

Suomi toisena kielenä -opetus
englanti

Teaching Finnish as a Second Language

Finnish as a Second Language (S2, to which it is referred in Finnish) is an integral part of the Finnish and Literature curriculum. Hence, it is not a form of remedial teaching or special education. Finnish as a Second Language is intended for pupils whose skills in Finnish are not at the level of a person who speaks Finnish as the first language in all areas of the language.

S2 pupils' level of Finnish skills is assessed by an S2 teacher together with other teachers. Pupils study Finnish as a Second Language until they reach the level of a native speaker. Pupils are different, i.e. the amount of time it takes for a pupil to learn the language cannot be determined by the number of years (s)he has lived in Finland or attended a Finnish school. Achieving a sufficient level of language skills in Finnish takes many years.

When assessing pupils' level of language skills, all of the areas of language are taken into consideration: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, oral skills, writing, vocabulary and structure. Although a pupil may speak Finnish fluently, it does not mean that (s)he possesses language skills equivalent to a native speaker.

When determining whether a pupil should be transferred to lessons in Finnish for native speakers, the level of skills in Finnish are always assessed separately for each individual pupil. The decision is always made by the school, not, for example, the parents or pupil. The people responsible for the assessment are always the S2 teacher together with other teachers.

S2 pupils attend only S2 lessons, or they attend both S2 lessons and Finnish lessons for native speakers. Although a pupil may attend lessons for native speakers, (s)he is assessed according to the criteria for Finnish as a Second Language. S2 pupils attend Finnish as a Second Language in their own groups at the same time other pupils are having their Finnish and Literature lessons.

Summarized from the "Suomen sanoin – monin tavoin: Suomi toisena kielenä perusopetuksessa" brochure provided by the Finnish National Board of Education.