

Teacher–Child Interaction and Scaffolding in Second Language Classrooms This research delves into how teachers and children interact in Finnish classrooms where kids are learning a second language (L2). The class sizes ranged from 19 to 25 students, and the children were mostly native Finnish speakers who were just beginning to learn English. Teachers use various strategies to encourage children to participate, including verbal techniques like simplifying language, asking questions, and giving feedback, as well as procedural techniques like using gestures, tools, or providing wait time. Effective scaffolding involves being responsive to the child's needs, gradually reducing support as the child improves, and ultimately transferring the responsibility for the task to the child. Previous studies have consistently shown that teachers play a vital role in creating opportunities for classroom interaction that help children learn a second language. However, classroom interaction often follows a pattern called Initiation–Response–Evaluation (IRE), where the teacher asks a question, the student answers, and the teacher provides feedback. This study aims to contribute to this knowledge by examining teacher–child interactions and scaffolding strategies in Finnish early years L2 classrooms. The researchers videotaped 56 hours of classroom activities in seven different early childhood and primary school settings, involving four teachers and 205 children. In contrast, when teachers use extended exchanges, provide hints, or give various forms of feedback, it encourages children to be more involved. When teachers scaffold effectively and children actively participate, it significantly boosts language learning. So, it's crucial to study teacher–child interaction in early years L2 education, especially in the context of playful and child–centered activities. The Finnish curriculum encourages teachers to make L2 education fun and playful, which adds another layer to this research. The study explores how teachers and students communicate, who initiates the interactions, and how teachers scaffold learning in both whole–class and small–group settings. The researchers used a sociocultural approach, drawing on Vygotsky's theories about the importance of language and social interaction in learning. Previous research has shown that active participation in classroom interaction is crucial for children's L2 learning. The study followed ethical guidelines, obtaining permission from the city and informed consent from the participants and their guardians. In Finland, the national curriculum emphasizes L2 education starting from the first grade, with a focus on playfulness and creating a multicultural environment. They often combined whole–class and small–group sessions, using English as the main language of instruction while also allowing children to use Finnish to ensure understanding and comfort. Whole–class sessions typically involved routines to practice basic language, while small groups focused on introducing new topics through games, role–plays, and songs. This particular study looks at the nature of teacher–child interaction and scaffolding techniques in Finnish early childhood L2 classrooms. This research is interested in how teachers scaffold children's participation in L2 learning and how classroom interaction evolves. It also looks at how these interactions reflect the goals of child–centeredness and playfulness in early years education. When children have opportunities to actively use the language, their pragmatic and expressive skills tend to develop better. Children's own initiations, like asking questions or sharing ideas, also contribute to richer classroom interaction and better learning. Creating this kind of interactive and engaging classroom environment is not always easy, highlighting the need for more research in this area. However, it seems that moving away from traditional teacher–centered teaching to more child–focused and playful methods

can be quite a challenge, and it requires teachers to have strong professional skills. Key concepts like the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding are central to this perspective. ZPD basically refers to the gap between what a child can do on their own and what they can achieve with help. Scaffolding is the support teachers provide to help children tackle tasks that are just beyond their current abilities. While common, this IRE sequence can limit children's active participation. Teacher scaffolding is another key factor in how much children benefit from classroom interaction. This study aims to fill that gap by taking a close look at what's happening in these classrooms. They wanted to understand the different ways teachers and children communicate, who starts the interactions, and how teachers use scaffolding to support the children's language learning. Yet, creating this kind of interactive environment demands a lot from teachers. Kids seem to enjoy learning a new language when they can actively participate through talking, singing, and playing, and when they feel a sense of accomplishment. Despite the growing trend of starting L2 education early, there's not enough research on the interactions between teachers and children in these early childhood settings. We also need to know more about how teachers use scaffolding to support young learners and the difficulties they might face. Studies have shown that effective scaffolding helps children develop more complex thinking skills. Giving children enough time to think and respond is also an important aspect of productive scaffolding. The research involved four pre-primary and three first-grade classrooms in Finland. The researchers selected the participating schools and units based on their interest in the study. The teachers involved in the study had various qualifications, including English language teachers and early childhood education teachers, and their experience ranged from two to 11 years. Participation was voluntary, and everyone had the right to withdraw at any time. Teachers have some flexibility in how they implement these objectives in their teaching.