation and memory orientation, and students can have high levels of both, low levels of both or more of one and less of the other. Skehan and Wesche (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 595-596) reported results where analytic and memory-oriented learner types emerged from learner score profiles on aptitude test batteries, and either sort can be successful. Wesche explored the consequences of such learners being matched or mismatched with teaching methodologies of analytic and audio-lingual. She showed that there is an interaction between learner characteristics and instructional conditions.
Kolb (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 65-67) has also a view on cognitive learning styles. He suggests that there is an ideal learning cycle, which starts from concrete experience, moves to observation and reflection upon experience, and then conceptualizes the experience at a more abstract level as a result of the reflection. The learner then uses the results of the conceptualization to achieve a deeper level of understanding. In reality, different learners may characteristically linger at particular points of the cycle. This results in whatever point of the cycle they prioritize will overly influence how they learn.

Moilanen (2008, 40) provides his own interpretation on learning styles, and writes that a part of the learners are more concrete. They have a need to experience the language personally and empathize to a language use-situation. In Kolb’s terms, it would mean that part of the learners linger at the first stage of the ideal learning cycle. They may want to organize words by using sticky notes, talk, stand and move around. They might have difficulties in receiving information from a black- or whiteboard and prefer having the information on their own copy in front of them on their desk instead. Moilanen (2008, 40) continues that they could also be called 3D-learners. Some learners then, are more abstract and could be called 2D-learners: they are able to externalize the language i.e. to understand words and language structures on paper without testing them in practice right away. These students would then linger on the third and fourth stages of the Kolb’s cycle.

However, Kolb’s cycle of ideal learning seems to suggest a sort of hierarchy where those learners who are more concrete and linger on the first stage, are somehow less advanced than those who are more abstract and on the third and fourth cycles. This however, could also explain why many learners with learning difficulties benefit from concrete instruction and activities. Kolb also seems to propose that all learning starts from a concrete experience, and that is something that could be agreed on, especially in FLL context. Indeed, languages need to be experienced personally and empathized to real language use-situations. Languages are studied because they are tools and means to achieve something.

Sternberg’s (2002) theory on successful intelligence broadens the views on cognitive learning styles and intelligence. The model consists of three types of intellectual competence; analytic abilities used in analyzing, judging and comparing and contrasting; creative abilities used in coping with novelty and ambiguity and coming up with novel solutions; and practical abilities used to apply knowledge and adapt to varying contexts. Especially creative abilities have been proven by brain research to appear active in the
different areas of brain lobes than analytical abilities (Sousa, 2009, 25-28). Hypothetically, a learner can be strong, weak, or average on any of the components of aptitude.

Successful intelligence then, involves recognizing one's strengths and making the most of them while recognizing one's weaknesses and finding ways to correct them. Moreover, people will learn a language successfully when the way they are taught fits their ability patterns. (Sternberg, 2002, 15.) For instruction in the classroom, the model encourages more diverse forms for encoding material, so that there will be more retrieval pathways to the material and a greater likelihood of recall (Sousa, 2009, 18).

Sternberg's theory was chosen over Gardner's multiple intelligence theory simply because the theory of multiple intelligence has not been tested, even though Gardner presented the theory 20 years ago. However, Gardner's theory can be seen as a springboard for differential pedagogical applications (see Tomlinson, 1999). Also, it has made a valuable contribution to the literature on intelligence by breaking away from g (general intelligence) theory. (Sternberg, 2002, 21-22; Sousa, 2009, 16.)

Finally, there are other learning preferences that can derive from differences in temperament, as Keltinkangas (in Moilanen, 2008, 51) explains or as Dunn & Dunn propose (in Salovita, 1999, 157) preferences for certain kind of physical learning circumstances and sociological and emotional factors. Some students need routines and clear instructions, as they experience changes and/or freedom of choice negatively. Some students then cannot stand monotony or doing only one exercise at a time. While some students move from one exercise to another quickly, others need more time. Furthermore, some students do not take part in classroom discussions, but it does not mean they would have poor knowledge. Students also receive feedback in different ways. Additionally, Reid (in Dömyei & Skehan, 2005, 437) talks about sensory preference; she proposed auditory, visual, kinesthetic and tactile preferences, and indeed Dömyei admits, based on research, that learners can have visual and/or auditory preferences even though not necessarily at the expense of the other channels.

Consequently, cognitive and learning styles and intelligences can be divided into several different categories. People can be seen as having different cognitive styles and be analytically or memory-oriented, field independent or field dependent, analytical, practical or creative, visual, auditory, tactile or kinesthetic, concrete or abstract or have different predispositions in the different stages of the learning cycle. It seems that analytical language style is the most successful in the classroom as well as in natural contexts, but it is not necessarily the determinant for success in communication. On the
other hand, analytic style might be successful in school contexts just because education believes in its superiority for effective learning and teach in the style. Thus, those who are stylistically different do not adapt and are labeled as having learning difficulties. Additionally, temperament affects learning preferences. Indeed, the term learning style has been used very broadly in literature, as it is used here in this research. Therefore, for the rest of this study, cognitive styles and learning styles are referred to as just learning styles.

2.3.3 Language Learning Strategies

Again, for clarity and simplicity, in this study, learning strategies will be included as a subcategory of learning styles from here onwards. Dörnyei & Skehan (2005) claim that, so far, several theories on learning strategies have been atheoretical and vague. Kirby (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 611) tries to explain the concept by specifying the relationship between "strategies", "skills" and "abilities" by saying that skills are the things we can do (constrained by our ability), whereas strategies involve the conscious decision to implement these skills.

Earliest theorizations on language learning strategies were provided by e.g. Rubin (in Griffiths, 2010, 1). According to her observations, good language learners use strategies of guessing meaning with the help of clues, communicating with the help of techniques, managing inhibitions, attending to form, practicing, monitoring, and attending to meaning. Shortly after, Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern, & Todesco (1978, 17) developed classifications of their own. Another example is Oxford’s (in Pawlak, 2012, xxx) holistic conceptualization; according to her model, language-learning strategies can be classified into six strategy types, which include metacognitive, cognitive strategies, memory-related, compensatory, social and affective strategies. However, educational psychologists in the late-90s focused on the learner’s conscious and proactive contribution to the enhancement of her or his own learning process. The new term for this evolved to be self-regulation. (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 610-611.)

As Winne (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 612) explains, self-regulating learners set goals for extending knowledge and sustaining motivation. They are aware of what they know, what they believe, and how these affect on the task-at-hand. They also select from small-grain tactics and overall strategies the ones they predict will support
progress towards chosen goals. An addition to the concept of self-regulatory learner was made due to results from motivational research: a language learner needs to be able to maintain one’s motivation despite challenging situations and drawbacks, hence the new term *motivational self-regulation.* (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 612.) Griffiths (2008, 58) argues, however, that the self-regulation concept does it do anything to resolve battles over definition neither remove the need for a strategy concept, as FLLs still need strategies to achieve self-regulation.

Indeed, apart from speculations on individual differences, definitional fuzziness and invalid research instruments, for long cognitive theory has produced at length a variety of language learning strategies that, it could be well argued, are still justifiable (Rose, 2012, 92). Also Winne (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 612), in the chapter above, referred to “small-grain tactics and overall strategies”. The statistics indicate that higher-level students report more frequent use of a larger number of language learning strategies than do lower level students, suggesting a generally positive relationship between the higher-level language learner and the language learning strategy use (Griffiths, 2008, 89). Even though it is complicated to pinpoint any specific strategy, all strategies require the learner to take charge of their learning, be cognitively active and process linguistic information, which enhance learning (Griffiths, 2010, 16).

An example of more context-specific strategies is provided by a study introduced by Griffiths (2008, 92). Its results on language learning strategies of good language learners are classified into strategies to manage one’s own learning (metacognitive), strategies to expand one’s vocabulary, strategies to improve one’s knowledge of grammar; strategies involving the use of resources (such as TV or movies); and strategies involving all language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking). Rubin also has her own classification (2008, 12) of strategies typical of good language learners.

Griffiths (2008, 87) brings together these aforementioned areas of consensus and proposes a conceptualization of language learning strategies as *activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own learning.* This conceptualization might be useful given the tangibility of strategic behaviors for teachers and learners, or the fact that training students in their use is likely to enhance learning, lead to better outcomes and foster autonomy (Pawlak, 2012, xxxi).

Some evidence of this autonomy and resulting motivation is provided by Schilling (2006, 179–181, 183) who studied 120 university students studying foreign languages in Germany. Schilling compared two groups, one of which was taught foreign
language learning strategies. Even after a year, the group who had been taught learning strategies, had better beliefs, attitudes and motivation to study foreign language, and better language achievement. These findings show that either language learning strategies really lead to better results or that when learners see themselves as having agency and being able to affect their learning, they become more motivated and thus achieve higher. In any case, motivation is closely related to language learning strategies and it is discussed about in the next section.

2.3.4 Motivation

Motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it. The range of potential motives on human behavior is very broad: a) general motives concerning FL-related values, beliefs and attitudes, b) learner-specific motives, such as self-confidence and self-esteem, c) motives rooted in the social micro-context of the language classroom, such as the informal class norms of the peer group, d) the teacher’s motivational influence, e) the motivational characteristics of the curriculum and the teaching materials, f) the distracting effects of alternative actions; and g) the learner’s self-regulation to control his or her own motivational state. (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 616-617.)

Point g) was briefly discussed about in the section above on language learning strategies. In regards to points a) and b), teachers and researchers have long recognized that it is not only about the objective language-learning situation, but also what the students make of it that will have an impact on their learning. Meanings that students attach to their learning experiences are shaped by factors unique to the students’ present circumstances and past histories, such as students’ beliefs and perceptions of themselves as learners and users of the foreign language. (Kubanyiová, 2013, 134.) Mercer (in Kubanyiová, 2013, 134) writes that she has encountered learners who differ in their sense of agency, motivation, and willingness to engage in activities or set themselves challenging goals, in the actual ways they approach their learning and the types of strategies they employ, as well as the degree of self-directed behavior they are able to engage in. She has learnt that a key factor contributing to the development of this complexity and variation are the learners’ dynamic self-beliefs. These have been variously referred to in psychology and
applied linguistics as self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-concept, linguistic self-confidence, future L2 self, and many other self-related constructs.

For instance, Weiner’s (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 615-617) expectancy-value theories propose that motivation is based on the individuals’ expectancy of success in a task and the value the individual attaches to the success in that task. Within this framework there is a variety of sub-theories that try to explain the cognitive processes that shape the individual’s expectancy of success: attribution theory emphasizes how one processes past successes and/or failures; Bandura’s self-efficacy theory refers to people’s judgment on their own capabilities to carry out certain tasks; and self-worth theory of Covington argues that the highest human priority is the need for self-acceptance and to maintain a positive face.

Goal theories by Locke and Latham (in Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 615-617) claim that people act due to sense of purpose, and for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued. The key variables here concern goal properties such as the level of challenge and how specific the goal is. Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory suggests that the essence of motivation is autonomy; that in order for any behavior to be intrinsically rewarding, it needs to be desired, self-initiated and self-regulated. Finally, the underlying principle of social psychological theories of action is that people’s attitude toward a target influences their behavior and response to the target. (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 615-617.)

Dörnyei & Skehan (2005, 618-620), however, argue that these theories do not adequately address the dynamic nature of motivation. Learning motivation is in constant flux rather than being stable, even with a one course of instruction. For compensating this weakness they suggest a process-oriented conceptualization of motivation. The construct separates three phases of motivation: choice motivation in pre-actional stage, executive motivation in actional stage, and motivational retrospect in post-actional stage. Many of the previously mentioned theories on motivation, e.g. on students’ goal properties, values, attitudes and expectancies of success, are, as more general and stable aspects, primarily associated with the pre-actional stage.

However, they are less adequate for predicting actual FL learning behaviors demonstrated in the classroom in the actional stage. There, some of the main motivational influences Dörnyei have derived from Schuman’s neurobiological research and its key constituent stimulus appraisal. This occurs in the brain along five dimensions: novelty, pleasantness, goal/need significance, coping potential, and self-and social image. As can
be read, also Mercer's concept on dynamic self-beliefs can be applied here. Additional motivational influences at this stage are teachers' and parents' influence, classroom reward- and goal-structure and influence of the learner group. In the final, post-actional stage, motivational influences include attributional factors, self-confidence and self-worth and received feedback, praise and grades.

In regards to point a), Dornyei (in Dornyei & Ushioda, 2012, 400-401) has also developed a theory where the central concept is the ideal self, signifying the attributes one would ideally like to possess. The first complementary concept is the ought-to-self, signifying the attributes one believes one ought to possess. The second complementary concept is the FL learning experience which concerns situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the positive impact of success or the enjoyable quality of a language course). If proficiency in the target language is important to one's ideal or ought-to-self, one will be motivated to learn the language due to our psychological need to reduce the contradiction between current and future self-states.

For more detailed discussion for the remaining section on motivation, one of the dynamic self-beliefs, the concept of self-efficacy by Bandura, derived from expectancy-value theory, is discussed. As already mentioned earlier, Bandura's (1997, 3, 8-11, 14, 382) theory of self-efficacy proposes that action requires both the skills and the belief that one can manage the act. Doubt on one's abilities and skills, prevents human beings from using their skills in the best way possible. Self-efficacy differs from self-image in that self-efficacy is related to the personal experience of being able, while self-image is related to self-esteem and self-worth. They are not clearly correlated since a human being can be unskilled in many aspects without it affecting on his self-worth, especially if these skills are not personally important. Often human beings try to do things they feel they are able to do, and on the other hand, avoid situations that they feel they are not able to function in. People who have the same skills perform on very different levels in a similar situation, depending on their feelings of self-efficacy. (Bandura, 1997, 37.)

In conclusion, there are several factors in play in the formation of motivation to learn a FL. These include the level of sense of self-efficacy, attribution of one's successes and failures, existence of goals and their nature, the amount of autonomy provided, ability to self-regulate one's motivation, different actors affecting choice motivation, executive motivation and motivational retrospect and the ideal self an ought-to-self in relation to FLL as well as factors related to the teacher, peers, materials, learning environment and curriculum.
2.3.6 Learning Difficulties

*Learning disabilities* are not manifested in the same way in every subject and not even in different skills within a subject. A student can do well in some subjects, such as science and have major difficulties in others, such as in English or only writing in English. (Moilanen, 2008, 67.) However, a student can also have wide-ranging learning difficulties.

Vygotsky (1962, 109-110) writes that knowing a foreign language fluently requires knowing one's mother tongue well. Therefore, naturally, linguistic difficulties in one's *mother tongue*, such as dyslexia affect FL learning (Moilanen, 2008, 17; Skehan, 2002, 75; Ptkänen, Dufva, Harju, Latva, & Taittonen, 2004, 82; Grigorenko, 2002, 98). That is why it is necessary to first pay attention to what kind of problems a student has in one's mother tongue. Problems can occur for example in sound recognition i.e. *phonological processing*, visual recognition i.e. *orthographical processing*, word interpretation i.e. *semantics*, and working memory, which are further reflected in *understanding* and *producing speech* and *text*. (Moilanen, 2008, 17-18.)

If a learning difficulty has been identified, the student should still be tested keeping FL learning specifically in mind so that the more specific nature of the learning difficulty will be found out. Sparks and colleagues (in Grigorenko, 2002, 99) conclude that the difficulties of struggling students reflect problems with phonological and syntactic processing across languages. Also, while models of working memory differ in terms of details, the majority of researchers, such as McLaughlin (in Ranta, 2008, 143) and Skehan (2002, 76), propose that it is the operations carried out within working memory that are crucial in foreign language learning.

Often linguistic problems are linked to problems in the central nervous system, and therefore, if linguistic problems are suspected, attention should be also paid to the student's motor skills, body coordination and spatial as well as temporal perceiving. On the basis of the testing, a specific and structured intervention should be planned out. It should be, however, noted that many learning difficulties occur together and individually. They can result from general slowness in processing phonemes and letters without the teacher being able to specify them any better. (Moilanen, 2008, 82.)

Moilanen (2008, 2002) lists more extensively how the most typical FLL difficulties are manifested. Problems in *mechanical reading* feature most often in third grade. In reading and dealing with texts and checking homework, the student cannot keep
up. In other words, the reading itself is so slow and challenging that the student does not have time and energy to pay attention to the semantic content and understanding. This is the main problem for dyslexic students, but usually also problematic for any students with dysphasia i.e. linguistic difficulties. One of the integral problems is the difficulty in recognizing linguistic components, both in letter-phoneme coding, and recognizing and naming whole words. Problems in mechanical reading are specifically reflected in reading comprehension and writing.

Problems in letter-phoneme coding then can be due to several difficulties but most essentially in phonological processing i.e. difficulties in auditive perceiving, distinguishing of phonemes from words, and short- and long-term auditive memory. These problems occur especially clearly in that the student might have problems in repeating unknown words which is usually the case with words in a FL. Thus, naturally, the student might have difficulties in understanding speech and be unwilling to talk in the FL. Furthermore, in English, which is has very poor phoneme-grapheme correspondence, the student cannot code the letters one by one into phonemes, i.e. use the phonological route to reading words, but s/he has to rely to an orthographical route i.e. process the word as an entity. For this, the student first needs to find a form of pronunciation of the word form that needs to be kept in memory while searching for a meaning for it from the memory. Therefore, it would be important to become automatized in recognizing the basic vocabulary as soon as possible, because otherwise the reading process slows down a lot.

If the difficulties are specifically in naming, the student has difficulties in retrieving words from the long-term memory. The student might use euphemisms and para-phrases, synonyms and majors and have difficulties in expressing him/herself, naming days of the week, numbers and colors etc. Problems occur also in recognizing written words as entities, which slows down mechanical reading and reading comprehension.

Difficulties can also present themselves in memorizing vocabulary. Keeping letters and phonemes together is difficult, and therefore mistakes in words are common. Here, the problems might derive from difficulties in phonological processing or working memory.

With difficulties in reading comprehension, mechanical reading and writing skills can still be good, but the problem lies in semantic processing i.e. understanding meanings. Understanding the essentials becomes harder if the student has to read or write, or listen and write or read simultaneously. Too many complicated words or parts steal attention and hinder the processing of the contents. The student might just react to the
endings of sentences or guess answers. Furthermore, understanding cause and effect can be challenging.

The student can also have difficulties in grammar; in internalizing grammar rules and interpreting morphemes and sentence structures i.e. syntax. Typical mistakes occur in lexical order and forms. This difficulty might derive from deficits in perceiving and analogical thinking. All in all, problems in syntactic and semantic understanding derive from difficulties in higher-level linguistic processing.

However, most commonly problems lie in deficits in lower level processes, such as processing phonemes. Consequently, it could be stated that when the lower level processes are difficult, the memory becomes overloaded and attention too occupied for which continued higher level processing, such as grammatical analysis and receiving new information, halts.

Common problem for students with learning difficulties are concentration and motivation problems. An excess of visual stimuli can distract concentration and listening, listening might be impossible without moving, drawing, nibbling or rocking one's chair, or listening and reading or writing cannot be concentrated on simultaneously. (Moilanen, 2008, 42.) In case of motivation problems, it is good to reflect whether they are related to learning difficulties, to disorder along the autism spectrum or to the incompatibility of the learning environment and methods, and the students learning styles and interests.

When comparing the number of students with learning difficulties to the number of students who do not do well in FL studies, it can be stated that individual and psychological learning disabilities are not enough to explain why some students find FL learning challenging. Other explanations can be found in the learning environment and methods, such as flawed learning strategies, teaching methods, lack of teaching resources and resulting motivation problems etc. (Moilanen, 2008, 11.) E.g. struggling language learners keep on using the same learning style or strategy even if they received poor grades and other proof that their strategies are not efficient. (Naiman et. al. 1978, 17.) Some of these potential nominators were mapped out in the previous chapters on learning styles, learning strategies and motivation.

In consequence, FLL difficulties can derive from problems in one's mother tongue, which are usually challenges in lower-level processes, such as phonological processing and working memory but also orthographical processing and naming as well as higher-level processes, such as syntactic and semantic processing. Problems can also lie in
low motivation, difficulties in concentration and incompatibility of teaching and learning methods and environments.

So far, individual differences in language aptitude, cognitive and learning styles, language learning strategies, motivation and language learning difficulties from the viewpoint of applied linguistics and psychology have been explored. In the following section, a more multidisciplinary and practical viewpoint is taken, as the section deals with differentiated instruction and issues related to it, such as assessing needs and defining objectives, strategies for differentiating by different orientations, evaluating, and organization and management strategies.

2.4 Differentiated Instruction in the Classroom

This section delves deeper into practices with which the previously mentioned learner differences could be taken into consideration in the classroom through differentiation. Applying standards while designing and organizing instruction, a teacher must be clear on what all students need to know, understand, and be able to do at the end of the unit. The teacher is familiar with student differences that affect the unit, such as readiness, learning styles, interests and emotional and social needs and builds on these differences, making adjustments in content, materials, the multiple ways students process the content, the various products they create in order to demonstrate what they have learned. (Tomlinson, 1999, 1.) Furthermore, the teacher needs to consider how to organize the learning and teaching in the classroom so that students' motivation is maintained and different activities managed.

As there seems to be a lot to take into consideration in differentiation teachers find differentiation to be a challenge. It should be remembered that students should be differentiated only when needed and not for the sake of differentiation itself (Tomlinson et. al., 2008, 5). Blaz (in Thesein, n.d.) sees that a very common misconception about differentiation is that it is not lots of student choices but rather only 2 or 3, and only one portion of a lesson (content, process, product, or the learning environment) is differentiated, not all of them. Laine (2010, 1) also remarks that differentiating does not mean that the instruction is individualized to each student. Most important is that teachers would be able to develop their teaching so that all students would
have the opportunity to receive teaching from time to time that would respond to their capabilities, provide challenges and support when needed. Differentiation is always a compromise between individual needs and wants, and outside requirements.

The figure below has been constructed in order to aid in understanding the big picture and the relations of different factors that needs to be taken into account in differentiation.

![Diagram of Differentiated Instruction](image)

Figure 2. Thesis writer's visualization of differentiated instruction

2.4.1 Assessing Needs and Defining Objectives

As can be seen from the figure, the starting point for all differentiation is assessing needs and defining objectives. In order for differentiation to be successful, *assessment* and *evaluation* must be used as a tool to map out each student's individual level and then to
establish the needs of individual students (Moilanen, 2008, Tomlinson, 1999). Learning in the classroom, while guided by the curriculum and the objectives it sets, should not be driven by the textbook, but rather by data collected by the teacher from the students and understanding on what is needed for proficiency in a foreign language. Continuous evaluation, assessment and individual feedback are imperative in differentiation (Tomlinson 1999, 10; POPMT, 2010).

According to Moilanen (2008, 66) a good time for evaluation and finding out if there is any need for extra support or extra challenge are the transitions between school levels, such as the transition from elementary level to secondary level. It is the time when the teacher is facing a new group while students are facing more complex linguistic material than before. Moilanen (2008, 75-116) suggests that the teacher would test students in dictation, listening comprehension, deduction of word classes, a short essay and an exercise testing fluency of mechanical reading and reading comprehension. As written earlier in the chapters on aptitude and learning difficulties, a student can have problems, for example, in memory and phonological and syntactic processing, but also motivation, learning strategies and home environment.

Naturally, it must be assessed whether a student needs more challenge in regard to complexity, depth and width of the learning content. Further data for assessing the learning profiles of the students could be in the form of interest surveys, learning style surveys, as well as daily assignments and performances (Tomlinson, 1999, 10).

What all students need to know can be found from the national core curriculum (OPS, 2004, 138-144), which is mostly based on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The framework divides languages skills to understanding speech and text and producing speech and text. However, the standards in the curriculum are not very strictly defined, as the reader can notice below. Therefore, the teacher needs to remember that the textbook is not the curriculum. This allows the FL teacher to respond to individual learning needs.

For instance, from third to sixth grade, in regards to FL skills, students will learn to tell basic things about themselves and their immediate environment, and to communicate in everyday language use situations. Furthermore, they will learn to understand integral contents in speech and text dealing with every day and routine-like situation. For Swedish, the so called B1-language that for most students begins in the secondary school, the objectives are quite similar to English from third to sixth grades; an addition is that the student will learn to write short, basic messages.
Additionally, the objectives from seventh to ninth grade in English, which is for many the first foreign language, the A-language, is that the student will learn to understand, in addition to the most integral contents, some integral details from well structured text or speech dealing with more general knowledge, such as work life, studies, sustainable development, health and media. Also, students will learn to manage in slightly more challenging, but informal discussion situations and produce text and speech that includes also some details. The emphasis on literal language increases. The objectives for grammar are more defined now, as the student will learn the basic inflections and tenses of verbs, the use of substantives and adjectives as well as the most common pronouns and prepositions, and the most integral syntax and discourse markers.

During planning, a teacher should generate specific lists, based on the curricula and other parameters, of what students should know (facts), understand (concepts and principles), and be able to do (skills) by the time the unit ends (Tomlinson, 1999, 40). As the curriculum is relatively free, regarding the different needs of students, teachers can think whether they prioritize communicative competences over exactness; which linguistic elements are highlighted, and which linguistic elements students are just passively exposed to; and what amount of active knowledge of pronunciation forms, spelling forms or usage rules of words they require from different students. (Moilanen, 2008, 69.) Moilanen (2008, 73) brings up an interesting point: Our culture nowadays highlights communicative competencies but still correct spelling is valued more than the verbal variants at schools. By writing "action" in the exam one gets a point but writing "äksön" which is the way Finns pronounce the word "action", one gets only half a point. Thus, teachers could bring the evaluation of verbal aspects up to the same level with literal aspects of the FLL.

For instance, for students with individual study plans, the linguistic objectives need to be adapted more. As an example, the objectives for a student with difficulties in perceiving written language, but with the ability to express oneself verbally, could be that the student will be able to communicate verbally on a basic level. Here, the written forms are secondary objectives and so is grammatical exactness. For example, when correcting grammar, the teacher can mark only those spots that threaten understanding. However, notable is that the objectives can and should be revisited regularly. (Moilanen, 2008, 69-71.) Of course, linguistic exactness adds to fluency so if and when the student starts to be ready, the linguistic exactness needs to practiced too. That way the student will get an idea that approximating is not always enough. (Moilanen, 2008, 74.)
2.4.2 Strategies for Differentiating by Orientation

According to Tomlinson (1999, 2003) teaching and learning can be differentiated by three different orientations: readiness, interests and learning styles. Renzulli & Reiss (in Valta, 2012, 27-28) would add to these the differentiation of the learning environment while POPS (2004) has strategies, rhythm of learning, as well as emotional and social needs on the list, too. All of these orientation and directions of differentiation are dealt with in the following chapters, but for the sake of clarity, the text is divided into differentiation by readiness, interests and learning styles. Emotional needs are dealt with in the Differentiating by Interest, while learning environment and rhythm of learning are dealt with in the later section on Organization and Management Strategies.

Differentiating by readiness

For clarity and practical utility in the classroom, the following strategies are divided according to strategies for differentiating exercises, vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening comprehension, writing and verbal exercises. In this research, differentiating for readiness mainly focuses on the learning content and how it can be made more or less complex, abstract or concrete and how its depth, breadth and sub-skills and -concepts can be varied. The practices listed below are just a scratch, as the teachers’ interviews provide a lot of utilizable practices, too. However, before, going to the specifics of strategies, a few general words could be said about readiness and differentiating for advanced and struggling students.

Tomlinson (1999, 53) argues that readiness relates to a particular competency at a particular time; it does not equate to a statement about a child’s overall ability or inability. Some students struggle with many things, and others are advanced with many things. But most have areas in which they are more fluid and some in which they are less so. Therefore, for example, instead of seeing language aptitude as a unitary ability, or only consisting of analytic language skills or being connected to general intelligence, it could be considered to be consisting of a multitude of sub-components. Furthermore, some students are just more advanced due to experiences and e.g. their social/cultural/national background. Also, in the classroom, some students seem to excel in reading and writing while struggling in listening comprehension and verbal exercises and vice versa.
Therefore, it is important that the teacher guides students to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses (Moilanen, 2008, 11; OPS, 2004; POPMT, 2010, 9).

Now, those students who are advanced in the FL due to their previous learning experiences are often asked to do a greater volume of work than they already know how to do, to ensure the success of other students through much of the school day by serving as peer coaches, or to wait patiently while less advanced continue to work for mastery of skills or concepts already mastered by the advanced learner. Sometimes we seem suggest that advanced learners are fine without differentiation because they are “up to standards” already. Again, this approach will not achieve genuine growth for advanced learning. Instead, these advanced students may benefit from skipping practice with previously mastered skills and concepts, and do activities that are more advanced in the depth and breadth of the learning content. (Tomlinson, 1999, 22.)

Those students then, who progress swiftly and quickly in learning academic school contents, such as vocabulary and grammar structures in languages, and who could be called intelligent linguistically/academically/cognitively or seen as having high language aptitude, and specifically good analytic language skills also need the challenge of tasks in order to develop. Otherwise they will not learn to practice and put an effort into learning new things. Many of these children have later graduated from the comprehensive school and high school without actually studying anything. However, after getting in to a university they have not found the motivation, persistence and learning skills needed for university studies since they have not needed them earlier. (Uusikylä 2003, 91–92.) According to Sousa (2009, 47) such a gifted student benefits and enjoys teaching that gives possibilities for independent thinking and learning and activities that use authentic materials and where different perspectives are brought up. According to Tomlinson (1999, 11) they may also benefit from activities and products that are quite complex, open-ended, abstract, and multifaceted, drawing on advanced reading materials, or a brisk pace of work.

Students with less-developed readiness, due to low language aptitude in specific sub-components, such as low analytic skills, or learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, need less distraction, abstractness, materials and complexity and more structure, concreteness, direct instruction and deliberate pace to make the learning situation as non-burdensome as possible. They also benefit from structuring of the lesson and anticipating what is coming up and proceeding from entities to details. Also, reflecting and memorizing what was learnt in the previous lesson, and repeating what was just learnt over the ongoing lesson, lessens the panic of not understanding the content the first time. (Moilanen, 2002,
Depending on the difficulty the student might also need very individualized interventions, e.g. students with poor working memory, phonological processing or understanding of syntax need remedial education in these areas (Moilanen, 2008). The student might also need motivational intervention, adaptations to the teaching style and environment, as well as teaching of language learning strategies, some of which will be dealt with in the chapters below.

What also needs to be remembered is that although the tasks may be different for the students with lower readiness, they still must be respectable tasks. This means that the students should not be just given a worksheet if the other students are making a movie. Instead, they could make a video of an advertisement or a digital poster using their vocabulary. Another example is that students of all levels need to be provided with authentic learning experiences, as learning should be connected to reality; languages are keys to something bigger. If students with learning difficulties are engaged only in rote drill of isolated skills and facts, they will lose sight of the very purpose of learning – to enjoy, to learn from one another and do activities that have value for them. (Peterson & Hittie, 2003, 223; Moilanen, 2002, 29-30.)

Bloom's taxonomy of educational outcomes provides useful guidelines whereby learning exercises with differing levels of complexity can be designed. (Peterson & Hittie, 2003, 165-166.) As the taxonomy originates from 1956, a group of educators worked to renew it, and rename the categories. This version has levels from the lowest level cognitive processes up to the highest level, which are remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create. Sousa (2009, 53-55) writes that the first three levels describe what can be called convergent thinking, whereby the learners recalls and focuses on what is known and comprehended to solve a problem through application. Then, in using the upper three levels, the learner engages in divergent thinking as s/he often gains new insights and makes discoveries that were not part of the original information. These can well be applied to language learning, too.

Vocabulary, especially in verbal forms, is one of the most important first steps in learning a language. If mechanical reading skills are poor, the learning of vocabulary should not be only dependent on the abilities for going through and understanding a text: vocabulary needs to be also provided apart from texts, the text structure needs to be simplified and vocabulary practiced in other ways. For instance, writing vocabulary down might not be the best memorizing technique for all, especially for many dyslexic students; therefore, students need to be provided with different ways to use
their strengths, such as verbal/auditive/kinesthetic, in memorizing the vocabulary. This should apply also in the secondary school. Moreover, some slow readers have problems, since they cannot recognize quickly enough the whole word forms in texts. Thus, their memorizing of the words can be aided for example by having ‘the words of the week’ written in big letters on the classroom wall. (Moilanen, 2008, 19-23.)

Additionally, for some students practicing grammar, such as word order, prepositions and different tenses, on paper only is not beneficial. They might need visual presentations on the grammar topic, and active and kinesthetic learning tasks. (Moilanen, 2008, 217-248.) Reflecting FL grammar structures to Finnish helps in memorizing and understanding (Moilanen, 2002, 25). Moilanen (2008, 193) suggests that the teacher can activate students to pay attention to the grammar in texts by providing the students with a "rake" i.e. a list of certain words and expressions in Finnish that the students ought to find from the text. The rake can be differentiated so that some of the items are marked as basic and some as advanced.

For students struggling in reading, it would be good to have shorter and plainer versions for every text in books, which would highlight the most communicatively integral, new expressions. Dyslexic students have slow mechanical reading since they might code words letter-by-letter and phoneme-by-phoneme; their visual/orthographical reading strategy is poor. Thus, with short texts they have more energy to read and understand the essential vocabulary and structures. These texts can work as anticipatory material in proactive teaching or in the regular classroom while others anticipate the text in other ways or as basic texts for students with individual study plan. (Moilanen 2002, 98-97.) For reviewing the texts at home, students should be reminded and encouraged to use the CDs they usually have within their study books. Or the teacher can prepare three different texts of differing levels of complexity from which students can choose which text to read. (Moilanen 2002, 120.)

Students who are more advanced in listening comprehension can practice answering more open questions while those who struggle more can practice answering to well-structured multiple choice questions (Lee 1994, 97). On the other hand, for students struggling in listening comprehension, it can be helpful to point out the difference between the exercises where one needs to concentrate on the big picture, and those where one needs to listen to details. (Moilanen, 2008, 86-88.) Furthermore, pronunciation practices, where rhythm and melody are highlighted, help in developing listening comprehension skills such as grasping the prosody of words. (Moilanen, 2008, 86-87.) Teacher talk can be supported
in many ways: instructions should be given clearly, verbally, literally and possibly using picture symbols. On the other hand, written instruction can be given verbally, too. However, students should be asked to write, read and listen to the teachers simultaneously. Gestures, simplified sentence structures, synonyms, paraphrases, clarifying questions, using Finnish instead of the FL and translating difficult concepts if only the FL is used. (Moilanen 2002, 52; Pitkanen et al. 2004, 166)

In writing, the teacher can easily give students open-ended assignments that differentiate almost automatically since students produce something of their own. Texts can be rewritten from a new angle, such as putting yourself into the shoes of the main characters or coming up with a sequel or a different ending, using schemes of the texts. (Moilanen 2008, 124.) Notable is that struggling students can also need help in building a coherent text and writing clear notes. For students who struggle in writing, the computer is very a useful tool. It helps those who have problems in fine motor skills, and thus is also supportive of the writing process itself (Lee 1994, 92). With a computer one can also highlight, color and increase the size of the text (Moilanen 2008, 124).

When doing verbal exercises, the teacher can again easily give students open-ended assignments that differentiate almost automatically, since students produce something of their own. For example, using the given words, students need to come up with a dialogue. Those students who are advanced orally can make presentations. Struggling should also be given permission to answer with single words, whereas the teacher can guide those students who are more advanced in producing speech to use more complex sentences. (Moilanen 2008, 233.)

**Differentiating by interest**

In this research, differentiation by interest focuses on how learning contents can be made interesting and motivating for the students. Moilanen (2008, 52) explains that contents that students have personal connections to are interesting and inspiring, and if the components are varied, there is more possibility that more learners' needs are met. The teacher should select a time in their teaching plans to differentiate by interest so that students can link what is being studied to something that is important to them. In addition, if the teacher acknowledges that school languages are keys to understanding information, lyrics, comics and movies, writing songs, surviving in different situations and interacting with others and
that acknowledgement is visible in the content, students will have easier time to connect and understand the usefulness of what is studied.

Holmes (1994, 72-73) claims that, generally speaking, the best learning environment for differentiation is the kind where students are allowed to choose exercises and activities. Also, according to Saloviita (2013, 115) the main tool for differentiation where the whole class is preferably being differentiated, is to increase freedom of choice. Similarly, Theisen (n.d.) says that when you give students choices, they will pleasantly surprise you with what they do. Students are empowered by choice. Having the autonomy to select what to do or how to do it gives them more responsibility and accountability for their learning because they must manage their time and select the options that will help them reach their full potential. Therefore, the teacher can align key understandings of the unit with topics that intrigue students, encourage investigation, and give them a choice of projects or tasks, including student-designed options. When students are making a choice that is too easy or too hard, we discuss it with them. Does it stretch their abilities? Are they finishing too quickly? If they decide a new choice is in order, we commend them for thinking it through. (Peterson & Hittie, 2003, 195.)

Now, if we consider student interest containing issues of motivation, the pedagogical implications of all the theories on motivation should be reflected on. The theory on motivational self-regulation emphasizes teacher-learner dialogue in helping learners to reflect on their learning process, to attribute negative outcomes to factors within their control, such as effort and choice of strategies, and to engage in constructive thinking about themselves as active agents of their learning. (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 404-405)

How learners think about themselves has been further developed by Dörnyei, and led to strategies for helping learners a) construct and sustain visions of their future ideal selves as FL users, using visualization techniques and guided imagery, b) to develop action plans comprising goal-setting and self-regulatory strategies in order to build realistically towards the vision, and c) to counterbalance this image of their desired self with that of their feared self, in order to stay firmly committed to their future ideals. (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013, 405.)

Furthermore, motivation can be generated and sustained through: promoting feeling of success and competence; adopting an autonomy supporting rather than controlling communicative style; providing informational feedback on students' learning; and fostering trust, good interpersonal relations, and a cohesive learner group. (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013, 405.)
Differentiating by learning style

To modify the process and the how of learning and teaching, the teacher can integrate learning- and teaching styles which are based, on one hand, on taking individualism into account and, especially transforming whole-group teaching practices so that they take different kinds of learners into account simultaneously. Many language teachers still prioritize book learning and lecturing even though learning styles are varied.

For instance, as already referred to in the chapter above on differentiating by readiness, some dyslexic students have stronger kinesthetic and visual channels than auditory channels and fine motor skills. Furthermore, they benefit from accessing the learning content through creativity, experience, humor, imagination, pictures, emotions, melody and rhythm, as their right hemisphere is stronger than the left (Moilanen, 2002, 26). Then, hyperactive students are kinesthetically skilled, preferring learning by movement and a hands-on approach.

In other words, utilizing their stronger learning channels, students are able to access e.g. vocabulary, grammar and instructions better than through reading, writing and listening to the teacher. Thus, teachers need to have the courage to try out different approaches and step out of the book while modifying the whole learning environment and materials in providing something for all learning channels and in supporting students in the functioning of their weaker channels (Moilanen, 2008, 208).

Of course, in addition to modifying teaching to fit the students’ learning styles for supporting their access to the learning content and show their learning, Skelhan (in Ranta, 2008, 147-148) has argued that it is preferable to use also compensatory rather than only matching individualized instruction. For example, this is especially the case for aptitudinal weaknesses because the components of aptitude relate to specific stages in the acquisition process. As dyslexic students have a weaker left hemisphere and thus, less analytic competence, the aim of remediation for them is to help them to extract information about linguistic structure from the communicative input and thus “see the trees in the forest”. Practicing skills of reasoning and seeing regularities, and providing support in processing and structuring what is being learnt are helpful in compensating for weaknesses (Moilanen, 2002, 27).

Indeed, recent work by the Sparks and Ganschow (in Ranta, 2008, 145) has demonstrated the benefits of a multisensory structured learning approach, applying visual, tactile and auditory stimulus, for learning-disabled students. Here, the idea is to proceed in
an exemplary language use situation from entities to details by using mimicking, gesturing, listening and repeating after the teacher, then seeing the written forms of words/expressions, visualizing them eyes closed in one’s mind while hearing them and then acting imagined situations out. Only after these, the details will be looked at. Furthermore, all students need exercises that are based on the concrete, personal application of the students, which allow them to imagine themselves in the actual language usage situations and decide the expressions with which they deal with situations. (Moilanen, 2008, 253-264.)

Moilanen (2008, 43-46) has an extensive rubric for helping students from secondary level upwards to recognize different learning styles from visual, auditive and kinesthetic styles. Although, Price and Richardson (in Nel, 2008, 56) argue the validity of learning style inventories is based on the assumption that learners can accurately and consistently reflect a) how they process external stimuli, and b) what their internal cognitive processes are. Perhaps the idea is not to find the eternal truth but to get students to reflect their learning tendencies and understand that everyone can monitor and affect their own learning (Moilanen, 2008, 43-46).

Nel (2008, 54-55) points out that though there might be no simple learning style preferences, teaching will be more effective if it can provide more variety and choice to accommodate the potential stylistic differences of their students. Indeed, providing choice is not just effective in taking student interests into account but also effective in taking account of individual learning styles.

Despite the discrepancies in research on learning strategies, Moilanen (2008, 12) suggests that teaching of different learning strategies should be knitted into the daily classroom work, so that every student can benefit from them. These techniques can be taught in the midst of book exercises e.g. by applying different techniques to reading book texts and listening comprehension exercises. The teacher can bring up different vocabulary memorization techniques one at a time and ask students to try those at home. (Moilanen, 2008, 23.) Some students would benefit from reading vocabulary and sentences while writing them or doing all exercises verbally and/or auditive first. For struggling students, extra attention on strategies of, especially layered reading and perceiving text schemes should be given. (Moilanen, 2008, 19.)

Just like helping students to become aware of different learning styles and maybe their personal learning preferences, teaching learning strategies can add to students ‘agency and sense of self-efficacy in that they are able to affect positively their own
learning. After trying out different learning strategies, it would good to have feedback sessions at times. Possible contradictory comments on different learning strategies about their helpfulness can assist students to understand their own individuality. (Moilanen, 2008, 24.)

2.4.3 Evaluating

A product is the output of the unit or the ways that students demonstrate or exhibit their understanding of the content (Tomlinson, 1999, 2003). Summative and formative evaluations should be conducted in a manner, e.g. verbally, so that students with learning difficulties in FLL are able to show what they have learnt (Moilanen, 2008, 72; POPMT, 2010, 22). Furthermore, evaluation should be varied (Nel, 2008, 55). For instance, Bloom’s Taxonomy and different cognitive and learning styles, and Sternberg’s intelligences (analytic, creative, practical) can be applied to the differentiation of products, providing greater challenge and variety in how students show what they have understood (Tomlinson, 1999, 2003). However, notable is that products and evaluation can be and should be continuous (Moilanen, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999; POPS, 2004).

Possibilities for varying products include portfolios, role-plays, multimedia and other presentations, brochures, plays, songs, graphic organizers, posters, presentations, research papers, essays, news broadcasts, varied homework assignments, stories and videos etc. By letting students choose, the teacher allows the students to show what they can do versus what they cannot.

In literal exams, some of the exercises can also be more open, with open questions where the emphasis of the evaluation is on communicative competence instead of any exact words or expressions that have been practiced. Struggling students do not necessarily need to translate exactly in the same words, but explanations are valid, too. If there are problems in writing, the student can circle, cross or underline the correct options. If written forms of the words are required, but the student writes them as they are pronounced, she should still get points. Instructions are given verbally or with illustrations if needed, and their presentation and the exercises need to be clear. (Moilanen, 2008, 74.) Similarly, students who are advanced can have exercises in the test that require deeper and wider knowledge or exercises that are more complex and open-ended.
Generally speaking, the teacher should evaluate several aspects of the students' level of speaking, writing, reading and listening comprehension skills. In evaluating skills of production, the following criteria are the most used: range, accuracy, fluency, interaction and coherence. (Tuokko, 2007, 124-140.) Curricula provide further criteria for evaluation. In other words, the teacher would not concentrate only on evaluating writing and reading, or accuracy and range, but speaking, listening comprehension, interaction and coherence, as well.

Should differentiation affect numerical grading? In differentiated classrooms, teachers ensure that a student competes against himself as he grows and develops more than he competes against other students (Tomlinson, 1999, 2; Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005, 18). Excellence is defined in a large measure by individual growth from a starting point (Tomlinson, 1999, 17). Therefore, an option would be to make the grade reflect achievement, effort/student growth and level of difficulty and count the average of these three dimensions.

2.4.4 Organization and other Management Strategies

Now that the needs, objectives, ideal processes for different learners and ways of showing what they have learnt are set, the challenge of organizing students, activities and exercises and classroom space is all that remains. In the figure, these topics are grouped under a heading learning environment. No doubt, when planning differentiated lessons, one has to be extremely organized and to keep the different assignments and approaches separate while teaching a coherent class. The teacher can either assign students to different groups with specific exercises and activities that best match their readiness (level of ability and/or skills needed to be learnt), learning styles or interests, assign students separately to do different exercises and activities, assign students to do the same exercises, but provide more direct support, or let students choose the exercises and activities they do. While deciding on the organization and management of the lesson, the teacher needs to remember the objectives of differentiation: helping the student find success and creating positive learning experiences.
Especially Tomlinson (1999, 2003) has written extensively about organizing differentiated activities. Agendas, learning contracts, choice boards, menus and stations/centers are ways to organize the time, resources and teacher availability so that the potential and talent of each student could be maximized. These require that the classroom space is planned so that each student would have their own, personal space, different places for group-work, but also space for moving around and working on the floor (Yatvin 2004, 14-16; Tomlinson, 2003, 11; Peterson & Hittie 2003, 422.)

When differentiating teaching for readiness, a teacher can tier or construct tasks depending on the students’ level of advancement and/or ability; tiered assignments focus on the same essential skills and understandings for all students— but at different levels of depth, width, complexity, abstractness, and open-endedness. Bloom's taxonomy can be helpful in trying differentiation in levels of complexity and abstractness.

Skills- and concept-based differentiation focuses on different essential skills and concepts for different students. Some students, especially those with learning difficulties and having intensified or special support, require reinforcement in different concepts or skills. Then, similarly advanced learners have skills that they can develop.

An agenda (similar to ‘urakka”) is useful in differentiating for readiness as it includes opportunities for students to work independently on skills and concepts, and on the level of ability they need; agendas can be tiered and/or skills- and concepts-based. It is a personalized list of tasks that a particular student must complete in a specified time. Student agendas throughout a class will have similar and dissimilar elements on them. A teacher usually creates an agenda that will last a student two to three weeks. The teacher develops a new agenda when the previous one is completed. Generally, students determine the order in which they will complete agenda items. A particular time in the day is set aside as agenda time. Agendas can be used once a week, once a day or as anchor activities when students complete other assigned work. While students work on their agendas, the teacher has great freedom to move among individual students, coaching and monitoring their understanding and progress. The teacher also can take advantage of agenda time to assemble small pull out-groups with students who need guided work or direct instruction with a particular concept or skill. (Tomlinson, 1999, 69.)

Learning contracts also include opportunities for students to work independently on skills and concepts and on the level of ability they need. It is a negotiated agreement between teacher and student that gives students some freedom in acquiring skills and understandings that a teacher deems important at a given time. A contract
assumes it is the teacher's responsibility to specify important learning; assumes students can take on some of the responsibility for learning themselves; specifies working conditions to which students must adhere during the contract time (student behavior; time constraints, homework and classwork involvement in the contract); sets positive consequences (continued freedom, grades) when students adhere to working conditions; sets also negative consequences if students do not adhere to working conditions; establishes criteria for successful completion and quality of work; and includes signatures of agreement to terms of the contract by both teacher and student. (Tomlinson, 1999, 87)

Additionally, the teacher can provide struggling students with remedial education. According to Moolanen (2008, 35) some students with individual study plans need focused practice on several aspects of FL or a whole, systematic and structured remedial package which can be conducted profoundly only if remedial education resources are utilized as well.

When differentiating for interest, but also for readiness and learning styles, the completion of activities and exercises often includes opportunities for student choice. The Tic-Tac-Toe menu is an example of a set of practice options from which learners can choose. With choice boards, changing assignments are placed in permanent pockets. By asking a student to make a work selection from a particular row, the teacher targets work toward student need, and at the same time allows student choice. Full instructions for the task are given at the place the student works, not on the choice board itself. Put another way, the choice board simply allows the teacher to "direct traffic." (Tomlinson, 1999, 92.)

Stations or centers are different spots in the classroom where students work on various tasks simultaneously. They allow different students to work with different tasks, and therefore, tiered and skills- and concept-based exercises and activities as well as exercises and activities that allow student choice or differentiation by learning styles can be used. They invite flexible grouping because not all students need to go to all stations all the time. Not all students need to spend the same amount of time in each station, either. Further, even when all students do go to every station, assignments at each station can vary from day to day, based on who will rotate there.

Stations can be a frequent or occasional part of the learning process. Stations also lend themselves to a good balance of teacher choice and student choice. On some days, the teacher decides who will go to a particular station, what work they will do when they get there, and the working conditions that must prevail while they are there. On other days, students can make these decisions. On still other days, the teacher may set some of
the parameters, but the student can choose the rest. Stations can be distinguished by signs, symbols, or colors to help the organization and students choice, or the teacher simply can ask groups of students to move to particular parts of the room. (Tomlinson, 1999, 63.)

As can be concluded, in differentiation, self-initiation and -regulation of students become important, towards which the teacher should guide the students (Yatvin 2004). Students could be studying in small groups or independently, and therefore the teacher cannot give common instructions. Explaining the expectations, routines and different sub-phases of working, such as doing exercises, asking for help, checking for correctness, and taking new exercises, help students function more independently. (Yatvin 2004, 23-24; Tomlinson, 1999, 75-76.) Furthermore, the teacher needs to use a record-keeping system to monitor what students do and the quality level (Tomlinson, 1999, 75-76).

Moilanen (2008, 265-266) provides an interesting example of differentiating a book text by learning styles in stations/centers: in one station students would listen to the text and in the others they would read it aloud, draw or fill in a picture on the basis of the text, write a sequel for the text and dramatize it into a play etc. This can be done when practicing grammar, too: in one station students would verbalize the structure and in the others they would write exemplary sentences, practice the topic kinesthetically and do exercises requiring application and problem-solving. The stations could also have two to three options for a text. Furthermore, the struggling students could start from a center where they can capitalize on their strengths. The students could move freely from one station to another, except for the listening station if there are not enough headphones and computers.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion to the theoretical part of the research, the most recent differentiation ideology in academic literature is individualist, learner-centered and appreciative of diversity. Its main tenet is that students in all their diversity have potential to be tapped, and its ultimate goal is the best possible academic success and maximum growth for all. It bases its arguments on student diversity: that students have different motivations, personalities, backgrounds, intelligences and styles of learning, none of it being more right
or wrong. Not only the content and product of the teaching and learning are differentiated but also the process, the how, are varied in response to individual needs. Similar orientations are visible the additions on differentiation made to the Finnish Core Curriculum in 2010, although the curriculum seems more inclusive in its emphases and the three step-support-model.

A narrower approach to differentiation, often found in the empirical research (Roiha, 2012; Mikola, 2011; Seppälä & Kauto-Knape, 2009; Huovinen, 2005; Hirvonen, 2008; Marja-Aho, 2003; Naukkari, 2005) on teachers’ perspectives and practices, is the kind that concentrates mainly on differentiating student readiness i.e. differentiating up and down, so to say. Therefore, teachers focus on modifying learning content and learning products, so that they provide more or less depth, breadth or complexity for learners depending on their level of ability, advancement or readiness. The process, or, the how of learning, is hardly differentiated at all. Further findings indicate that teachers differentiate mostly down in support of struggling students. Reasons for this gap between theories on differentiation and teacher practices might be explained by teachers’ experiences of differentiation being challenging, time-consuming and requiring a lot of resources etc.

Furthermore, applied linguistics, or foreign/second language learning theories, bring in their own theories to individual differences and instruction. Focus here is mostly on what characteristics of a language learner enhance language achievement, and it is widely agreed that language aptitude, specifically analytic language learning, and motivation are the main factors. From the point of theories on differentiation, it could be said that the findings from applied linguistic could result in a narrower approach to differentiation. Here, some students, who are considered as having high language aptitude, or analytic language skills more precisely, are provided with more complex activities and exercises. On the other hand, those students who are considered having low language aptitude, or poor analytic language skills, are provided with more simple activities and exercises. However, what broadens the scope of the potentially resulting view on differentiation by applied linguistics is that it has a heavy focus on generating and sustaining student motivation and self-beliefs.

All in all, the main discrepancy between differentiation theory and the view on students differences from the applied linguistics’ point of view seems to be the existence of learning styles and learning strategies and the fixedness/fluidity/consistency of language aptitude and intelligence. Although aptitude is undoubtedly a powerful predictor of success and some cognitive styles are more characteristic of successful learners than
others (e.g. field-independence and analytic language learning), caution should be exercised in claiming that learners who manifest little talent for languages are necessarily at a disadvantage. To speak for the differentiation theory, there are several existing theories on learning styles, strategies and intelligences that, in despite of not being completely flawless and theoretically sound, have pragmatic utility in the foreign language classroom. Even though one would not be able to quite put a finger on it, few people can completely deny that learners have differing learning styles, consisting of a unique blend of instructional and environmental preferences, of information processing preferences, and of preferences related to personality (Nel, 2008, 57).

Studies on good language learners have come up with some learning strategies or predispositions of a self-regulatory learner, while learning styles might be just behavior patterns that extend over contexts. Anyhow, as motivation has an integral role in language achievement, but the ideas of a fixed language aptitude and intelligence are not very encouraging for those who have so called low aptitude or intelligence, theories on a variety of learning styles and intelligences, and the promise of one being able to boost one’s learning through the use of learning strategies, can support one’s self-efficacy, and thus, motivation.

The leading idea of a differentiated classroom that we are all different learners with our different, but equally valuable modes for learning and potential for learning, has a great potential in preventing negative dichotomies of “weak” or “stupid” and “gifted” and “intelligent” learners. As Bennet (in Nel, 2008, 54) writes, the concept of learning styles offers a value-neutral approach for understanding individual differences. The assumption is that everyone can learn, provided teachers respond appropriately to individual learning needs, teach learning strategies and support motivation.

Therefore, there are several variables in learning that teachers can address and thus create positive learning environments with flexible learning options; modification of contents, materials, processes and products to align with the different learning styles, readiness and interests of the students; and a choice of cooperative, collaborative and independent learning experiences to ensure experiences of success related to self-belief for all in the class. First and foremost, teachers need to assess individual needs, such as learning difficulties, individual strengths and weaknesses, cognitive and learning styles and personal interests, and get to know the essential skills and concepts for units of learning.
In differentiating for readiness, teachers need to differentiate depending on whether the student is advanced due to experiences, language aptitude or intelligence, or struggling due to specific learning difficulties, aptitudinal weaknesses, such as poor phonological processing or working memory (see Skehan, 2002; Robinson, 2002) or motivation problems (see Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005). Teachers can differentiate in depth, breadth, complexity, concreteness/abstractness and open-endedness and offer more/less independence or direct support. In differentiating for interests, teachers need to provide multiple options and choices in the learning contents and materials and utilize open-ended projects and learning products. In differentiating for learning styles, teachers need to use a variety of learning methods, also providing choices for students and teach different learning and self-regulation strategies. In differentiating evaluation, teachers need to remember continuity and variegating of learning products. There are multiple aspects one can evaluate in FLL, such as production and understanding in the FL and their sub-components. Finally, teachers need to be flexible, but informed in organizing learning activities and grouping students in order to prevent labeling. Flexible grouping is a good tool for differentiation as it provides possibilities for students to work in heterogeneous and homogenous groups practicing different skills and working on their ability levels collaboratively. Thus, it is better to differentiate all than just the few, and promote an atmosphere respectful of diversity and understanding of different weaknesses and strengths.

Next, the study will proceed to the empirical part; first, by introducing the research setting and then presenting the results.
3. RESEARCH

This chapter aims at presenting and reporting the research and the different phases it includes. First, the research objectives and questions are presented, then the methodological perspectives and finally data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research objectives and questions

As mentioned in the introduction chapter the aim of this research is to increase understanding and knowledge on differentiation in the foreign language classroom as a phenomenon, and spread awareness of diverse means for differentiation that foreign language teachers could apply in their everyday work. These aims have been attempted to be reached through interviewing FL teachers teaching in the foreign language classrooms about their perspectives, practices and experiences on differentiation. Consequently, my empirical research questions are 1) how do FL teachers understand differentiation and who do they differentiate, 2) how do FL teachers differentiate their instruction in practice and what kind of orientations for differentiation they have and 3) how do teachers experience differentiation: a) what kind of challenges and b) good practices do FL teachers find in differentiating in the FL classroom?

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1. Phenomenology

This study could be characterized as a qualitative, phenomenological research. Phenomenology is a method interested in people's perspectives and experiences in trying to gain a deep insight into a phenomenon. According to phenomenology, people's actions are
always intentional. The intentions of a person's actions can be understood by asking what kind of meanings one acts on (Laine, 2010, 29).

Phenomenology is visible in the research in that it asks how teachers define and experience differentiation in a context and what kind of meanings they give to it. Thus, the focus of this research is a human being, a person and his/her experiences (Laine, 2010, 28-31.) Interpretations of the informants on the everyday phenomenon represent a first hand interpretation. Interpretations of the research on the interpretations of the informants represent second hand interpretations. In other words, qualitative research is the imitation of the first hand interpretation. However, the researcher needs to rise above the natural experience and try to understand it theoretically. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 148.) In other words, the research is not aiming at developing a generalized picture on differentiation in the FL classroom but, through individual and specific cases, to increase understanding of this phenomenon. Qualitative research enables the detailed and multifaceted examination of the data. (Hirsjärvi, 2009, 164.)

In contrast to biographical experiences, here I am more interested in teachers and their capacities as experts for a certain field or activity. Experts have technical process oriented and interpretive knowledge referring to their specific professional sphere of activity. Thus expert knowledge does not only consist of systematized and reflexively accessible specialist knowledge, but it has the character of practical knowledge in big parts. Different and even disparate precepts for activities and individual rules of decision, collective orientations and social interpretive patterns are part of it. (Flick, 2012, 165-167.)

3.3 Data collection

Six semi-structured, thematically organized interviews were conducted with FL teachers teaching mostly English, but also French and Swedish at comprehensive schools in Northern Finland in April, May and June in 2014. The informants were found through asking face to face or via email from people that have been known to the researcher. Four of the teachers were teaching at the same school.

According to Eskola and Vastamäki (1998, 85) one of the most important reasons for choosing interviews as the data collection method is the idea that when we want to know what a person thinks of about a certain topic, the most simple way to find it
out, is to ask the person. Furthermore, interviews would offer a deeper view on the phenomenon since clarification and more details could be asked for and the original order of questions could be changed in the interviews (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 35-36). Therefore, interview was chosen to be the research method since it was the tool with which the perspectives of the teachers on differentiation in a specific context could be explored in depth.

The interview was semi-structured since the interview questions were prepared beforehand but the order of the questions was not strictly followed and clarifying questions were asked regularly. The questions were formed on the basis of literature and previous research. The interviewees were also asked about their education and professional background, the idea being that by knowing the teacher it would be easier for the researcher and readers to understand the starting points from which the teachers look at differentiation and what might affect their perspectives and practices.

For the interview, two interview forms were prepared (see Appendixes 1.). One had the main questions written down, and it was sent to the interviewee two days before the interviews. The idea for this was that since the interviewees would have some time to prepare for the interview, they would be able to give as many perspectives and experiences on the topic as possible (see Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 73). The other form was for the researcher, and it had clarifying questions and possible prompts. Most interviews were done at the schools of the informants, except for one, which was conducted at a cafe, and one, conducted via Skype. The average length of an interview was 51 minutes and 34 seconds.

3.4 Informants

The first informant, Teacher1, is an English and French teacher in an elementary school. She graduated in 2003 having English philology as her major subject and French and educational sciences as her minor subjects. She taught two years in a secondary school and now she has been teaching for 8 years at the elementary level. Currently she is teaching grades 3-6, and altogether has 120 students.
Teacher 2 has been a teacher for 12 years teaching at secondary and upper secondary schools as well as at a university. She studied Nordic philology and English, and educational sciences as her minor subjects. She has also taken some courses in Finnish and sociology. Altogether she has 80 students on the secondary level and 120 students on the upper secondary level.

Teacher 3 has been a teacher for 27 years. She majored in English language and studied German, Swedish and educational sciences as her minor subjects. She has taught around ten years at secondary levels, where she taught some German but mostly English and Swedish, and more than ten years in the elementary level where she teaches now English. At the moment, she has 80 students while earlier she has had around 150 students. She has participated in several lectures related to differentiation.

Teacher 4 has been a teacher for around 20 years. By education she is a elementary school teacher who has specialized in English and arts. One of her teaching practices she carried out at a special needs school. In addition to teaching several years at a university's teacher training school, she has worked as a teacher educator and a consultant, especially in issues related to indigenous people's education and multilingualism abroad, and been one of the organizers of an International school in Finland. She is a second-grade teacher but teaches also English to the sixth-grade.

Teacher 5 has been a teacher for 33 years, teaching at secondary and upper secondary schools. She also taught French for two years at an elementary school. She studied English philology while French, educational sciences were her minor subjects. The number of her students varies due to the system of study periods at secondary and upper secondary schools, but during this period she has 38 secondary school students in two different courses. She has taken a few courses on special pedagogy aimed at language teachers.

Teacher 6 is a university teacher, teacher trainer and researcher with the experience of working for a university for 30 years. For several years she was a teacher trainer at a university's training school, teaching 50% English and 50%, a vice-principal, but now she is part of a research group related to life-long learning and reading. By education she is an elementary school teacher who is specialized in teaching English. She has studied several other minor subjects such as arts, speech communication, psychology and social sciences. She has attended courses on special education and differentiation. At some point she considered special teacher education. Notable is that she has not been a
teacher for children for a while, thus now she evaluates her previous practices and experiences from a distance.

Table 1. Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Lengths of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>English and French teacher, elementary s.</td>
<td>English philology, French, Education</td>
<td>10 (+ 2 yrs. secondary)</td>
<td>65,89 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Swedish teacher, secondary s., upper secondary s.</td>
<td>Nordic philology, English philology, Education</td>
<td>12 (+ at a university)</td>
<td>31,20 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>English teacher, elementary s.</td>
<td>English philology, German, Swedish, Education</td>
<td>27 (+ 10 yrs. secondary s.)</td>
<td>48,02 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Elementary s. and English teacher</td>
<td>Education, English philology, arts</td>
<td>20 (+international s., consultant/educator abroad)</td>
<td>58,43 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>English teacher, secondary, upper s. school</td>
<td>English philology, French, Education</td>
<td>33 (+ 2 yrs. elementary s.)</td>
<td>41,15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>University teacher and researcher, project attendee</td>
<td>Education, English philology</td>
<td>30 (both at elementary s. and at a university)</td>
<td>63,36 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Data analysis

The analysis is abductive, meaning that the analysis has proceeded on the terms of the data, but the researcher already knows theoretical concepts related to the topic. Consequently, the themes and concepts are not completely formed on the basis of the data. (see Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 108-118.) Wolcott and Rorty claim (in Ruusuvuori, Nikander, & Hyvärinen, 2010, 19) that pure inductive analysis is impossible, since all the descriptions and classifications are inevitably affected by the theoretical concepts and methodological choices. For instance, the research questions here are based on earlier research and theories. No specific theories are, however, tested.

Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis were used in this research. Analysis units were first and foremost thought of as entities (ajatuskokonaisuudet) that formed meanings, but also individual words were brought out from the data. The
transcribed data was read carefully a few times. Then, the citations were grouped under the three empirical research questions and their sub-questions on the computer using different colors. After that the citations were reduced on the basis of theoretical literature, repetitive or overlapping citations were eliminated, and some initial groupings were made. Then, themes were drawn from the reductions using a table as help. These themes were mainly formed on the basis of the interview questions, which usually work as a good starting point for finding themes (see Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, 93). After that, the reductions of all the informants' citations were compared with a view to finding similarities and differences, i.e. codes under the different themes. These codes appear in tables in the 4. Results-chapter for the reader to see. Furthermore, the reductions of the informants' citations were compared individually under the different themes for perceiving their individual perspectives and practices. See 8. Appendix-chapter for further examples of the analysis process.

The themes and codes were synthesized into textual descriptions of the central phenomenon, and central quotes were identified to support the themes. Then, the results from the data and theoretical literature were compared to see what kind of theoretical correspondences the teachers had for their perspectives and practices. Finally, the original quotations were again compared with the concluding results to increase the validity and trustworthiness of this study.
4. RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the research are presented under the three research questions for the empirical data, with their sub-questions. The results for research questions are divided into separate chapters named with common nominators i.e. themes of the semi-structured, thematic interview. One of the themes, 4.2.1 Differentiating by Emotional Needs and Personalities emerged from the data. The results of most of the research questions are presented in tables and then, as texts of analysis. The tables include the multitude of codes found in the data, as well as how the codes are represented in each of the informants' interview answers. The codes are in italics within analysis in order for the reader to make references, get oneself acquainted in more detail with how the different teachers think about the specific topics and to see a bigger picture more easily. The analysis is very detailed, especially 4.2. Differentiation in Practice, and therefore, the reader can choose to go only through the tables and then, proceed to 5. Discussion and 6. Conclusion.

4.1 Understanding differentiation

The following section on understanding differentiation presents meanings, objectives and the importance the informants give to differentiation in the FL classroom. Furthermore, the focus group of their differentiation is mapped in order to define more the informants' understanding of the phenomenon of differentiation. In other words, section 4.1. answers the first research question, "How do FL teachers understand differentiation and who do they differentiate?"

4.1.1 Meaning of Differentiation

Table 2. Meaning of Differentiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students have different:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- skills</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When describing what differentiation means to the interviewees as teachers and persons, all of them said that students are somehow different, and they expressed, in their own words in quite different ways, the role of the teacher in differentiation. It was a challenge to translate and condense the descriptions to a table, as the words describing student differences ranged from capacities and skills to abilities and competencies. However, some commonalities could be constructed: the most pronounced descriptive words were skills, learning styles and abilities. Then, the teacher needs to take students into account as individuals and allow them to study on their own level.

According to T6 some families are learning- and school oriented as a result of which their children have schemes for learning and studying already in their heads when they come to school. This is what Uusikylä (2003) mentioned about giftedness: it is greatly affected by social backgrounds of students. Also, how students experience learning situations is affected by their different self-beliefs, motivations, temperaments and personalities (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005; Moilanen, 2008). T6 also referred to individual differences in the ability to learn, e.g. language aptitude, giftedness and intelligence and her will to balance those differences: “The ability of human beings to learn is being very unfairly shared,” and added that “the teacher needs to notice, see and hear holistically each student as individuals in each and every situation and not just within a subject.”

Thus, she seems to acknowledge that differentiation is not a general system and a collection of didactic gimmicks, but a learner-centered, context-specific and individualized approach. She seems to opt for harmonizing differentiation in that she wants to balance student differences, but on the other hand, her approach could be seen as differentiative, as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher needs to:</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- take students into account as individuals</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- balance the unfairness in skills for learning</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- allow students to study on their level</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- focus on the essentials and differentiate from there</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- take into account different learning channels</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- make sure that the weaker students learn, too</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
she does not believe that everyone needs to be similar in regards to weaknesses and strengths.

T1 explained that students are more *gifted* or *weaker*. Therefore, teachers need to *modify* the teaching by finding the middle level i.e. what is integral to learn and provide more *challenge* or *cut down* the learning package from there. Similarly, according to Tomlinson (1999, 12) in differentiation the teacher needs to focus on the essential skills and concepts for all and then start to differentiate from there. T2 was of the same opinion on teacher’s role in differentiation. T5 and T1 also expressed that the teacher needs to take care that the weaker students learn something, too. Their view on differentiation could be seen as more differentiative, as they seem to provide struggling students with slightly less expectations.

T4 and T6 had the *broadest* perspectives on student differences since, in addition to student readiness that other teachers mentioned in their answers, T4 and T6 mentioned learning styles and interests, as well as social and emotional differences. T5 also talked about different *learning channels* in addition to capacities. T3, T2 and T1 mainly focused on students’ readiness, i.e. abilities and skills for FL learning.

4.1.2 Objectives of FL Differentiation

Table 3. Objectives of FL Differentiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Positive learning experiences</th>
<th>Motivation to learn</th>
<th>Respect for different learners, self-awareness, self-regulation, agency and self-efficacy</th>
<th>Experiences of being noticed and supported as an individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All teachers mentioned in one way or another that one the objectives of differentiation is for students to learn and feel good about it, which will undoubtedly lead to an increase in study motivation, although not all mentioned it. T4 had a lot of other objectives for differentiation which differed from the others’. She clearly fostered Mastery Learning –
mindset where all the students are seen as having potential for maximum growth and thus provided with high expectations. She emphasized that children would learn to respect different ways of learning and know themselves as learners; they would get to know their learning strategies, styles, weaknesses and strengths and when they need help from others, and thereby, make plans and choices i.e. self-regulate their learning. Similarly, Tomlinson (1999) advocate respect and understanding for learner diversity and their styles, strengths and weaknesses, while e.g. Dörnyei & Skehan (2005) and Dörnyei & Ushioda (2013) propagate the importance of self-regulation in learning. T4 added that students would also understand that instead of learning for the teacher and avoiding sanctions, they are learning for themselves and the joy of learning new things. All these thoughts are related to Bandura's concept of agency. Finally, T4 emphasized the importance of self-confidence:

"It is the only precondition for learning. It is built by the joy of learning, which comes from the thought and feeling that 'I can learn and I have learnt every day and every moment'. What is being learnt is not that important."

T4's objectives are in line with Bandura's concept of self-efficacy i.e. one's belief in one's own capabilities (see ch. 2.2.). Extrinsic motivation would be replaced with intrinsic motivation fueled by sense of agency and self-efficacy. Her

In T6's answer her consideration for students' emotional needs was evident, she emphasized that every student should experience that they have received the kind of support they need. They would also experience being helped, heard and above all, noticed as individuals.

4.1.3 Importance of FL Differentiation

Table 4. Importance of FL Differentiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation is extremely important</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation is important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating down is more important than differentiating up</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation up is important</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the elementary school teachers i.e. T4, T1, T6 and T3 were strongly of the opinion that 

differentiation is important. T6 added that it is so all-encompassing that it is always in 

mind and the goal in teaching. T2 and T5 agreed, however slightly more mildly, that it is 

important to differentiate.

Nevertheless, T1 remarked:

"If there were more students that needed to be differentiated, the differentiation 

practices could be developed and used more. On the other hand, I'm not sure what is 

then meaningful."

Similarly, Roihä's (2012, 94) pro gradu hinted that the more students in intensified/special 
support teachers have, the more they differentiate their teaching. However, it implies a 

somewhat linear understanding of student differences, with weaker students on one end 

and more gifted students on the other end. In the end, all students should be differentiated.

T1, however, asked a very valid question: how far one should go in differentiation? Indeed, 

extreme differentiation, where everything and everyone are differentiated, is not 

favourable (Viljanen, 1975, 10). T4 provided one viewpoint saying that a teacher does not 

need to do 24 different lesson plans, but three to four is enough, and the rest is subtle 

adaptation, similar to what Laine (2010, 1) says. To Tomlinson (1999, 2003), in a truly 

differentiated classroom, everything from planning and materials to classroom 

organization and routines is based on differentiation. It should be an implicit, a natural part 

of the classroom culture, just like T6 also referred. However, in the beginning, the 

transformation to a truly differentiated classroom often requires a lot of planning and 

reflection from the teacher, although, as T6 added, small nuances in teaching are 

differentiation, too.

Everyone mentioned that often teachers in general differentiate more down, 

especially in a hurry. Also, everyone, except for T4, said that they personally do it, too, 

even though all of them consider differentiating up important, as well. Teachers in Seppäälä 
& Kauuto-Knape’s research (2009) and Roihä’s (2012) pro gradu also consider 

differentiating down more important. T1 was of the opinion that everyone should get 

experiences of success so that study motivation is maintained. T5 said that that the teacher 

needs to support the weaker students so that they will learn at least something, too, while 

T1 put it so that differentiating down is more important so that no one is left behind. T6
explained that she has supported most those who she has felt needed the most help, and those who get good test results and seem to manage are often left more unnoticed. The advanced students often have the schemes for learning ready in their heads so the teacher is not that much needed anymore e.g. for learning facts but with the exception of discussions. This is what research has suggested, too: good language learners apply several learning strategies (Griffiths, 2008, 90-92). Everyone mentioned that the gifted students practice languages in their free time, as well, which could be considered a language learning strategy. T5 summarized that the good students are able to take care of themselves.

Thus, egalitarianism and the inclusive Finnish education policies are evident in the teachers’ attitudes. Furthermore, it is understandable that the teachers emphasize differentiating down; several sources (see Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005; Ushioda, 2008; Dörnyei, 2010) have proposed that motivation is the other main factor, in addition to language aptitude, that predicts high language achievement. Thus, by emphasizing the supporting and motivating of the struggling students, in comparison to their peers that are advanced and confident e.g. due to high language aptitude, it becomes possible for all to experience success and confidence in learning, once in a while.

Anyhow, T3 thought that gifted students need as much attention and patting on the back as others. In T6’s words, everyone needs to experience being heard, seen and noticed. T2 pointed out that often the term differentiation refers to differentiating down, even though it should work to both directions. She and T1 said that everyone needs to have possibilities to experience success without boredom or frustration. T4 claimed:

"However as important [as differentiating down] is to open doors to those who have skills to reach higher so that only the sky is the limit and do their own thing."

Here, her attempt to help each student grow to his or her full potential is evident (see Tomlinson, 1999). She also added that advanced students should not get to think that they already know everything, since everyone has things they need to practice. Like Uusikylä (2003, 91-92) and Tomlinson (1999, 18) write that a gifted child needs challenges in order for her to develop, since otherwise she will not learn to practice and put an effort in learning new things. Furthermore, if advanced students are not challenged, their thinking and problem solving is suppressed (Tomlinson, 1999, 19). They might even give in and not do much, since, according to expectancy value theory, a goal needs to be
challenging, and thus rewarding, in order for motivation for reaching the goal to stir (see Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005, 615).

4.1.4 Focus group of FL Differentiation

Table 5. Focus group of FL Differentiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- all students</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students with different strengths and skills</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students with different learning styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with learning difficulties</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students in special and intensified support</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students with other learning difficulties</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students with low self-efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good language learners</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students who have learnt the FL already</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students who are motivated</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students who go in for the FL</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students who know language strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- students who have linguistic giftedness</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T4 was the only teacher who clearly answered "all" to the question "Who do you differentiate?" In her answer to the question "what differentiation means to you" she also expressed that all really means all to her: students with different learning styles, readiness and skills. T4 added that she dislikes the term "differentiation" and prefers the term individualization more, as perhaps "differentiation" refers more to separating the few whereas "individualization" refers more to differentiating all. Similarly, T6 said that differentiating all students should be as important. She did not like talking about differentiating "up" and "down", as she thought that all students should be provided with what they need; she prefers the term spectrum of differentiation.

T1, T4 and T5 mentioned their students in special support and intensified support who they differentiate first and foremost. T2 had no students in special support at the moment but a few students in intensified support such as immigrant students with poor knowledge in Finnish. T3's students in special and intensified support study in a special education group (pienluokka). T6 has not been teaching children in a while so she has not had students in special and intensified support as they are defined in today's law on education and curricula. They also said that they differentiate those students who have
other difficulties in learning English such as dyslexia, hearing/sight impairment and concentration and/or hyperactivity issues. Therefore, in accordance to general support written down in the Basic Education law of Finland, not only those students with diagnoses get support, but also those who seem to struggle or need special accommodations.

There was no mention that some of the learning difficulties might derive from the fact that the learning environment and methods used might not be suitable for the learning styles and interests of some students. As Moolanen (2008, 11) writes, explanations other than medical ones for learning difficulties can be found in the learning environment and methods, such as flawed learning strategies, teaching methods, lack of teaching resources and motivation problems. The term learning difficulty itself might have led the teachers to only think of difficulties researched in the psychological tradition that focuses on problems in individuals.

T4 did mention that some students have the difficulty ‘between their ears’, but as soon as the teacher comes and helps, they gain some sense of self-efficacy which enhances motivation. T6 explained that she had had hearing-impaired student who had a low sense of self-efficacy. However, s/he was interested in American cars and motorcycles so T6 organized at times a race for remote-controlled cars to enhance the student’s connectedness to and enjoyability in the school environment.

All of the teachers also had so called good language students whom they tried to take into account in their teaching. The definitions for a good language student and giftedness differed. Proficiencies in different language areas and good test results were mentioned. All teachers said that giftedness appears as interest and motivation towards the language, and the students go in for the language in their free time, too. However, whether motivation and free time engagement are the results or reasons for giftedness, was not as clear, except for one teacher. Furthermore, there was no unanimity in further explanations for giftedness.

T1 and T5 were of the opinion that giftedness results from experiences, such as having the FL spoken at home, studying at an international school, living or travelling abroad and/or playing games. T2 and T5 explained that a good language student has natural gifts in language learning i.e. language aptitude. They also explained that a good language student is able to grasp concepts quickly, implying that there is some sort of innate intelligence or analytic language predisposition.
T1 characterized a good language student as someone who is good in multitasking, such as noticing several linguistic items at the same time and processing them, which can be considered as an innate ability. Being able to notice linguistic items and then process and understand them are different stages of information processing and, as Skehan (2002) suggests, sub-components of language aptitude: phonemic coding ability and language analytic ability. Similarly, T4, T6 and T2 explained that students can be talented in different areas of the FL. Thus, they all might be implying that language aptitude is not a monolithic construct but consisted of sub-components where students’ strengths differ, similar to Skehan (2002), Robinson (2002) and Sternberg’s arguments (2002).

T6 explained that gifted students have abilities and schemes for learning, which might partly originate from experiences and home environment. Naiman et. al. (1978) emphasized that so called gifted language learners have strategies and skills that can be practiced by others, too, such as learning schemes and autonomy. T4 seems to share these ideas since she tells her students that they can develop their ‘ear for languages’ even though some might consider it as a fixed, innate ability. T4 further said that basically a gifted student can be anyone who is motivated and interested in the language, even the student who does not do well in math and Finnish, like a few of her students are. These students just believe in their ability to learn and know their learning styles.

In other words, the teachers attributed giftedness to innate language aptitude, analytic learning style and intelligence as well as experiences. Only one teacher seemed to somehow imply that linguistic giftedness is a monolithic aptitude, whereas others who talked about it, implied that students can be able in different sub-components of language and language aptitude. One teacher attributed giftedness to having motivation and two to knowing about learning strategies. However, it needs to be remembered that gifted learners, with high language aptitude, schemes for learning and/or intelligence, are usually gifted students, i.e. proficient in the FL, but gifted students, e.g. those who know the FL from experience, are not always gifted learners and know efficient FLL strategies. As Uusikylä (2003, 91-92) expressed his concern, these gifted students might have a perception that FLs should be learnt effortlessly, and thus experience disappointments in learning then other FLs, such as the A2-language in Finland, that do not internalize so easily anymore. Therefore, teaching language strategies, such as motivation self-regulation strategies, for advanced language students is important, too.
4.2 FL Differentiation in Practice

This section responds to the second empirical question: how do FL teachers differentiate their teaching in practice?

4.2.1 Differentiating by Emotional Needs and Personalities

Table 6. Differentiation by Emotional Needs and Personalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting to know your students better</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of teacher-student-relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation with the class teacher</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Tomlinson (2001, 2, 5, 17) getting to know your students and building a sense of community is vital to the success of any differentiated classroom, and this is what T6 and T4 talked about. For instance, T4 talked about teaching the same students for a long time and getting to know their personalities. She explained that a language teacher should not just be a subject teacher but part of the lives of the students in a holistic way. This means, for instance, that:

"You still meet the students always as an English teacher i.e. in the role where they know you. You immediately see in them that they have, for example, carefully prepared and practiced something at home to say to me in English in the school corridor, and when they get to do it, they are so excited."

Her being in the English teacher role provides her with opportunities to gain broader, individualized knowledge on how her students use English, as it provides her students with opportunities to use English outside the classroom and in more natural situations. Additionally, for some students it can be a more convenient way to practice English, and thus more motivating. She adds that if the teacher knows the students, she will be able to pull the right string, so to say. It means that the teacher needs to listen to
how are the students are like and what they are interested in, and then interact with them accordingly.

T6 emphasized the teacher-student-relationship in differentiation. Seeing, hearing and noticing every student is differentiation. She gave an example of handshaking: every morning and every afternoon she would shake hands with students and look them in the eyes. Immediately, one would come up with something personal to ask or say. In other words, differentiation is about small nuances, not always visible to the outsiders.

Furthermore, students need to be shown that they are accepted and cared for despite their misgivings:

"I got feedback from a mother of a family where everyone had considerable dyslexia. Studying English was a real struggle for them. I sat with one of the boys for, I do not remember how many times, to retake a test. When he finally got it done, just and just, I hugged him and said that you’re such a wonderful boy that you’ll be just fine. After several years, the mother of the family told me that the boy had reminisced the event and the fact that he had been accepted without being so successful in the test."

T1 cooperates with the class teacher to develop her understanding of class dynamics, while T4 cooperates with the class teacher quite closely for all sorts of matters, which must develop her understanding on the students as persons, as well.

T6 seemed to use humor to talk to students about success and failure, wanting the students to understand that life is not too serious:

"To students who asked whether they could take the test again, I asked if they were going to eat the grade and if the grade nine tasted better than the grade eight...People, especially parents, pay too much attention to grades. Even the ministers did not get good diplomas from high school...It is enough to do the basic test, When you are able to do it, everything is fine...Not taking things so seriously is one kind of way to differentiate."

Moilanen (2008, 86) writes that teachers can encourage students by telling them about how they have and have had problems and failures with learning FLs etc. This is exactly what T6 did. T4 also encourages her students by saying that everyone can
consciously develop one's ear for languages and find the notes, just like one can develop one's ear for music.

Consequently, as elementary school teachers, T4 and T6 have possibilities and motifs to get to know their students holistically, and differentiate their emotional needs and personalities. As T6 expresses it by saying this allows the teacher to apply discreet nuances in differentiation. Getting to know students of course further helps in differentiating for readiness, styles and interests.

4.2.2 Differentiating by Readiness

Table 7. Differentiating by Readiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differentiating by readiness</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced language students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- allowing freedom and autonomy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- giving responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- setting personal goals</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- providing with authentic materials and situations</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Struggling students</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- special attention during classes</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- using wait time to allow reflection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- one-to-one teaching in verbal ex.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>- classroom assistant</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- cooperation with parents</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>- cooperation with other teachers</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>- using special study books</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>- accepting differences in performance</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- classroom placement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>- giving responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- collaborative reading</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- sketches and text-support for reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- anticipating vocabulary, themes and texts</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigrant students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- taking use of the student’s other skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- studying with a less advanced class</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
All of the teachers talked about differentiating by readiness and more specifically differentiating up and down, and for four teachers it was the main orientation in differentiation (T1, T2, T3, T5). As can be seen from the table above, strategies, both the whole group and the individual ones, that the teachers use for differentiating by readiness are several. They are divided under the different focus groups: advanced language students, struggling students, immigrant students and all students, however they are not exactly in the same order in the text as in the table.

**Advanced language students**

Four out of six teachers expressed in one way or another that good language learners can be differentiated by allowing them freedom and autonomy in their studies. These results correspond with Valta’s (2010) research results on differentiating gifted language learners. T6 said that teachers need to have the courage to step out of the schoolbooks, and that good language students need to be given freedom to choose what they need, want and can do. T4 has the students making their own period plans where they need to evaluate what they know already, and what they need practice in. They plan a schedule and projects on the basis of the evaluations. This also requires from the students that they set personal goals for themselves, which is an important part of learning self-regulation (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005). Struggling students would definitely benefit from setting personal goals as well. Similarly, Sousa (2009, 47) suggests that gifted students benefit and enjoy teaching that gives them opportunities for independent thinking and learning, but is also...
multifaceted and profound in its learning contents. Not all good students want to just do extra exercises but develop something new, something of their own.

Naturally, even though not all of them mentioned the exact word, by allowing the students freedom, the teachers assume that they are able to carry the responsibilities that come along. T6 recruited the students to plan and teach others e.g. by making a power point about the objective in English or Native Americans, which the students really liked. Similarly, T5 has recruited good students to update school websites and other things where they can show what they are capable of. T3 assigns good students to sit next to those students who need more help. She believes that the gifted students can enjoy helping others. Although research (in Sousa, 2009) shows that gifted students benefit the most from working with other gifted students. Therefore, this arrangement mentioned by T3 would not preferably be a stable or the only way of grouping used in the classroom.

T2 and T6 mentioned ways to differentiate advanced students that are based on authentic materials and situations. T2 said that the students can be presented with the culture and encouraged to use the language in their everyday life. T6 had similar thoughts when she said she had suggested a motivated language learner to take part in English clubs and encouraged other students to go places where they will hear English. She had a few gifted students to spend the other English lesson with an exchange student. Again, according to Sousa (2009, 47), activities that simulate problems of the surrounding world and use authentic materials and where different perspectives are brought up are especially good for differentiating for gifted students.

Struggling students

T3 uses special study books sometimes to assign exercises for struggling students, which can be uncomfortable for the students. If special differentiated study books are used with students along with individual study plans, those books, according to Moilanen (2008, 155-156), should be observed critically in relation to how well they take individualized learning objectives into account i.e. how well they practice those linguistic areas that students with the individualized study plans need. He also suggests that the study materials need to be clear with proper font sizes and styles and spacing, as the student might not be able to find out the essential linguistic contents if the materials or the texts are incoherent, fragmentary and extraneous. However, T1 emphasizes that the books should not look different from the regular ones to prevent negative labeling. Brattsein, Weinstein, & Marshall (in Rubie-
Davis, 2010, 123-124) also propose that distinctly different work and study materials make ability differences too salient and provide students with low expectations for their abilities.

Another term of providing support for students is *scaffolding* by Vygotsky, and that is what e.g. T5, T2, T4 and T6 do. T6 explained that if she sees that there is a student looking anxious, as if s/he does not know what is going on, she will *give special attention* to the student, e.g. walk subtly to that student and point at the spot they are working with. T5 is of the opinion that the struggling students can do the more challenging exercises as well, as long as the teacher ensures someone is supporting and helping the students who need it. T2 explained that literal exercises are easy to differentiate since students start to do the same basic exercises, but how they will continue and whether they need teacher's help, will depend on how students proceed with the exercises. *Classroom assistants*, T3 said, are a good help in individually supporting the struggling students. T1 thinks a classroom assistant would be really useful, especially for students in special and intensified support. However, classroom assistants are not used at the school of the majority informants, as it is a university school, and therefore has teacher students already there to assist. T4, T1 and T3 often work *one-to-one* with the struggling student in *communicative exercises* carried out in pairs. T4 said that she first puts everyone to work and then works with the struggling student.

T1, T3 and T4 have been *cooperating with the parents* in supporting the learners at home, too. T4 has arranged evaluation and development discussions with the parents about their children's English learning. As the national curriculum says, cooperating with the guardians of the students supports differentiation (POPMT, 2010, 9).

T4 also takes part in the student welfare-group (oppilashuoltoryhmä) and shares and absorbs information and experiences about students in special and intensified support. She also mentioned that she *cooperates a lot with the class teacher* for integrating and pacing Finnish teaching with English teaching. Learning the past simple in English can be difficult if the students have not learnt it in Finnish first. T6, T1 and T2 mentioned *cooperating with the special teacher*. Indeed, the cooperation between FL teachers and other teachers is important in order to get to know the students better and sharing ideas of how to support them individually (Moiilainen, 2008, 67; POPMT, 2010, 11).

T2, T5, T1 and T6 added that not everyone needs to learn everything, i.e. they accept differences in student performance, as the differentiative differentiation ideology does, too. However, it is dangerous to lower performance expectations in advance, as students learn to do what is expected of them. Teachers need to believe in
everyone's potential to learn. Learning expectations are met when every learner finds success at the end of hard work and achieves more than they thought they could.

Tomlinson & Strickland (2005, 16-17) write that differentiation should not be used only as a way to "protect" learners but to push students beyond comfort zone by providing them with challenging tasks. High expectations produce high results more likely than low expectations do.

On the other hand, in the end, the curricula define the essentials all students ought to learn. From there, the teacher can provide more challenge. If the task ends up being too challenging, the teacher needs to make sure s/he is there to help in finishing the task. Then, students in intensified and special support can have special areas of emphasis in what they need to learn; the objectives here are not, however, lowered, meaning that the student is evaluated on the basis of the criterion in the curriculum. Then, students with individual study plans have their learning objectives individualized. In other words, if expectations are lowered notably, the students should be transferred to special support. Here, it is good to remember that textbooks are not the curriculum. As Moilanen (2008, 70-71) proposes, the curricula leave some space for the teacher to emphasize communicativeness over accuracy, especially on the elementary level. Furthermore, how students learn and how they show what they have learnt, is not defined strictly. (see POPS, 2004; Opetushallitus, n.d.)

Immigrant students

The case with immigrant students, who do not know Finnish very well and might not have studied the FL, especially Swedish, at all, is slightly different from other students who need too be differentiated down. T5 mentioned that she has an immigrant student who knows French but not English or Finnish very well. Therefore, she has taken advantage of the student's strengths, the skills in French, and talked French with the whole class since then, they can learn French, as well. T2 has eighth grade immigrant students in special support who have been studying Swedish with a less advanced class i.e. the seventh grade students. Then, they study eighth grade Swedish over the summer and work hard over the next autumn so that they will catch up the others by the ninth grade. T2 said that with the principal they have agreed that the immigrant students in the intensified support do not have to study everything; just so that they will be able to get the diploma. In this case, they
most probably have special emphases for learning that are also written down on their personal study plans.

All students

T4 said that a natural method in her classroom is to have 3-4 different lesson plans, which she then just modifies. According to her there is no need to have e.g. 24 different plans. She did not specify how the lesson plans are different, but judging by her ideology in differentiation, she might have plans for students with not just different readiness, but also styles, personalities or interests.

Open-ended assignments, that T3, T4 and T5 claim to use, differentiate by readiness so that students produce e.g. dialogues, drama, trailers, animation, portfolios, posters and stories on the level they are. These kinds of assignments are promoted by several theorists (see Tomlinson 1999, 68–69; Peterson & Hittle 2003; Yatvin 2004, 16; Seppala, & Kauto- Knape, 2009; Moilanen, 2008). T5 also thinks that especially good language students can benefit from more open-ended assignments since good students can be given technological devices, such as iPads, and ask them to produce an animation or a performance, so that they can show what they are capable of. Indeed, Tomlinson & Strickland (2005, 10) mention that the teacher can differentiate by making task directions more detailed and specific for some learners and more open for others. However, Tomlinson et. al. (2008, 3) and Peterson & Hittle (2003, 223) argue that also struggling students need to be provided respectful, interesting and authentic activates connected to the real life. Actually, T4 organizes a lot of her teaching around thematic units, such as multicultural issues, which allow bringing up real life issues and problem-solving in heterogeneous groups. Moreover, they have a high potential to be motivating for all students as the role of language as a key in thematic activities is crystallized.

For differentiating literal exercises, homework, dialogues, listening comprehension exercises, vocabulary and reading for advanced and struggling students the teachers said they assign more/less or easier/more challenging exercises. In other words, they vary the breadth and complexity and possibly depth of the exercises. These areas of language learning are discussed separately in the chapters below.

T2 is of the opinion that differentiating up is easier than the other way around since one can just give them more challenging literal exercises, such as elaborating and translation exercises from which one can e.g. write a story. Moilanen (2008, 123) also
points out that elaboration exercises are easy to differentiate. T4 uses translation sentences for everyone in her teaching but differentiates them. T3 might give advanced students in sixth grade *the books of secondary level students*, which is what a teacher from Rojha’s (2012, 75) thesis does, too. T5 said that the teacher can just slip in some extra exercises for the gifted students if they are quicker than others in the class.

T4 might assign extra “challenges” for homework. T1 uses a book series which has the more challenging exercises marked with a circle. She leaves it for the students to choose to make a challenging extra exercise for homework, but sometimes she tells to some students to do the extra homework. What T6 said is that she has always differentiated homework. She has simply explained to good or struggling students that they will just do their homework slightly differently. T4 has made a deal with her students in special and intensified support that they will come after the class to ask the teacher what they will get for homework. T3 assigns some students to make fewer exercises at home. Those students do less/different exercises for homework, they can still benefit from listening to the exercises being checked.

T1 explained that books often have more complex or open dialogues after the basic exercise, and those students who can, will do them. T4 prepares basic spoken dialogues, a practice also promoted by Moilanen (2002, 233), which are short question-answer dialogues and fill in the gaps-exercises. Students may choose to take optional routes and/or extend their conversations. She has also prepared more extensive and profound dialogues on tablets. If the students cannot remember the words required, they can use digital or other dictionaries. Therefore, the dialogues can work as vocabulary enrichment exercises.

T2 said that they use AB-dialogues that can be adapted i.e. in which the lines can be said in the ways the students are able to. T5 said that gifted students could have more lines in their dialogues while T3 encourages the advanced students to use more vocabulary than there is available in the verbal exercise, similar to what Moilanen (2002, 233) proposes. T5 and T2 give fewer lines for those who struggle. T2 has fewer expectations for them to go through the whole dialogue. T4 and T5 explained that when going through the contents of the book chapters, the students who are able to can discuss about the text either in English or Finnish.

T1 said that for some students the kind of *listening comprehension exercises* where one needs to choose the correct answer are too easy, and thus, those students often get bored during the second round of listening. Therefore, she assigns up differentiated
extra listening comprehension exercises that the book series she uses has for 5th-6th-graders. In those exercises students usually have to write the answers in whole sentences in Finnish or English. For 3rd-4th-graders she asks them to answer briefly to small, extra questions the teacher has prepared for the second round if they have time. These practices are mentioned by Moilanen (2008, 120, 128), too. Similarly, T3 runs the listening comprehension exercises twice, and for quick finishers T3 writes up instructions for extra exercises. T5 mentioned using wait time in between the different parts of the listening comprehension exercises to allow reflection so that everyone can keep up.

T4 usually says instructions four times: first in a difficult way so that the more gifted ones get the message, then two more times making it easier. Finally she says them in Finnish. T2 also talks only in Swedish of which some understand more and some less.

In studying vocabulary, T4 might assign different variations of the vocabulary for study for different students. Some students can study all plus five words of their own choice while others can study the bolded words and five of choosing. T1 uses a book series that has the vocabulary divided in two, and she assigns the other half for the struggling students to ease the load while trusting that they will learn the rest at least passively.

For reading the book chapter, T1 anticipates the vocabulary by asking students to repeat the new words while reading the vocabulary from the book simultaneously. Moilanen (2008, 169) emphasizes the importance of anticipating new words before reading. T1 and T3 have also given proactive homework where the students have anticipated the new text e.g. by translating sentences and going through a simplified AB-dialogue or the sketch of the story plot. However, T1 was of the opinion that it really depends on the student whether she is willing to do proactive homework or not. Proactive small-group instruction helps in anticipating coming material, too.

Furthermore, similar to what Moilanen (2002, 98-100) suggests, for the struggling students in reading T3 and T5 have support for reading texts: T3 has sketches of the book chapters handed out to students, while T5 might have Finnish translations of the texts, Finnish translations of the text with gaps or a simplified version of the text. T3 also might shorten some of the texts. T2 has students processing texts collaboratively, in pairs or groups so that one does not have struggle alone with them, but hear how other see and interpret the text. She also emphasized what Moilanen (2002, 97) says, too, that the most important thing is for the students to understand the text. Being able to produce the language can then differ, which is often the more advanced skills in FLL.
Sometimes students are provided materials at varied reading levels. For example, T1, T3 and T2 assign advanced students extra texts from the study books. They can also read easy reader-books or other books as extra texts, which is also proposed by Moilanen (2002, 99-100). At times T1 allows students to choose from three different texts in the book.

T1 and T2 are somewhat flexible about the pace of learning of their students. T1 has had gifted students take part in lessons with older students, but it is not always possible due to scheduling problems, while T2’s immigrant student is studying with younger students. In a way all of the informants are being flexible about the pace of learning, as, for instance, within a class some students accelerate to finish earlier and get more tasks to complete, while some students might proceed more slowly and thus complete less exercises in the end.

4.2.3 Differentiating by Interest

Table 8. Differentiating by Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differentiating by interest</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- student choice of exercises</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>- students come up with their own homework</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- student choice in open-ended assignments</td>
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The way the teachers mostly differentiated by student interest was providing choices for the students. There was variation in how much the teachers allow students to choose the exercises they do. For instance, T6 was of the opinion that freedom to choose from different ways to do an exercise is extremely important for motivation. T2 said that she believes that students are not able to learn all the theoretical topics related to for example language structures on their own.

For T4 self-awareness of one’s learning profile is linked to freedom of choice. When there is freedom of choice, children automatically develop the feeling that they are responsible of their own learning process. Knowing themselves also helps in the choosing. If they feel a task is too difficult, they are able to say so and choose another one, ask for help from the teacher in choosing or in getting started with an exercise. One of the
reasons for T4 giving freedom of choice is that there is a danger in differentiation that if being done in a wrong way, e.g. by just assigning different exercises to students, students can lose their confidence as learners, and then their learning processes will halt. T4 said:

"One can go wrong in differentiation in a way that children and their performance are categorized beforehand so that teacher puts the children in certain boxes. The children are being labeled: first in their own eyes and then in the eyes of their classmates. Then they gradually start to believe that they are good for nothing and ask if they could get into special education... The teacher might say to a student to get an extra exercise from the turtle exercises instead of the child being allowed to choose the exercise. That way the turtle student will never start believing that s/he could be able to do the star exercises and be the star student."

Also, assigning the kind of exercises for a student that the teacher thinks are suitable makes it difficult to see the development of the student. Children can surprise the teacher by their choices: someone whom the teacher thought would never write stories suddenly had a story writing week instead of writing 10 separate sentences. Furthermore, in open-ended assignments, such as portfolios and drama etc., T4 gives her students the possibility to choose the topic they find most interesting.

T6 gave an example that freedom to choose can be realized in a lesson with beginning, middle and end, and in the middle the students can choose from three different options how to study the thing that should be studied. Or then, T6 as well as T4 said that they allow often students to choose the exercises or homework they do e.g. from teacher given options. T6 could also have said to students that they can come up with their own homework. T3 might assign certain exercises but then allow students to choose one. T5 allows the students to choose sometimes, as well. She teacher might give a certain number of exercises to do from specific areas of language but the students can choose which of them they will complete.

4.2.4 Differentiating by Learning Styles

Table 9. Differentiating by Learning Styles
Five out of six teachers had not differentiated specifically individually according to learning styles, but everyone utilized a variety of whole group activities providing for different learning styles. However, they had not dismissed the idea of individual learning styles. Otherwise, their opinions on the topic differed e.g. on whether there are such things as learning styles, and whether we could and should take individual learning styles into account in the class.

T1, T2, T3 mentioned that students seem to have different learning styles: auditory, kinesthetic and visual learning styles could be noticed in children. T3 mentioned that some students prefer literal exercises, while T2 mentioned that some students like to sit and listen. T6 was speaking of systematic and holistic students: those who like to study everything in a book in order and those who can acquire language from anywhere. T5 mentioned that students have different learning channels and need activation of different brain spheres. T4 had clearly the most structured opinions in differentiating by learning styles. She talked a lot about helping students to recognize their learning strategies, styles, weaknesses and strengths and when they need help from others. Students can be kinesthetic, verbal, visual and/or social learners.

However, T2 said that no learning style-tests have yet been made, only everyday observations. She agreed with her school’s special education teacher that since most of the people have a mix of learning styles, the test results should be very clear so that learning environments would be suitable. Obviously a child who has hyperactivity disorder but is very talented linguistically would need kinesthetic and active learning methods but then again that does not fit to all. Indeed, Moilanen (2008, 39) writes that the most common learning style tests are quite simplified. Therefore, the results of those tests should be viewed more as guidelines and something to think about but not as categorical truths. Senses do not out each other. For many, their learning profiles are combinations of many styles. Furthermore, T2’s immigrant student had said that would not it be enough for
some people just to learn verbal skills, but T2 thought both verbal and literal skills are important, especially in Finland, implying that even though someone would be more verbally inclined, they need to learn literal skills, as well. Indeed, according to the core curriculum, FL teaching on the secondary level should gradually start emphasizing literal skills, as well, in addition to communication skills (POPS, 2004, 140).

T1, T3, T5 and T2 implied that taking individual learning styles into account is a challenge. In other words, teachers’ acknowledgement that there are different learning styles, but that they are challenging to pin down and take into account in the classroom, is evident in their opinions. Therefore, instead of individually differentiating teaching and learning by different learning styles, the teachers generally vary their teaching methods, which is what Oxford & Lee (2008, 312) also recommend. T2 said that there could be variation in the stimulation of different learning channels during lessons so that everyone’s styles would get stimulation from time to time. T4, T1, T3 and T5 also mentioned that the learning in their classrooms is varied anyways. T4, T1 and T3 explained that their lessons are generally active, playful and communicative. T1 and T4 emphasized that language learning on the elementary level should be communicative. T1 added that not until 5th-6th grades issues such as articles and spelling are evaluated, but even then, the point is not to put off the joy in learning by concentrating on small mistakes. Indeed, according to the core curriculum, FL teaching on the elementary level should emphasize first communicative skills (POPS, 2004, 138). T5 tries to activate the different brain spheres of students by using visual and creative teaching methods, such as ICT, playing, drawing, pictures and acting.

Just like Moilanen (2002, 52) suggests, she as well as T1 and T4 use visual prompts to support the learning. Especially T5 tries to remember to make simplified visual presentations for dyslexic students e.g. by making the font in hand outs, presentations and tests bigger and leave enough spaces between the lines and exercises. If the visual presentation were not clear enough, the letters would be jumping around. T1 writes everything down on the whiteboard in addition to saying them aloud.

Why do teachers find differentiation by learning styles so challenging? T2 and T3 implied that in big groups it is difficult to differentiate by learning styles. Similarly, T5 explained that groupings would make it much easier for students to recognize and use their learning channels. She continued similarly to what Yatvin (2004, 19-21) has written about: it would be ideal to have lots of different materials and tools for learning such as bookshelves where students could go and take something to read; peaceful corners for
reading and writing; tablets, smartphones and computers always available where students could work independently, and exercises on notebook on smart board. T2 mentioned that their school will have a new learning environment built with different organizational spaces such as learning corners and tables for group work. She believes these classroom organizational and grouping solutions will tackle some of the challenges of differentiation regarding e.g. learning styles. T3 also said that they will have new facilities, as well but she added that as long as student groups are growing, it is unlikely to differentiate everyone according to their learning styles.

Furthermore, T3 was of the opinion that to be able to differentiate by learning styles, one should be quite knowledgeable as a teacher. In a similar vein, T1 said that it would be really good to take learning styles into account if a special education teacher would be able to say what to consider. In other words, they did not feel competent enough to differentiate by learning styles.

T4 had the most extensive scale of experiences in considering learning styles in FL teaching. For her, students are not labeled as weak or gifted but as learners with different styles. She also teaches about learning styles and help students to find their ways of learning.

"I do the following with all of my students: e.g. now at the second grade we start a "me and I as a learner-book". We go through different ways of learning and I explain how some researchers think that people learn in different ways. We do different exercises so that they'll understand what are kinesthetic/social/verbal learners like and what things you can learn by those ways. With the second graders I do not use those scientific terms but with 5-6th graders I do since they like the "adult-terms".

T4, T6, T1 and T3 have taught learning strategies, T4 especially for students in special and intensified support. T1 has given tips about how to practice vocabulary for students in remedial classes. T3 also reminds students how to practice for tests e.g. by revisiting exercises. Moilanen (2008, 19) writes that a student should receive guidance in learning strategies, such as memorizing vocabulary, listening comprehension techniques, reading strategies and doing an exam etc. Teaching of strategies needs to be structured and systematic so that they will become automatized. (Moilanen, 2008, 11-12.) By teaching metacognitive skills and learning strategies, a teacher develops students' abilities to learn
foreign languages while helping the student in seeing her/himself as an active agent in the learning process, and thus increase motivation (Schilling, 2006, 179-181, 183).

4.2.5 Differentiating Evaluation

Table 10. Differentiating Evaluation

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<tr>
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<th>T1</th>
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<th>T3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>everyday observations and homework</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>essay writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>continuous evaluation</td>
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<td>using several different test methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>student choice on test</td>
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<td>simplified visual presentation on test papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>differentiated test for struggling students</td>
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<tr>
<td>two to three tests of varied breadth and depth</td>
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<tr>
<td>bonus and open exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>same tests but softer assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>retaking an exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>complementing a test verbally</td>
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</table>

For researching student needs, T1 and T2 said that the special teacher takes care of it in the case of struggling students who seem in need of extra support. Then they and other teachers cooperate to find ways to support the student and continuously evaluate if any students who are in intensified support need to be transferred to special support. T4 relies, first and foremost, on continuous evaluation. POPMT (2010) and Tomlinson (1999) emphasize the importance of continuous evaluation.

Furthermore, all of the teachers mentioned everyday observations, homework and test results as tools for assessing any student needs. T6 explained that sometimes teachers need to let students learn instead of teaching all the time; this allows teachers to silently observe students. T5 further explained, similarly to Moilanen (2008, 78) that written essays are good tools for figuring out if there are any problems or what the students know and do not know. T1 might have students retaking e.g. vocabulary tests that have gone poorly in order to see whether the results are due to lazy reading or possible learning difficulties. Moilanen (2002, 249)
All of the teachers differentiated exams but in different ways. T1, T4 and T6 usually make tests of different levels. T6 and T1 make a basic test, a more challenging one and an easier one, while T4 has more fluctuating levels. T1 uses the tests found from teacher manuals and assigns the easier versions for struggling students and then asks the gifted students whether they want to make the challenging version. This is because some students who have answered to the more challenging version, have been disappointed when they did not get a high grade. T6 gives the students an option to choose which test they want to answer to, but this is discussed with the parents, as well. However, T6 pointed out that parents might pressure the students to choose to do the more challenging exam, which brings up the question of "whose freedom to choose?" The option to choose a test also brings pressure for those overachievers who want to do all the tests. For 3rd-4th graders T4 conducts rainbow tests where the students choose a certain amount of exercises on stations. T4 explained that it is a good system since the stations cut down the test into smaller and more manageable chunks. 5th-6th graders then practice choosing a test for themselves to do from three different tests. In other words, all of the teachers who make different tests give, more or less, students choices in which test to answer to.

T3 mainly assigns the same tests for everyone but evaluates some of the tests with a softer hand. Similarly, in Roiha's thesis (2012, 99) many teachers provided all students the same exercises but required different levels of completion. This might allow the teacher to actually see how the student manages a basic test, but still not disappoint the student with a poor test grade. In a similar vein, T1 explained that she does not want to pay too much attention to the mistakes since she wishes to maintain the joy in learning. When students go to 5th-6th grade she starts to pay a little bit more attention to the articles and spelling. This is especially important with students in intensified or special support and who have areas of special emphasis in their study plans. Or, for a few very weak students T2 might assign tests from the differentiated study book. T5 and T2 also assign the same tests for everyone except for students with individual study plans.

For making an easier exam T1 includes exercises where students need to know only half of the vocabulary, translate words from English to Finnish, find the right words from the written ones, connect things and order lines in a dialogue in the test. In exercises where producing words is needed, T1 might add different hints to the test papers. She might e.g. have lines ready for the needed letters and a few letters written there already or markings where the answers for the reading comprehension questions are found.

Structure exercises are more difficult to differentiate than vocabulary exercises, T1
explained, but she might add some letters or words there. Moilanen (2002, 250) also suggests adding written tips to exam papers to help struggling students in memorizing. However, the teacher is not able to see how the student would have managed without the extra support, and thus variation in testing is needed. Also, the teacher needs to consider what kind of support the student needs in an exam. For instance, for some dyslexic students, T5 modifies the visual presentation of the test, while memory aid might be helpful for e.g. those with difficulties in working memory.

With T2 the exam can also be partly or completely verbal, a practice strongly supported by Moilanen (2008, 72) and POPMT (2010); students need to be given the possibility to show what they can do in a way that better suits them. If needed, the teacher can read the words aloud or the student recognizes them on the basis of what s/he hears. In a (partly) verbal test, a student who has difficulties memorizing written forms of the words, can show what s/he has learnt. Perhaps, tests could be partly verbal and partly written for all students if it can be organized? Sometimes, T2 conducts partner tests, suggested by Nel (2008, 55), too, where, due to the students' wish, the partners are sometimes randomly assigned but sometimes also assigned homogeneously by the teacher. This converts the test taking situation into a learning situation as well, where also those students who need talking for processing benefit. T5 might give a struggling student an option to retake the test, which Moilanen (2002, 249) suggests, too.

Interestingly, T4 assigns students different kinds of tests just to experiment with what they can do. Once a year everyone does the same test so that the teacher to find out the middle level. Furthermore, T4 always has bonus or open exercises for students to show what they can do, especially if the teacher herself has "forgotten" to ask something the students would have wanted to be asked about. T4 told that the students are always very eager to do the bonus exercises.

"It is dangerous to have the same test for everyone all the time...All the time, I am experimenting with where the boundaries of the children actually go in different kinds of exercises."

Like Oxford & Lee (2008, 307) think, good language learning skills are not regarded as static and unchangeable but the opposite, and therefore, experimenting allows the teacher to see the development of students more easily and holistically.
For evaluation, for T1 and T3 student activity, participation and trying affects the grades while T2 has a system where 50% of the grade consists of the test grade and the rest from activity, participation and trying. One option would be to make the grade reflect achievement, effort and level of difficulty and count the average of these three dimensions. Indeed, even though the grade should be realistic and show what the student can or cannot do in comparison to the norm, students are all different, and thus effort need to be rewarded too. As Tomlinson (1999, 17) claims, excellence is defined in large measure by individual growth from a starting point.

4.2.6 Organization and Grouping

Table 11. Organization and Grouping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
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Most interviewees used flexible grouping, but mostly in differentiating by readiness: sometimes students would work in pairs and groups that are of the same level of advancement and sometimes they would work in pairs and groups where the other(s) would support the struggling student(s). Otherwise, the teachers' practices in grouping and organization differed. T4 has the most flexible grouping: for her groups/partners can be divided homogeneously or heterogeneously by readiness or by learning styles or specific
skills. T6 uses skills- and character-based grouping. T1 groups and pairs up those students together who get along and are able to work efficiently next to each other and together.

T1 said she has not developed any system for grouping since she finds it complex and multifaceted issue. Grouping is not only about the readiness of the students but also about group dynamics. However, that is exactly the point of flexible grouping: student relationships, skills, characters, readiness, styles and interests are diverse for which different groupings need to be organized and then reorganized in other ways. Naturally, organizing and managing flexible groups can be a challenge. Grouping, especially in elementary school takes time. Problems can also be caused to students with learning disabilities due to the lack of structure and routines.

T1, T3 and T4 have lessons so that the classes have been divided into two separate, heterogeneous groups once or twice a week (jakotunti). The point in this organization is just to have fewer students so that the teacher can support individuals better while still avoiding the leveled grouping and the labels they carry. T5 is of the opinion that division of students into heterogeneous groups and classes benefits struggling students due to the positive peer effect, the activeness and eagerness, of the better language learners.

T5 and T2 often pair up and group students homogeneously. T5 said that for those who work more swiftly, do not have to ponder what the other one knows and can do, and therefore they can converse more smoothly. T2 and T4 explained that the teacher would not bring up that the certain groups are more able than others, but have the group divisions just in one's mind and give names for the groups that will not reveal the main common nominators for the groups but use e.g. color codes and animals that change from time to time.

T4 has divided students into "study groups" by learning styles. Interestingly, sometimes T4 would set up a skills-based group, e.g. a think tank-group, where one needs to think very carefully. She said these groups imply that they have nothing to do with the giftedness or weakness of a child but with specific skills, e.g. the ability to concentrate and think carefully at the moment. Indeed, this sort of arrangement shows students that there is no overall inability or ability but different strengths and weaknesses.

T1 tries to take student character into account when grouping since class dynamics often influence a lot on how well students are able to work together. T6 uses also flexible grouping so that she groups the students by skills and student character depending on the exercise. If the exercise required performing, she would not group all the shy
students together. In some exercises it was useful to have a good drawer and a good writer while in some other exercises the group constellation did not really matter.

Differentiation can be realized through classroom placement. T1 and T6 have a student with a hearing impairment to sit in the front of the class while T5 has a student with a sight impairment to sit in the front, too.

Small group instruction was used quite a lot. For supporting struggling students T4 and T6 promoted the practice of proactive education. According to T4, it should be systematic and carefully planned so that it will support the bigger framework of learning. Especially, visual support should be meticulously prepared. Systematic it would be so that it continues from grade to grade. She also explains that she gives proactive education classes just right before the regular class so that issues dealt with would remain in the short-term memory, and be then repeated again in the regular class, in the homework and finally when checking the homework. How she carries out the classes is that they form sentences, first with the teacher, then with a pair or a small group and finally in front of the whole group in the regular class. They take time to go through the topics which the teacher explains clearly and in Finnish. Proactive education class is like a safe-place.

T1 and T5 organize remedial education classes for struggling students. T1 combines students from different classes with whom she reviews and practices the basics and also gives tips about how to practice vocabulary. In addition to assigning students to remedial education, T5 asks students who would like to join remedial education classes. There, they review and practice structures e.g. for the test but basically the same things as they practice in the regular classes.

T3 might have a pull out-group on the side, but she tries to include students of different abilities there in order to avoid negative labeling. She mentioned she might pull out not just the struggling one's but others as well so that the students would not notice what is going on.

T6 explained about an American Ateljé-method for literacy studies, adapted for Finnish schools, where sub-skills of literacy are being modeled, individual objectives set, practiced and evaluated in five different ateljés. These ateljés are independent reading, partner reading, creative writing, spelling and grammar and listening, and the students would go to different ateljés. T2 and T4 dreamed of something slightly similar. T4 talked about learning paths where students would move forward after mastering certain skills. T2 had ideas about learning stations through which students would move in heterogeneous groups, and which would have basic exercises, but some extra, as well. The Ateljé-method
might work well in FLL as even the sub-skills are quite similar to sub-skills in literacy. Actually, T5, T2 and T3’s schools will have new learning environments with different kinds of spaces for study: groups of sofas, screens, a therapy room and gym balls. T2 and T5 believed the environment would help in tackling the challenges of differentiation with classroom organization, learning styles/grouping. Ateljés, centers and stations will definitely be easier to realize in such environments (see Tomlinson, 1999; ch.2.4.4).

In summary, the section above, 4.2 Differentiation in practice, analyzed themes of differentiating by orientation, such as emotional needs and personalities, readiness, learning styles and interests as well as differentiating evaluation and organization and grouping. The informants seem to apply a broad range of measures for differentiation, but they do emphasize different orientations. For instance, the orientation of differentiating by readiness was the most pronounced one, while the orientation of differentiating by emotional needs and personalities was not originally found from the theory, but it emerged from the data. Then, in the practices for differentiating by readiness, different groups of students, i.e. advanced, struggling, immigrant and all students, were constructed on the basis of the data, too.

4.3 Teacher Experiences on Differentiation

This section provides answers to the third research question: how do FL teachers experience differentiation?

4.3.1 Good Practices in FL Differentiation

Table 12. Good Practices in FL Differentiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proactive education</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher manuals and school books</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises of differing complexity, depth and breadth</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided lessons</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom assistant</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
T4 was very positive about how well proactive education works to the extent that she was not sure what would have happened to the students in special and intensified support if she had not taught them in proactive education. One of the students has now ten in English with the same rubric than everyone else, and the other two have eight, and all of love learning English and believe that they are learning and good at it. Proactive education just needs to be systematic and scheduled so that it is possible. T6 also has had very positive experiences of proactive education. Her students liked it a lot and were relieved of their fears and anxieties over not understanding and keeping up.

T5 and T1 thought the teacher's manuals, especially in English, have good and useful material for differentiation. T1 mentioned that differentiated vocabularies and easier exercise books that look the same and have the same page numbers as the general ones are good since they are discreet and students who are differentiated downwards learn to use them on their own. A 5th-6th-grade book series has good listening comprehension exercises, which differentiate up. The exam packages are also useful since they have easier and more difficult ones. T2 had similar ideas in that she said that she likes to differentiate exercise types into easier and more difficult exercises.

T1 and T3 enjoyed the divided lessons with only half a group (=jakotunti). T1 and T3 also enjoyed the classroom assistant. T6 was very positive about the increase in cooperative teaching and openness. She found that dividing the class into two groups between the teachers is a good practice. T2 was also interested in aspects of cooperative teaching.

T6 said one of the best ways to differentiate is to ask gifted students to teach their classmates. She also explained that young teachers have difficulties to differentiate because they are too afraid of silence. Quiet moments, however, are the ones that allow the teacher to follow and listen what each student is doing. Teacher needs to be able to be quiet, observe, listen and ask.
4.3.2 Challenges and Problems in FL Differentiation

Table 13. Challenges and Problems in FL Differentiation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of inadequacy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of materials in school books for differentiating up</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T1 and T5 said that one feels inadequate in differentiation. T1 added that one is never ready; one could always plan lessons and differentiate better and better. T5 has asked herself whether one can know what is enough, especially when considering weaker students. T3 and T2 had similar thoughts: even though one tries to differentiate, it is challenging to be sure of the exact problems and the exact supportive measures. T6 expressed feelings of guilt: despite her strong will to take everyone into account as individuals, a teacher cannot always do that. There is a danger that teachers start to think about differentiation so much that they start to feel they cannot do anything.

T1, T2, T3 and T5 mentioned the hurry and lack of time as a challenge in differentiation in relation to the large amount of things to consider and the number of students to differentiate. T6 had similar ideas when she said there is not enough time to put an effort into the nuances of each school subject. T2 said one often just puts "the weak" in one group and does not have time to really think about their specific needs. T6 would have wanted to have more time to acquaint herself with research on for example brain and psychology. Teachers said that there is not enough material in the study books that would differentiate up (T4, T1); not enough resources to organize more support teaching or small group teaching which is also complicated due to scheduling problems (T5, T4, T1); not enough resources for various teaching and learning materials and spaces (T5); and not enough school assistants for students in special support (T1).

Furthermore, T1 mentioned that it is difficult to know what students do at home, she would like to know more about supporting immigrant students and that sharing information on students between teachers is poor. This latter challenge might exist because teachers change at times and Wilma, a web interface for student administration, has not
been all that useful in sharing information on the special needs of students, since teachers
do not use it that much. T6 was of the opinion that special teachers have lot of good
materials and methods for differentiation but was pondering how to share that know-how
with classroom teachers, as well. T1 and T3 implied that they do not know enough about
differentiating by learning styles for actually doing it.
5. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results of this research: in comparison to what theory claims differentiation should be like, the common and individual perspectives, practices and experiences of the informants, on what differentiation could be like are evaluated. Some differences in these practices between secondary and primary school teachers are also discussed as well as ideas for further research. In a separate chapter 6. Conclusion the results for the main question of this research “What should and could differentiation in the FL classroom be like?” will be summarized. Ideally, the results would provide various examples on differentiated instruction in the FL classroom with their theoretical bases explained, whereby other FL teachers can reflect on their perspectives, practices and experiences, and get new ideas for differentiation in their classrooms. However, before evaluating the individual and common perspectives and practices of the teachers, supporting students self-beliefs are discussed, as the discussion on these topics will explain some of the later presentations on parameters for successful differentiation and the evaluation of the teachers.

5.1 Supporting Students’ Self-beliefs

The topic of students’ self-beliefs was chosen for further discussion since, in addition to so called language aptitude, student motivation, greatly affected by what the students believe they are able to do, is the main factor in language achievement. Differentiated instruction has potential to support the students’ self-beliefs, but also diminish them. Therefore, as Bandura (1997, 175–176) argues, the success of different teaching methods should not be measured only by what students have learnt, but also by how they have affected students’ conceptions about their own skills and know-how; these conceptions largely determine how students orientate and respond to upcoming learning events.

There are several aspects in differentiation that need to be considered in how they affect students’ self-beliefs. Here, two aspects are chosen for discussion: the dilemma of labels in differentiation and the dilemma of differentiating by learning styles.
5.1.1. Dilemma of Labels in Differentiation

All, except T6, worried about the noticeability of differentiating down. However, according to Uusikylä (2003, 47) and Tomlinson (1999, 10) as well as half of the informants, children understand at early stages of their life that they have different abilities from their friends. Children seem to accept a world in which we are not alike. Therefore, noticeability might not be that pressing of a dilemma: however, being labeled as ‘stupid’ and ‘weak’ is. Being diagnosed with a learning difficulty and provided with individualized teaching might bring a sense of relief and understanding that the student is not stupid but just different. Nevertheless, this is not always the case. Therefore, how can we then help students, without, or with, diagnosed learning difficulty not label themselves and each other as ‘weak’ and ‘stupid’ but instead believe in themselves and their worthiness as individuals?

Of course, teachers need to show that they believe in their students’ potential to learn and support the development of that belief in students themselves; students can understand that abilities are not fixed and that by practicing they are able to develop different skills (Uusikylä 2003, 56–57; Rubie-Davis, 2010, 132). Nevertheless, students should not compare themselves to others, but to themselves, and to their own growth. However, on a more practical level, we could ask whether we should a) assign the same exercises but provide more modifications for performing them, teacher/peer support, softer evaluation and more deliberate pace, b) assign different exercises to students, or c) allow student choice in exercises. Which of the options is more supportive of students’ self-beliefs?

Let’s look at option a) the provision of same exercises and exams but then modifications in how to do them, more teacher/peer support, more deliberate pace, softer evaluation and lowering performance expectations. For instance, T2 assigns all students the same exercises, but depending on how the students proceed in them, she provides more/less challenge and support from her or a peer. T1 gives struggling students more time to answer to exam questions. T3 assigns the same exams for everyone but then evaluates some students with a softer hand. T2 accepts that some struggling students do not go through all dialogues she assigns. T5 assigns the same exercises, but makes the font and spacing bigger for some students.

This approach, where the exercises are the same for all, might help in seeing
the real level of the student instead of just presuming what the student can and cannot do. However, the student might also feel disempowered if s/he never is able to pass an exercise or a test independently or with flying colors but only just scrape through. One of the main problems here is that the teacher might not always have enough time give one-to-one support for all. Also, allowing students to proceed in their own pace might not always be possible, although it is highly recommendable. Then, with lowering performance expectations teachers need to be very careful, as students learn to do what is expected of them. Many students, if provided with high expectations and support, can achieve at the highest levels of thinking. (Tomlinson, 1999, 10; Rubie-Davis, 2010, 132.) Then, the curriculum also defines the basic frames for expectations for student performance.

Or, should we give students option b) different exercises and exams e.g. with less breadth, complexity and/or variations in practiced skills and concepts? For instance, T1 assigns the struggling students sometimes with exams with less breadth and complexity. In this case, there are possibilities for students to gain feelings of success when they are able to manage well on their own without teacher support. T5 said that sometimes some students feel relieved when they get the kind of exercises they feel they can cope with. Furthermore, the teacher does not need to be there, supporting, which saves the teacher’s precious time. This approach might not be very visible from the outside, unless special, notably different-looking books are used, but then it might lead the student feeling separate and diminish solidarity. Furthermore, how can the teacher know the exact level of the student, and expect to give exercises of the right level? Thus, by assigning exercises that diverge from the standards the teacher might not be able to see the true potential of the student.

In contrast to whole class differentiation, Saloviita (2013, 174) argues that too much of individual differentiation can be harmful, as it can label students. Also, Thousand, Villa & Nevin (2014, xviii) caution against using layered curriculum approaches to relegate some students to lower-level cognitive tasks. Providing children with rich learning experiences can amplify their intelligence, and denying them such richness of experience can diminish their intelligence (Tomlinson, 1999, 18). Similarly, in grouping, long-term and fixed arrangements affect negatively the sense of self-efficacy of students who are assigned for the lower ability-groups. Too often in these settings, teachers’ expectations for the struggling learners decline, materials are simplified, the level of discourse is poor, and the pace slackens. Of course, now that we claim that heterogeneous classes can represent high expectations for struggling learners, we cannot
leave them to their own devices to figure out how to "catch up" with the expectations. (Tomlinson, 1999, 21; Rubie-Davis, 2010, 131-132.)

Therefore, both ways of assigning activities and exercises have pros and cons. Students need to have it explained to them that everyone is different, and that some like to work at a slower pace, some independently and some with others or more verbally than literally. However, as Saloviita (2013, 174) state, the emphasis of differentiation should be on whole class actions, and heavy, individually differentiated measures one should attempt to avoid. If different exercises are assigned, preferably several or all students would be assigned different exercises, e.g. in the form of agendas, learning contracts or choice boards, instead of only one or two students. Of course, some students in special and intensified support might need different exercises. Here, the exercises should not be notably simple looking, but be what Tomlinson (1999, 2003) calls “respectful tasks”. Or, for homework different and in remedial and proactive education exercises would be given.

While not related to labels, a good solution for this, again, would be to know your students and their specific needs. In option a, with the same materials, but more support, time and modifications, the need for others for support, slower progression and different learning modes become emphasized; in option b, with different materials with less breadth, complexity and/or variations in practiced concepts and skills in them, the alleviation of burden and practices for different skills and concepts are emphasized. Thus, when deciding either for option a or b, the teacher should try to get to know the students and think what they as individuals need: who needs less material, and less complex and confusing material, whose objectives need to be lowered and how, who needs to practice specific skills and concepts; who needs different modes for learning; who needs encouragement and teacher/peer support; and who needs more time to complete tasks?

We could also give students option c): choices for exercises and activities. For instance, T4 has solved the issue of labeling students by using all of the aforementioned methods, but with the emphasis on student choice, and including learning styles in the spectrum of learner differences. Even though students might not be immediately able to make informed decisions on the options regarding their needs, being able to choose increases their sense of agency and prevents labeling students from top-down and separating a few students to lower level tasks. No one is defining what the students can and cannot do, but they choose it by themselves. Naturally, it is also important
that at times the teacher assigns specific exercises and activities to the students so that they would develop in ways deemed important (Tomlinson et al. 2008).

So, to conclude, teachers need to enhance appreciation of diversity, self-worth and the belief that practice makes perfect, and know their students. The broader the group to be given different exercises, the more natural part of the classroom practices it will become: if everyone does different exercises, at times, students will concretely understand how we all have strengths and weaknesses. Grouping and assigning of differentiated tasks need to be flexible, and students need to be given opportunities for choosing so that teachers will not simply assign tasks from top-down, and consequently label their students.

5.1.2. Dilemma of Learning Styles

Most of the teachers did not actively differentiate individually by learning styles, except for one teacher, but they all had thought about it. Clearly, the dissonance of conceptualizing learning styles in the academic field is reflected in teachers’ perspectives on the topic. Now, if we presume that there is a language aptitude, also hinted at by some of the informants, and that some students have more or less language aptitude, for example in phonological processing and noticing, it is indeed beneficial to differentiate by readiness so that students will expect to cope with given tasks and experience success and competency.

However, since motivation is an important factor in predicting language achievement, a student being labeled or labeling him- or herself as having low aptitude, can suppress severely the student’s expectancy of success and self-efficacy. Here, the teacher trying insisting to the student that his or her generating and sustaining motivation and belief that they will learn despite their low aptitude, might not be very effective in actually generating and sustaining the motivation. Of course, the teacher should explain the student that language aptitude has several sub-components and that the student possibly has challenges with only one of some of them, meaning that there is no way someone would be simply unable to learn languages.

Nevertheless, disguising low aptitude with differences in learning styles is not a poor decision. And there might as well be differences in that some students are more self-reliant and others more other-reliant or that some students are more analytical while
others more memory-oriented. Making students aware of these potential differences and providing a variety of activities and exercises differing according to these learning styles and content for different interests, and allowing student choice there, can boost language achievement, support student agency, self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Motivational self-regulation and self-image strategies can furthermore, motivate students in imaging their ideal selves and making them aware that they can control their own learning through effort, self-motivation and specific language learning strategies.

Moilanen (2008) writes that even though it is often hard to pin down the specific learning styles, and some scholars (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013) argue that there are no definite, good learning strategies, it would be good to try out different styles and strategies, such as memorizing vocabulary visually. Then everyone can choose those they like to most - despite their style being divergent from the strategy they like.

These discussions above, in addition to the theoretical discussions in the beginning of the study, have been used in constructing the parameters of a successfully differentiated classroom. These can be read in the following section. After that, the parameters are compared with the perspectives, practices and experiences of the informants of this study.

5.2 Shoulds of Differentiation in FL classroom

What should differentiation be like in the FL classroom? To summarize, differentiation is an ideology and a synthesized theory of individualism, cognitive constructivism, socio-constructivism, zone of proximal development and multiple intelligences. Although the goals of essential knowledge, understanding and skill remain bedrocks for the class as a whole, the teacher makes adaptations in time, support, materials and routes of access to ensure that each learner finds success at the end of hard work. Also, in the Finnish core curriculum, and especially in the amendments made to it, one can see influences of this theory. Furthermore, inclusiveness and support for the struggling students are evident in the curriculum and the basic education laws. Applied linguistics and psychology emphasize the importance of motivation and self-beliefs in compensating for flaws in language aptitude, while not completely recognizing the existence of individual learning
styles and strategies. Therefore, the term learning styles is here replaced with learning preferences.

The parameters of a successfully differentiated classroom can be defined and interpreted from such various viewpoints and theoretical traditions. Nevertheless, on the basis of the theory explored in this research, a few parameters could be drafted on what differentiation in the FL classroom should be like:

1) The teacher knows what matters in the subject area.
2) The teacher understands and appreciates student differences.
3) Differentiation concerns all students.
4) The teacher enhances appreciation of diversity.
5) Student weaknesses are practiced and compensated by support and capitalizing on strengths.
6) The teacher adjusts content, process, and product in response to student readiness, interests and learning profile.
7) The teacher takes into account the student personality, social background and emotional and motivational needs.
8) All students participate in respectful work.
9) The teacher provides choices.
10) Flexibility is the hallmark of a differentiated classroom.
11) Assessment is continuous and inseparable from instruction.
12) Goals of a differentiated classroom are maximum growth, individual success and generating and maintaining students’ self-beliefs.

5.3 Evaluating Coulds or Teachers’ Common and Individual Perspectives, Practices and Experiences

The success of the teachers in differentiation is impossible to find out in this research, or ever, since the parameters of a successfully differentiated classroom can be defined and interpreted from such various viewpoints and theoretical traditions. Furthermore, one is never able to record the wholeness of what teachers engage in as educational professionals
in the classroom, and thus I cannot thoroughly evaluate each point in relation to each teacher.

Still, the constructed parameters can be compared to the informants’ interview answers in gaining insight into what differentiation in the FL classroom could be like. However, the parameters are not an objective measure for success of differentiation, and therefore, the comparisons to the informants’ perspectives and practices do not measure their success in differentiation either. There are overlaps in the points and exemplary perspectives and practices, as these issues are all intertwined in working towards successful differentiation.

1) The teacher knows what matters in the subject area.

Since all of the teachers were specialized in the language, e.g. English and/or Swedish, it would be expected that they have opinions on what matters in FL teaching and learning for becoming proficient in the FL. For instance, T3, T1 and T4 emphasized that communicativeness is the number one priority over exactness on the elementary level, and the same claim can be found in the Finnish core curriculum. Notable is that this 2nd point also means the courage to cut down things that are extraneous and less important, which is what T1 and T2 talked about when they said that differentiation is about defining the basics and providing more or less challenge from there. For example, T1, T2, T3 and T5 try to think which linguistic elements are highlighted and which linguistic elements students are just passively exposed to, and what amount of active knowing of pronunciation forms, spelling forms or usage rules of words they require from different students.

2) The teacher understands and appreciates student differences.

With regard to this second point, all of the interviewees did mention that all students are different in various ways or individuals. However, T6 and T4 seemed to have the broadest viewpoints on student differences, as they saw students not only being different in their skills and abilities, but also in their interests, learning styles, personalities, temperament and social backgrounds and emotional and motivational needs. They also talked about getting to know students holistically, not just within a subject. Cooperation with other teachers aids this process.
Most of the teachers seem to look at readiness in a similar way to Tomlinson (1999), Skehan (2002) and Sternberg (2002): the concept relates to a particular competency at a particular time; it does not equate to a statement about a child’s overall ability or inability, for instance, in languages. The teachers explained how gifted students can be gifted in languages due to their experiences, their family backgrounds, efficient learning schemes, general intelligence, language ability and motivation while students can be struggling in languages due to their family backgrounds, various learning difficulties and lack of self-efficacy. Furthermore, students can have different skills in the FL.

3) Differentiation concerns all students.

Only two teachers were clearly differentiating all of their students; not just “weak” and “gifted” students are differentiated, but all, as everyone has different interests, learning preferences, social backgrounds, emotional and motivational needs and personalities. For example, T6 did not like talking about differentiating only up and down, but responding to the whole spectrum of student needs.

Differentiating all does not mean making 23 lesson plans, but providing choice and making e.g. 3-4 lesson plans and then slightly adapting them, as T4 suggests. Like T6 says, differentiating all can be also realized by holistically noticing of all students in all spheres of life everyone. Students have a need to experience being heard, seen and noticed as individuals.

Instead of differentiating a few to less complex tasks, T4 tries to differentiate all, e.g. by teaching about and having students to test their learning styles, which might be the reason she prefers the term individualization to differentiation. Teaching about learning styles and differentiating all enhances appreciation of diversity (see the next point 4). Differentiating all can be a challenge, at least in the beginning, before differentiation has become a part of the class culture.

4) The teacher enhances appreciation of diversity.

Indeed, teaching about learning styles and differentiating all enhances appreciation of diversity. Also, if all students are provided with different exercises that practice their weaknesses or capitalize on their strengths (see point 5), they will concretely learn that everyone has weaknesses and strengths. T6 has also talked about human differences with
her students. Enhancing appreciation of diversity supports students’ self-beliefs (see point 12).

5) Student weaknesses are practiced and compensated by support and capitalizing on strengths.

In capitalizing on strengths, the teachers varied whole group activities to respond to different learning channels, provided visual prompts in addition to auditive instructions and teaching and allowed choice. Allowing choices is important so that students would be able to access the content, e.g. vocabulary and grammar, through their preferred style; there would be a verbal, literal, creative, visual and hands-on options. T6 was grouping students according to strengths where students would contribute to the group with their different skills, such as skills in drawing, technology, presentation, spelling and vocabulary. T5 utilized her student’s other language skills, while T2 conducted verbal tests. However, capitalizing on strengths cannot be utilized too much; it is an important way to provide access to and intensify learning while supporting students’ self-beliefs.

In compensating weaknesses by support the teachers addressed both individuals and the whole group: they provided text support, modified materials for them to be clearer, gave clear instructions e.g. in Finnish, mimicked and anticipated activities and exercises. In individually practicing weaknesses the teachers provided struggling students with remedial and proactive education. Of course, many exercises and activities practice students’ weak skills, too. However, the teachers could apply more of individual differentiation by utilizing skills-and concept based differentiation such as pull out-groups, centers/stations, agendas, choice boards or learning contracts. These would be organized for practicing students’ weak areas in different ability levels, such as reading, spelling, listening comprehension, pronunciation and even lower-level processes, such as aptitudinal components and phonological awareness.

6) The teacher adjusts content, process, and product in response to student readiness, interests and learning profile.

All of the teachers did differentiate their instruction in various different ways. Now, it could be said none of the teachers were passively differentiating or really differentiating all of the contents, processes and products. However, the teachers’ focus groups, and thus
orientations for differentiation differed a lot, which also affected how they differentiated in practice; it could be said that their activeness/frequency varied in relation to different orientations of differentiation, i.e. student readiness, interests, learning style, and the practices within those orientations i.e. content, process, and product.

T4 differentiates all students actively by student readiness (content, product), interests (content, product) and learning styles (content, product, process). At the time T6 was teaching, she differentiated all students actively by readiness and interests (content, product) and less frequently by learning styles (process). T1, T2, T3 and T5 differentiate those students who are proficient due to previous learning experiences, high intelligence and/or language aptitude(s) and those who have learning difficulties and hence, struggle. They concentrate on actively differentiating by readiness (content, product) while less frequently differentiating by learning styles (process) and interests (content).

Then, when putting all of the practices of the teachers together, differentiating by readiness (content and product) seems to be, not only in this research but in other studies, too, the most pronounced orientation of differentiation. The teachers also provided a lot of examples for how to differentiate by readiness. This is understandable, as there is a certain set of standards that everyone is expected to achieve, and if someone does not keep up in the system of mass schooling, problems arise; different paces of learning and student struggles, boredom and frustration affect greatly classroom functioning, and on the other hand, they are often contributed to learning difficulties or giftedness, and not for instance to learning styles or interests. The informants have acknowledged that there is a need for differentiating by readiness, and that students need variety in the breadth, depth, complexity and pace in learning tasks. The three-step-support model has been acknowledged and applied, too.

The most used practices (4/6 teachers) in differentiating by readiness were differentiating breadth, complexity or open-endedness in exercises and activities, allowing advanced students freedom and autonomy, and giving them responsibilities, anticipating vocabulary, themes and texts, cooperation with other teachers, remedial education, special attention during classes for struggling students and accepting differences in performance. All of these practices are suggested by e.g. Tomlinson (1999, 2001, 2003) and Moilanen (2002, 2008). Additionally, all of the teachers mentioned several of the practices on differentiating and especially supporting struggling student in reading, vocabulary, doing exercises and listening comprehension suggested by Moilanen (2002, 2008). However, in accepting differences in student performance, the teacher needs to be careful: students
learn to do what is expected of them. Therefore, the teacher would show that s/he has high expectations for all that they work hard to move forward in their level individual levels of competency. Anyhow, naturally not everyone needs to get the highest grade.

The best practice for differentiating by readiness were books, divided lessons and classroom assistants. The teacher manuals and study books should be definitely utilized as they can differentiate in the pace of learning, width and complexity and perhaps sometimes also depth and interest. However, they should not preferably be the only differentiating practice. For instance, the teacher can prepare materials of different complexity and difficulty levels by utilizing Bloom's taxonomy, which practices various thinking skills. Other learning materials can consist of different texts, audio, video, games and flashcards, among other things. Furthermore, what the teachers did not mention using often, but what Moilanen (2002, 120) and Lee (1994, 92) suggest, is the use of computer and different ICT-applications as teaching and learning materials for writing. These can be very helpful and motivating for students with dyslexia for example. All in all, technology has great potential in differentiating. Finally, divided lessons and classroom assistants allow more one-to-one teaching and special attention, one of the most used practices, but require resources. Lack of resources was one of the challenges mentioned.

Some of the least used practices by differentiating by readiness were setting personal goals (advanced students), giving responsibilities (struggling students), having 3-4 different lesson plans and thematic units for real-life application. It is curious that only advanced students were required to set personal goals, as it would be very useful for struggling students as well. Setting personal goals is an important part of learning self-regulation and generating and maintaining motivation (see point 7). Perhaps it is thought that children are not capable of meta-cognitive thinking, or that organizing activities addressing personal goals is a challenge. Another curious thing is that one of the most used practices for differentiating readiness was giving responsibilities for advanced students while at the same time, giving responsibilities for struggling students was one of the least used practices. Giving responsibilities for struggling students emerged from the data, while it was not detected in the theory, but the practice has possibilities to help struggling students to believe in themselves.

Finally, having 3-4 different lesson plans and thematic units for real-life application were not really applied. Perhaps it is experienced that they are too laborious. However, having 3-4 different lesson plans would make differentiation more systematic and organized, while more concrete activities related to real life would provide
experiences of success with those who have practical intelligence, but also possibilities for linking what is studied to student interests. The new Finnish core curriculum 2016 (in process) does require more thematic units which will also potentially improve differentiation.

In differentiating by learning styles, not many practices were mentioned, as most of the teachers, as well as the academic field, were critical towards the existence of specific learning styles. It might also be challenging to organize activities for several different learning styles. However, one teacher differed by using several methods for differentiating by learning styles, and it seems that she had put an effort in developing her know-how in that area. The most used practices in differentiating by learning style were using varied teaching methods and collaborative activities. These whole-group methods are relatively easy to apply and also highly recommended. However, Möilanen (2008) also emphasizes the importance of the teaching of language learning strategies, especially to struggling students. Some of the teachers did mention teaching vocabulary memorizing and studying for the test strategies, but reading and listening comprehension strategies were not mentioned. However, they are important strategies to teach, as well.

In differentiating by interest, there was not much variation in the practices. Indeed, the most used practice in differentiating by interest was allowing student choice in exercises. Nevertheless, the academic literature has a great number of suggestions how to connect what is being studied to student interests and experiences (see also point 9). For instance, advanced students might benefit from studying a topic of their interest in more depth in the classroom, but this practice was only used outside of the classroom by the informants. They could be provided materials for further exploration after mastering concepts that others are still practicing. All students could also be provided more choice in projects, a practice mentioned only by one informant. Furthermore, student questions and topics, and examples and illustrations based on student interests could be used to guide lectures and materials selection. (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2005, 9.)

The most used practice in organization and grouping was flexible grouping homogenously and heterogeneously by readiness (complexity) and remedial education, while other methods were used very little. The least used practices were grouping by style and skill, but also surprisingly by dynamics and student character, even though they do affect a lot how effectively a group can function. Rarely, students were given a choice in grouping, although it does have its place in the classroom practices. Other organizational methods could be experimented with, too, in order to differentiate as many students as
possible and therefore, make differentiation a natural part of the classroom and decrease negative labeling. Examples of these are agendas, learning contracts and menus, choice boards and centers/stations. Moreover, in creating more opportunities for differentiating by readiness (skills) and interests, different groups could be organized: homogenous and heterogeneous groups focused on a variety of skills (as in the Ateljé-method) and interests.

In differentiating evaluation there was a quite a lot of dispersion. One of the most used practices in differentiating evaluation were everyday observations and homework and continuous evaluation. However, other products than tests can be evaluated, too: students can be given choices to show what they can do through their preferred mode of e.g. portfolios, drama, multimedia presentations, written stories etc. Also, oral skills should be evaluated just like written skills. If tests do not include oral exercises, teachers need to be observant in the classroom. Some of the least used practices were using several different test methods and complementing test verbally. Using several different test methods emerged from the data; the teacher did not want to always assign the weaker students the tests she thought would be good to them but varied what kind of the tests her students would do in order to experiment with the student abilities. This practice does allow more space for the students to show their learning instead of the teacher labeling them. Moilanen (2002, 2008) strongly encourages that some students would be allowed to do their tests verbally.

7) The teacher takes into account the student personality, social background and emotional and motivational needs.

T4 engages her students in making their own study plans, evaluating their own learning and choosing tasks for themselves which all enhance agency and thus, have good potential in motivating students intrinsically. T6 also seemed to be considering students’ emotional and motivational needs that came evident in her use of encouragement and humor and showing of caring. She also acknowledged the effect of social background on school performance. As T6 and T4 explained, interacting with students also outside the classroom and getting to know their interests and personalities help in differentiating by personality. Moreover, T1 pairs up and groups students based on socio-dynamics.

However, there seems to be a contrast in how much scholars (see Dörnyei & Skehan, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Pawlak, 2012) call for teachers acknowledging e.g. motivational regulation, and how little the teachers actually specifically talked about
individual motivation problems and methods to address them. Perhaps not all of the teachers considered motivation as a differentiated practice, and did not thus mention it. Anyhow, encouragement, individual feedback and paying attention to different motivational factors in different phases of learning and are integral ways of enhancing motivation.

Teachers can also try to create an atmosphere and provide direct practice where motivational self-regulation is acknowledged and developed. Here personal goal setting, helping students to construct and sustain visions of their future ideal selves as FL users and attributing success and failure to the amount of effort put teach for motivational self-regulation. Teachers can instill in students the idea that abilities are not fixed (even though cognitive styles for processing information might be); instead, they are like muscles. In some people, the muscles are naturally stronger than in others, but they can grow stronger in everyone with exercise, one needs to exercise to keep the muscles in shape. Learning language strategies i.e. ways to process the content, such as vocabulary and texts, efficiently, also used by half of the teachers, help in exercising these muscles.

8) *All students participate in respectful work.*

Student choice and thematic study units used by T4 can enhance this principle and avoid assigning struggling students to completing simple worksheets. When T6 provided more advanced students to plan and teach assigned activities, the other students were allowed to do the same when they became interested to do so, too. However, as T5 legitimately explained, with students with more challenging learning difficulties, and thus being in intensified and special support, getting exercises that have less breadth and complexity, but more structure and clarity, does offer a relief. This is because they lessen the burden of deficits in lower-level processes. Someone might view these as disrespectful tasks, but they, as well as different exercises practicing for instance phonological processing suggested by Moilanen (2002, 2008), have their place in differentiation.

9) *The teacher provides choices.*

The teachers were providing some choices in projects, groups and exam exercises but most commonly in exercises, exams and homework. However, there are more possibilities for providing choice: students can be allowed to design a day or different activities according
to their interests. Providing choice supports capitalizing on student strengths and taps on different interests while not labeling anyone.

10) *Flexibility is the hallmark of a differentiated classroom.*

All of the teachers were grouping and pairing up students depending on the activity but also flexibly providing some students more challenge and some students more support and modifications of exercises as they proceed on the lesson. However, as mentioned in the point 5., the teachers could apply more of *the flexible grouping so that students have different tasks.* This could be realized even once a week for 15 minutes or once a month for the whole lesson by utilizing *skills-and concept based differentiation* such as *pull out-groups*, centers/stations, agendas, choice boards or learning contracts. Demonstrating clarity about learning goals helps in conducting flexible solutions in the classroom.

11) *Assessment is continuous and inseparable from instruction.*

Three of the most used practices in evaluation by the teachers were everyday observations and homework and continuous evaluation, implying that their assessment is continuous. Furthermore, T3 and T2 were not evaluating students on the basis of a test, but also everyday participation, which adds continuity to their evaluation. T1 also said that the struggling students need to be observed continuously in case there is a need to transfer them in the three steps of support. T4 uses several different tests and varies them frequently, which makes it easier for her to experiment with what are the students’ actual strengths and weaknesses. However, within this research it is difficult to say to which extent the assessment and instruction are inseparable. If assessment is continuous, it is easier to make constant changes to one’s instruction depending on the students’ needs and progress.

12) *Goals of a differentiated classroom are maximum growth, individual success and generating and maintaining students’ self-beliefs.*

The data revealed that all of the teachers had similar objectives for differentiation: student learning, experiencing success and them feeling good about it, which, although not all mentioning it exactly, would result in learning motivation. However, although they all
clearly wished for and worked for success even for the struggling students, their thoughts and efforts for maximum growth, for the good language student, too, were not as strong, except for T4. She seemed to have high expectations for all of her students, and she provided support and varied her teaching. The other teachers were more “protective” of the struggling students, and wanted to make sure no one would be totally left behind. Indeed, challenging struggling students in a positive way can be a challenge itself, too.

Differentiating all by flexible grouping, teaching about learning styles, providing different exercises for all which practice weaknesses and capitalize on strengths, ensuring respectful tasks for all and providing choice, all of which T4 does, enhance respect for diversity, prevent labeling and thus generate and maintain self-beliefs. T4 especially emphasizes intrinsic motivation and the role of self-efficacy in it to the extent that she believes that any student can be a good language student or be whoever they want to be. What she aims at avoiding is the teacher’s determining of what the students are able to do, and thus labeling of them. Furthermore, T6 brought up a new viewpoint to differentiation perspective which has a great potential in enhancing students’ sense of self-worth: not taking things so seriously; all people are valuable, and they can shine in so many other ways than just getting good grades and being good at school.

Proactive education, used by T6 and T4, also takes account students’ self-beliefs. Actually, they mentioned proactive education being their best practice in differentiation. Indeed, proactive teaching in small groups can be really supportive of students’ self-efficacies, but it needs to be systematic and planned so that that they are just before the regular class. Anticipating vocabulary, themes and structures of texts and listening comprehension exercises are also sort of proactive teaching and can be easily used to support the learning of the struggling students in the general classroom without labeling the students.

These coulds show which practices the informants find possible to use in regards to their know how and resources, and perhaps, which practices they deem effective and good. Not using some of the aforementioned practices, although suggested by academic literature, might be linked to one of the challenges mentioned: the lack of resources. Seppälä & Knautto-Knappe (2009) asked from their informants, teachers, how they would differentiate if they had limitless access to different resources. Similar to the results of this research, the teachers mentioned e.g. bigger classrooms, less students per class, more classroom assistants, cooperative teaching, and remedial education classes as
well as more books, magazines, computers and computer programs and games suitable for differentiation.

Half of the teachers in this research were also inspired by the new spaces and grouping possibilities they bring, interested in cooperative teaching and positive or extremely positive on proactive education groups. As schools are tight on resources, they cannot simply provide more classroom assistants or teaching materials; however, as Roiha (2012, 99) also suggests, schools could critically observe their structures for enabling cooperative teaching, more options for organizing spaces and students and remedial or perhaps proactive education with which differentiation could be practiced more efficiently.

Another challenge, mentioned by five teachers was the feeling of inadequacy. Similarly, in Mikola’s (2011, 67, 161, 265) doctoral thesis, teachers reported feelings of inadequacy in differentiation. Related to this is lack of time and knowledge, mentioned by the teachers, as well. Three teachers expressed their interest in cooperative teaching, and it could help in these feelings of inadequacy. Cooperating with teachers in general would also help in smoothing the flow of information between teachers, as one of the teachers saw poor communication between teachers as preventing knowing the students and thus, efficient differentiation. Furthermore, if schools have clear policies and practices on differentiation, it can help teachers to further develop their own perspectives and practices.

From the results can be interpreted that there are some differences between elementary and secondary school teachers. First of all, the secondary school teachers did not regard differentiation being as important as the elementary school teachers did. The main factor for differences between might be that secondary level teachers do not simply have as good possibilities to get to know their students as elementary school teachers have, as secondary school teachers might have 80 to 120 students. Furthermore, their major subject in their university education has been the subject they teach and not education, which might have an effect.

However, according to Gardner (2008), but also to the results of this research, it is favourable that the same teacher teaches the children for a long time since this enables better knowledge of students and their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it might be recommendable that in primary school, the class teacher would be also the FL teacher. Then, in supporting secondary level teachers to get to know their students and thus be better equipped for responsive teaching, open communication and information transmission between teachers would be extremely useful. Perhaps, also the age of the older students and the curricular requirements for more emphasis on literal language is
seen as somewhat restricting the use of different teaching and learning modes. However, as older students generally have more self-regulation skills and language skills, the teacher can co-opt collaboration, flexible grouping, open-ended projects and products and student choice.

Additionally, teaching Swedish, as T2 does, is quite different from teaching English; in comparison to English, in Swedish the advancement of students is not really pronounced, not at least in the beginning of the studies. Rarely are there students who would know Swedish before they start their studies, and rarely students hear, engage in and practice it in their freetime. However, in English, the so-called lingua franca of today’s globalized world, students come in to the class with very diverse experiences and backgrounds in the language. However, T2, a Swedish teacher herself, said that English can be more challenging for students with learning difficulties, as English is more unsystematic in both its phoneme-grapheme-correspondence and grammar than Swedish is. Therefore, it could be said that the need for differentiation in English is greater than in Swedish.

With regard down to other FLs taught in Finnish schools, they are usually recommended for and chosen by students who have not had much challenge in language learning, and thus the need for differentiation is smaller. Nevertheless, student differences in regard to cognitive and learning styles, knowing of learning strategies, motivation, interests, social backgrounds, personalities and emotional needs are still present in the Swedish and any other foreign language class, too. The earlier the teacher starts to take into account these differences and responds to them, the more probable it is that students will learn to enjoy learning foreign languages for life.

All in all, it could be said that the informants differentiate their teaching in multiple different ways: materials, teaching methods and evaluation were differentiated and flexible groupings utilized. Not everyone did everything in regards to the parameters for successful differentiation, but there was always at least one informant who provided an interesting example to the coulds-part, and everyone applied several methods of differentiation in their everyday work. This finding is in contrast with the results from previous research which concluded that teacher defined differentiation narrowly as being mostly about differentiating learning materials (see Naukkarinen 2005; Mikola 2011; Marja-aho 2003; Hirvonen 2008). Many teachers probably use even more methods for differentiation but do not realize that they are actually already differentiating. For instance, perhaps most of the informants use wait time to allow reflection, use examples based on
student interests or apply visual and creative activities, but only individual teachers mentioned them as their methods of differentiation.

Still, if they and any other teacher want to develop their practices in differentiation, they could reflect their own perspectives and practices in relation to this research's parameters, and clarify for themselves what is the nature of differentiation for them. On the bases of the reflections they could choose one new practice, either from what the teachers in this research use or this research suggests or some other practices, and try to apply it to the classroom. They could for instance, start from trying to get to know their students and the diversity among them by cooperating with other teachers and assigning different kinds of products and then evaluating them; thinking how to generally modify their classroom practices, presentations and giving instructions for supporting the struggling students and everyone's different learning channels; and providing students choices in tasks and agendas for practicing individually different skills and concepts. In general, the informants of this research could aspire to differentiate all of their students, differentiate more by interest, apply more diverse methods in organization and grouping, allow more variety in products and show that they have high expectations for their students.

5.4 Further studies

Finally, for further studies, it would be interesting to study student experiences and opinions on differentiation, as it could shed more light on the topic of supporting students' self-beliefs. Student experiences are not often studied but are naturally very important in developing teaching. The attitudes of parents to differentiation could also be explored. Furthermore, the quality of this research could have been improved by ethnographic observations in the classrooms to actually see how the teachers apply their claimed practices on differentiation. For instance, as one of the teachers' perspectives and practices differed quite clearly from the others', it would have been interesting to make a case study on her teaching. Another interesting topic for a quantitative or qualitative research would be how special education teachers support students with learning difficulties in FLs.
5.5 Quality of the research

5.5.1 Validity

Since the research data are interviews, which have been analyzed qualitatively, the researcher has had to consider carefully how the research questions have been constructed and informed to the interviewees in order to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the research. There is a concern that since the interviewees were given the interview questions beforehand, they might have prepared themselves for the interview to give "the right answers" instead of their true, inner perspectives and experiences. Preparing for the interview is not an issue, unless they prepare to answer to the researcher’s questions as they expect they should answer. However, in the interviews, no signs of the interviewees having been prepared to answer "the right answers" were noticed. For example, the first informant told the researcher things that had been talked about earlier about the topic before any mention of the research. Furthermore, even though the interview was semi-structured, some of the themes were revisited from a different point of view, as the discussion flowed forward, and no significant incongruities were observed.

After the fourth interview, which digressed completely from others, and during which it felt that the interview questions were clumsy and out of place, it was realized that the questions where differentiating down and up were mentioned were very leading. In other words, the research questions very much lead the interview i.e. where the focus is and what is left out. Therefore, the intention for this study was to construct the research questions carefully.

Furthermore, some informants are more able to verbalize and explain their practices, whereas some informants do not notice to bring something specific up unless they are reminded and asked about it. In teaching and differentiation, some nuances and practices might be so automatized and self-evident for teachers that they do not even think about them consciously any more, and hence are unable to mention them in an interview. In conclusion, interview is an interactional situation where both the interviewee and interviewer affect each other (Eskola, & Suoranta, 1998, 85). In this study, open communication and thorough discussions were facilitated in order to decrease the potential negative effects.
5.5.2 Trustworthiness and Ethics

As Syrjälä (2014) argues, qualitative and quantitative methods are so different that similar evaluations on reliability cannot be used, and therefore, instead of using the term "reliability", the term "trustworthiness" is used. It is recognized that since the focus group is so small and only conducted in Oulu and mostly in a same school, the results cannot be generalized to the whole of Finland and its foreign language teachers. This, however, was the conduct, as it was difficult to find and access willing informants. For instance, Schwandt (in Sin, 2010) has argued that meanings of complex phenomena are context-specific and that there are no context-free meanings. Thus, there is no intention to make generalizations in qualitative research. Nevertheless, it is believed that the results can provide valuable insight into differentiation in the foreign language classroom in Finland. However, there has been an attempt to find interviewees who would represent different kinds of teachers; elementary school teachers, secondary school teachers, English teachers, French teachers, Swedish teachers etc. so that the variation of teachers in the field would be perceptible. Nevertheless, only one Swedish teacher was interviewed, even though the researcher would have hoped for more. Furthermore, one of the teachers had not been teaching in a while, meaning that she had to rely on her memory, which might affect on the trustworthiness of her answers.

As a researcher but also as an individual, the researcher will be interpreting the research data, which gives rise to questions about reliability of the research results. Therefore, the researcher has critically written down and opened up her background, theoretical assumptions and expectations so that the reader can evaluate the reliability of this research in relation to her as a researcher and an individual. (Syrjälä, 2014; Sin, 2010.) In this case, the researcher is an elementary school teacher and English teacher student, which might make some of the claims biased, as the differences between elementary school and secondary school teachers were discussed to some extent. However, in the results-section, with the help of the tables and texts of analysis, the reader can assess to which extent the background of the researcher has affected the conclusions.

Also, the themes and codes that have been brought up from the data are always interpretations of the researcher. When analyzing the data, the researcher interprets what the informants say and decides what kind of meanings are to be formed on the basis of the data. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, 173.) In this study, there has been an attempt to
interpret the data as objectively as possible. Furthermore, in qualitative research, it is a challenge to maintain the wholeness of what the interviewees have said and not simplify them too much. Thus, one way to increase the trustworthiness of the research is to include original citations so that the reader can decide whether to agree on the interpretations of the researcher (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 208-219). These kinds of citations can be found in the results-chapter. Furthermore, the teachers' individual explanations have been attempted to be written out in addition to original citations. Moreover, there has been an attempt to provide contradictory and competing arguments and explanations, which can open up spaces for critical reflection (see Syrjälä, 2014).

When considering the ethical side of this study, in a way, the thesis is assessing and evaluating how individual teachers differentiate. When one's professional practices or some of them are being put under inspection, the researcher needs to be sensitive, which has been taken into account in this research. For example, the anonymity of the participants has been preserved. When doing the first interview it was realized that the interviewee had not been provided the information that the interview will be recorded, and thus the interviewee was slightly uncomfortable at first. However, the researcher has aspired to be as truthful to the data as possible in her description and interpretation. The interviewees were provided preliminary results of the data analysis before publishing the thesis so that they can comment if there is anything that has been understood wrongly by the researcher.
6. CONCLUSION

Finally, this chapter aspires to summarize and conclude the answers to the ultimate research question: what should and could differentiation in the FL classroom be like? For the should-part of the question, the answers are drawn from the theory I have discussed about in this thesis: theory of differentiation with theories on applied linguistics, psychology and individual differences in language aptitude, cognitive and learning styles, learning strategies and motivation. For the could-part I have turned to the data: the teachers’ perspectives, practices and experiences. Then, I, as a researcher, have tried to combine this to produce a description on the phenomenon of differentiation in the FL classroom.

Differentiation should concern all students, enhance appreciation of diversity, be supportive of students maximum growth and self-beliefs and informed by teacher knowledge on student differences, respond to student differences in readiness, interests, learning profile, personality, social background and emotional and motivational needs, practice weaknesses and capitalize on strengths, provide freedom of choice and be respectful and flexible. Due to the vast array of student differences and the resulting obligation to respond to them for more positive learning experiences, the need for differentiation is not only prevalent in the English classroom but also in all the foreign language classrooms.

Differentiation measures need to be planned individually: as the teachers described good language students and struggling students in different ways, we need to ask why a student seems to struggle, why a student seems to be advanced and what kind of practices would support their growth and learning. In order to do this, the teachers mentioned utilizing several different test methods and observation, exploring student interests and cooperating with special education and other teachers. Setting different learning objectives, and thus accepting differences in performance is allowed, as the national curriculum allows teachers to differentiate objectives to some extent, but only as long as students put an effort in learning. The teacher would show that s/he expects everyone to develop himself or herself. Differentiation should not be used only as a way to “protect” learners but to push students beyond their comfort zone by providing them with challenging tasks.
This leads us to think that in primary school the class teacher might be better equipped to teach FLs and differentiate teaching. For secondary school teachers, who have many students, the importance of teacher cooperation is vital. Furthermore, as older students generally have more self-regulation skills and language skills, the teacher can co-opt collaboration and flexible grouping and open-ended projects and products, as the secondary school teachers do in this research, but also more student choice.

All of the teachers differentiated their teaching in several different ways by utilizing whole group and individual differentiation: materials, methods, evaluation, modifications to the learning environment and flexible grouping. The best practices were teacher manuals and study books, proactive education, classroom assistants and divided lessons. Differentiating by readiness was the most pronounced orientation in the data as well as the academic literature, although not the main orientation for two teachers: one emphasized the supporting of students' self-efficacies and differentiated by learning styles, interests, personalities, motivational needs and readiness, while the other highlighted the supporting of students' emotional needs and differentiating by them as well as interests. However, readiness was not seen as a unitary construct by the interviewees, but consisting of several different competencies that vary from one student to another.

In differentiating by readiness, the teacher would assign the same tasks but with more teacher/peer support and modified learning materials, as the informants do, but also slower pace. Different exercises can be provided in proactive and remedial education and homework, as all of the teachers do. However, when assigning different exercises in class, it would preferably concern not only the few students but all. Agendas, contracts, choice boards and centers/stations would be useful here to allow differentiated practice for all in practicing everyone’s weak areas. Here again, emphasizing that we are all different learners, with our different strengths and weaknesses and that by practice we can develop, enhances the respect for diversity and prevents negative labeling.

Differentiating only by assigning challenging/easy exercises seems to suggest a viewpoint whereby some students are seen to be more generally able and some less able. Therefore, as the informants do, students’ strengths need to be capitalized on by providing choice, co-opting various teaching methods to provide access for all to the learning content and ensuring that materials, giving instructions and teaching content is understandable to all students with different learning channels. Furthermore, there are various options to take student interests into account in the classroom. The teacher really needs to critically observe practices to see whether one actually provides for different learning styles in the
classroom so that lecturing, literal book exercises, reading and writing are not overtly and solely emphasized. Especially the FL classroom has a huge potential in providing for all learning preferences.

As academic literature and the informants in this research were hesitant on the concept of learning styles, teachers can make a decision whether they want to specifically teach about different learning styles, help students to find their preferences and group students according to those styles. Nevertheless, students would be guided to recognize their strengths and weakness in order to understand the diversity of learners and their own individuality and uniqueness and self-regulate and set goals for their learning.

Grouping is a useful tool for differentiation, and not just for readiness (complexity) but also different skills and interests. However, it needs to be flexible and, as the teachers explained, discreet, in order to avoid the forming of obvious and stable ability groups, harmful for students' sense of self-efficacy and development of abilities in general. In differentiating all students flexibly, their skills for self-regulation come to play an important role. However, as one of the teachers expressed it, not all students are naturally goal-oriented nor very good in self-regulating, and that some students might need more structure and routines. Therefore, the teachers' clear instructions, classroom management and teaching and practicing of classroom routines and different grouping formations become very important, too. Different spaces and multiple resources aid in organizing efficient groupings, while their absence hinders rich differentiation.

All the teachers talked about how differentiation is important for motivation. However, they, with the exception of two teachers, did not emphasize it when being asked about their practices. As researchers claim, motivation is one of the most important determinants in language achievement. Motivational self-regulation can be specifically taught, but teacher encouragement and individual feedback are essential, too.

In the end, the methods for differentiating in the FL classroom are various and almost endless. Most of the teachers considered differentiation important, but expressed in one way or another the feelings of inadequacy in differentiation and lack of resources; groups are too big for the teacher to have enough time, energy and competencies to get to know all the students and their needs, to plan differentiation for them and to actually realize the plans. Therefore, easily one ends up supporting the struggling students and grouping them under a "weak" label without having the time to think what the exact needs are. These are generally acknowledged challenges of differentiation (Tomlinson, 1999). Cooperative teaching, clear school-level policies on differentiation and, for
example, starting to improve one's differentiation from easier-to-conduct practices, such as whole group-practices and providing choices, can help in tackling the feelings of inadequacy.

Anyhow, all of the teachers are aware of differentiation and differentiate their teaching in multiple ways their teaching, co-opting both whole group and individual measures for differentiation. As one of the teachers said, differentiation is also about small nuances, such as noticing everyone. We need not to aspire extreme forms of differentiation, as learning is both an individual and a communal construct. Differentiation is also about compromising between individual needs and extrinsic requirements. One of the teachers also pointed out that one cannot generalize the practices of differentiation, but one needs to find out what works for oneself. Finding out, that is, trying diverse practices one by one is a step forwards towards a differentiated FL classroom for all.
7. REFERENCES


8. APPENDIX

App.1. Question form sent to the teachers

What does differentiation mean to you personally?
Should we differentiate our teaching? Why?
What kind of students do you differentiate or could differentiate?
How do the needs for differentiation manifest themselves in the classroom?

How do you differentiate in practice?
How do you differentiate literal/verbal/listening comprehension/reading exercises?
How do you evaluate students and how does differentiation affect on it?

How do you think students experience differentiation?
What are your good practices in differentiation?
If there are challenges in differentiation, what are they?
Are there any differences in differentiating in the elementary level in comparison to the secondary level?

Additional prompts for the interviewer:

Could differentiation have any negative effects?
Is one orientation more important than the other: differentiating up and differentiating down?
How are students different?
Do you have any students in intensified and/or special support?
Do you have other students with learning difficulties?
Do you have any good language students?
What is a good language student like?
What do you think of differentiating by learning styles and student interests?
How do you group students?
Do you think you should talk to students about differentiation?
What would an ideal situation for differentiation be like?

App. 2. Examples of analysis

1. Grouping citations by coloring them under the different empirical research questions and their sub-questions:

Understanding

“ It [differentiation] is a good thing. If I imagine myself being put to do something I have no natural gifts at all for and trying to keep up with the top students, it would feel terrible. Or it might be that I would not notice it myself, but others would be looking down on me knowing that I cannot do anything. If we want the weaker students to learn something, we need to teach in a way that they will learn, too. However, we need to remember that not everyone needs to learn everything.” T5

Focus group

” They are like really good and amazingly good at pronunciation. There was this boy, whose father I met at a parents’ meeting. He said Riku has always been interested in languages, and that he often talks English at home, too. We had a Comenius-project where the students were presenting the school for the visitors. And this boy was in his element: there was not word he would not know!” T3

Practices

“One of the students in special support, who has a really challenging dyslexia, is losing his belief in his managing in English learning. As long as we worked on the present simple, he did fine, but when we started talking about different tenses, he was like ‘what, isn’t it enough that I know these verbs in one form?!’ These problems need to be noticed as early as possible and written in the study plans. The parents need to be contacted, too. Then, there won’t be queries from the parents, and other teachers as well, that why this student has only made half of the exercises in the book while others have made them all.” T4

Student experiences

“ I think that the other students must anyway notice that someone has difficulties if s/he, for instance, is not able to read the English book or say anything.” T1

Challenges
"...and of course when there is a lot of students, it's challenging to notice everything and think and know what are the specific problems. You kind of end up labeling them all as generally weak, because you don't really have time to think about it in so much detail." T2

Good Practices

"I think that the most empowering factor has been that the children have been provided systematically proactive education since the third grade; for such a long time, we've practiced the things first in small groups and then have had the regular class right after, where the students have been the most active ones. It's amazingly simple thing, but it has worked every time." T4

2. Reducing the citations on the basis of theoretical literature and constructing themes for them on the bases of the thematic interview questions and theoretical literature:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Reduction</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Children have a terribly need to perform. I hope that by sixth grade they would understand that they are performing for themselves and not for the teacher. That they would not perform tasks, because they think that otherwise the teacher will get mad, and they will end up in homework class, but because they want to get things done, so that they will be able to move on and get that nice feeling that they are learning again something new.&quot; T4</td>
<td>External motivation → Intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>Objectives for differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Learning difficulties in English can appear so that a student has hard time memorizing words. The student might be able to recognize them but not write them. Or the student mixes letters.” T1</td>
<td>Problems in memorizing words and writing them, mixing letters in writing</td>
<td>Students with learning difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Sometimes the difficulty might just be between the ears. So, when the teacher comes there, demonstrates and they work together, the whole thing taking about twenty seconds, the children see daylight and are like 'we were able to do it, we learnt it even though it felt difficult at first'.” T4</td>
<td>a) Teacher support b) Instead of learning difficulty a negative orientation to a learning task → developing self-efficacy</td>
<td>a) Differentiating by readiness (down) b) Students with low self-efficacy (focus group) &amp; Objectives for differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student experiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;You can talk to students about differentiation but maybe not with the terms that teachers talk about it with each other.</td>
<td>Not explaining differentiation to students very</td>
<td>Talking about differentiation to students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You got to think how to do it; is there a need to talk about it very straightforwardly. I would maybe say that ‘this is important, the basics; let’s start from here. When we’re done with this, we’ll see how what we’re going to do then.’ T2

### Challenges

"Sometimes I feel that no matter how hard you try to provide this student that and that student this, I get the feeling that ‘oh no, will they get the best out of it’." T3

Despite trying hard to differentiate, students might not learn

Feelings of inadequacy

### Good Practices

"There are good teacher’s manuals in English, because there is a lot of competition in different book series. It makes your job easier. You could make your own materials sometimes, too, but usually there is not enough time for it.” T5

a) Good materials in teacher manuals

b) No time for creating own materials

(b) No time (challenge)

3. Comparing reductions of the informants under the themes for finding similarities and differences i.e. codes in them:

### Theme: Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>T4</th>
<th>T5</th>
<th>T6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of learning and success, enough challenge so no frustration</td>
<td>Feeling good, studying on one’s own level, success without boredom and frustration</td>
<td>Good feelings from learning, no failure. Improving study results and thus getting excited.</td>
<td>Learning, respect for learner diversity, self-confidence, agency, intrinsic motivation.</td>
<td>Weaker students learning something, too, generating and maintaining joyful learning</td>
<td>Motivation, attitudes, experiences of being helped, noticed and heard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Codes:**

*Learning/success & feeling good (all) → self-confidence & agency → intrinsic (T4) motivation (T3, T6),

(...without boredom/frustration → motivation for good language students, too (T1, T2))

...experiences of being helped, noticed and heard (T6)

...appreciation for learner diversity (T4)*
4. Comparing reductions of the informants individually under the different themes for perceiving their individual perspectives and practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T5: Understanding</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helping students to find their learning <em>channels</em> and taking into account students' different <em>capacities</em> to internalize what is taught, supporting the learning of the <em>weaker</em> students: those who do not have <em>natural gifts</em> for certain things</td>
<td>Weaker students <em>learning</em> something, too, providing something nice to do for everyone so that would be up and going, generating and maintaining <em>joyful learning</em></td>
<td><em>All</em>: learning channels</td>
<td>A <em>good</em> thing. Differentiating up and down are both important. However, good students are able to take care of themselves by practising the FL in their freetime.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T5: Practices</th>
<th>Dif. by readiness</th>
<th>Dif. by interests</th>
<th>Dif. by learning styles</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Grouping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS= Struggling students GS= good IS= immigrant MS= mediocre ex= exercise</td>
<td><em>SS</em>: less <em>expectations</em>, classroom placement, remedial ed., supported reading, same ex. for everyone, but teacher support, repeating listening comp. ex., <em>GS</em>: open and independent ex. <em>IS</em>: using French (strengths) <em>All</em>: less/more (challenging) ex., verbal ex. dif. automatically + support materials, <em>MS</em>: motivating with good grades to put effort and try more by doing e.g. extra exercises</td>
<td>Sometimes student choices for exercises, open-ended exercises (drama...)</td>
<td>Drawing, pictures, drama, plays and games, <em>ICT</em> → <em>varying teaching methods</em> for different brain lobes and channels, visual prompts</td>
<td>Same tests except for students in special support, visual modification for dyslexic students</td>
<td>Both hom. and het. pairs and groups, but usually the one that they sit next to, except for SS, depends on the class as well, <em>het.classes</em> better for the positive atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5: Experiences</td>
<td>Student experiences</td>
<td>Good practices</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not being able to keep up must feel terrible, students feel relieved when dif. down, not everyone likes to come to remedial ed., sometimes not everyone is motivated to do and try more even if they would be able to, a student with dyslexia tries and participates; the teacher just needs to remember to support him.</td>
<td>Good materials in teacher’s manuals, ICT</td>
<td>No time, more time for learning about interactive learning methods and ICT/apps for FLL, more materials, spaces and resources for remedial ed. needed, feelings of inadequacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1. Thesis writer's visualization of individual differences in FLL
Figure 2. Thesis writer's visualization of differentiated instruction

Table 1. Informants
Table 2. Meaning of Differentiation
Table 3. Objectives of FL Differentiation
Table 4. Importance of FL Differentiation
Table 5. Focus group of FL Differentiation
Table 6. Differentiation by Emotional Needs and Personalities
Table 7. Differentiating by Readiness
Table 8. Differentiating by Interest
Table 9. Differentiating by Learning Styles
Table 10. Differentiating Evaluation
Table 11. Organization and Grouping
Table 12. Good Practices in FL Differentiation
Table 13. Challenges and Problems in FL Differentiation