

Facilitating Second Language Acquisition

An analysis of English language teaching materials in Finland

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential of Finnish teaching materials of the English language to facilitate language acquisition according to language learning research. Seven student workbooks from two book series were analysed using an established framework for materials analysis and evaluation. The results showed that only one language acquisition principle, focusing on meaning, was well represented in the analysed sample, while several others were scarcely found in any of the materials. The findings imply that coursebooks should not be used as the only source of input and tasks for language learners, and that teachers should utilize other authentic sources of input to ensure proper communicative competence and language acquisition for their learners.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, foreign language teaching, teaching materials

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1 Introduction

Although Finnish people are considered to speak English quite well, the trend has taken a turn for the worse, especially when looking at young people's language proficiency (EF English Proficiency Index 2023; Mäntylä 2023, 31). For the first time in a decade, Finland did not qualify for Very High Proficiency in the EF Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) in 2023. This means that, for example, Finns lack the ability to understand and use appropriate language in different social situations or negotiate a work contract with a native speaker of English (EF Education First ef.com). The same trend was seen in ninth graders, as their language skills have been on the decline in the past decade (Mäntylä 2023, 31). Nearly half of the ninth graders aiming for high school only had an A-level proficiency in English, although the target level for good language skills is B1 (Mäntylä 2023, 27–31).

The first foreign language (A1) studied by almost all children in Finnish basic education is English (Kumpulainen 2019, 88–89; Mäntylä 2023, 27). As most teachers base their teaching primarily on course books (Luukka, Pöyhönen, Taalas et al. 2008, 94–95; Harjanne, Reunamo & Tella 2015, 921; Mäkipää, Hahl, Luodonpää-Manni et al. 2024, 128), it is vital that those course books provide a credible authority for language acquisition. Contrary to language learning theories, language teaching seems to still utilize mechanical exercises and non-communicative vocabulary and grammar tasks (Mäkipää et al. 2024, 128; Harjanne et al. 2015, 921).

Although many general principles of language learning and teaching are implied in the current Finnish National Core Curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education 2014), teaching materials have not been checked or regulated by the Finnish National Agency for Education since 1992 (Pietiäinen 2014, 57). Furthermore, language teaching materials are traditionally created by a team of teachers and native speakers of the language rather than language scholars and researchers (Vuorinen 2015, 117). Some materials developers even ignore language learning theories completely (Cook 2016, 13). This implies that Finnish teaching materials might not be as creditable in creating language competencies as they are thought and trusted to be.

The aim of this study was to find out how well Finnish teaching materials of the English language reflect generally accepted theories of the field of *second language acquisition* (SLA). The findings of this study can provide better understanding of how the currently most

used English teaching materials support proper and long-term language acquisition in Finland, as well as help teachers adapt their teaching methods to compensate the possible shortcomings of the teaching materials.

1.1 Second language learning and teaching

A *second language* (L2) is any language acquired in addition to a person's mother tongue (Unesco 1953; Cook 2016, 15; Mitchell, Myles & Marsden 2019, 1). A distinction is sometimes made between a *second language* and a *foreign language*. The former denotes a language in use in the learner's immediate environment, learned among native speakers, while the latter is seen as a language used for travel or other non-crucial environments, learned in an environment where it is not naturally in use. (Cook 2016, 14–15.) While technically the teaching of English in Finland falls under the description of *foreign language* teaching, the distinction is not necessarily that simple: although taught in an environment where there are no native speakers to learn with, the use of English is indeed natural in many situations outside of travelling. In this study, following Cook (2016, 15), second language (L2) learning will be seen as the learning of any second language, and its theories will be implied to the learning of English in Finland.

Learning a second language must be seen as an operation distinct from acquiring a first language (L1). The most obvious difference between the two is the presence of the first language when learning the second. (Cook 2016, 17.) Another difference is that the native speaker of a language knows the grammar of the language unconsciously, while the language learner must acquire the set of rules to understand how the language works (Cook 2016, 30). However, similarities between the two exist.

1.1.1 Second Language Acquisition

One of the first researchers to make a distinction between second language learning and second language acquisition was Krashen in the early 1980s. Krashen presented five fundamental theories about second language learning and teaching in what he later called his Monitor Theory (Krashen 1982). These theories included the distinction between *second language learning* (SLL) and *second language acquisition* (SLA). This *Acquisition/Learning Distinction* states that language acquisition is very similar to the way children learn their first

language, subconsciously. Language learning on the other hand is the conscious process of learning about a language and its rules through explicit teaching. Krashen himself says that scholars before him had already made the distinction between implicit and explicit learning, and so have many since. (Lichtman & VanPatten 2021, 283–285; Mitchell et al. 2019, 52–53.)

Krashen also argued that the explicit teaching of grammar does not help students develop an unconscious linguistic system (Lichtman & VanPatten 2021, 284). Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018, 189) agree that a learner can be taught *about* a language, but truly learning to use a language cannot be taught explicitly. Instead, the language needs to be experienced as authentically as possible with comprehensible and meaningful language. To do this, the learner has to be motivated and engaged, and process the language deeply. (Tomlinson 2008, 4.) The goal of language learning and teaching should be to acquire the ability to use a language (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 189).

Tomlinson has researched the use of the inner voice in language learning over several years (e.g. Tomlinson 2000, 2003, 2020). By an inner voice he means silent self-talk without producing any external sound that is usually used in the person's native language before articulating speech (Tomlinson 2020, 33–34). In his earlier studies, Tomlinson found that some advanced language learners had acquired an L2 inner voice, meaning that they talk to themselves or use the target language in thinking rather than translating their L1 thoughts (Tomlinson 2003, 185; Tomlinson 2020, 38). He also claims that the use of an inner voice is essential to creativity and expression, increases reading and listening comprehension in the L2, enables meaningful conversation and mental representation in the L2, and gives the learner confidence as a language user (Tomlinson 2003, 181, 185–186). Because the inner voice uses a simple vocabulary and structures, and it is not monitored by anyone else, it is easy and worry-free to produce (Tomlinson 2020, 34). Tomlinson states that learners can be guided to use an L2 inner voice (Tomlinson 2020, 37). To do this, learners of an L2 should be allowed more time to produce utterances in their L2 inner voice before being forced to speak out loud, as well as silences and incomplete code in the L2, as these support the acquiring of an inner voice in the target language (Tomlinson 2003, 184; Tomlinson 2020, 41). Unfortunately, no coursebook seems to include activities to support this (Tomlinson 2020, 40).

1.1.2 English language teaching

Language teaching, as a term, is used in this study to express anything a teacher or materials developers do to facilitate language learning (Tomlinson 2011, 3). While teaching can be done directly or indirectly, the latter has been proven to be most effective in language learning research (Tomlinson 2011, 4).

SLA research is a field of study separate from language teaching, and vice versa: in the past 50 years, most language teaching approaches have been derived from teaching methodologists rather than SLA research. To truly help students acquire a language properly, teachers and material developers should first find out how people learn languages, and then base their materials and teaching methods on what they have found. (Cook 2016, 14.)

Because the Finnish teacher training programme does not require a primary school teacher to learn about language learning theories (e.g. University of Turku Study Guide 2024–2027), it often rests solely on teaching materials to present a proper method of teaching languages. Knowledge about how students learn languages would help teachers make their teaching methods more effective (Cook 2016, 11). In a recent Finnish study, it was found that in-service training for teachers is necessary to provide them with the means to successfully teach languages (Mäkipää et al. 2024, 128). To understand how people learn languages, theories of language learning are needed (Mitchell, Myles and Marsden 2019, 2).

In their study about communicative language teaching methods, Harjanne and her colleagues found that although teachers claimed to use communicative tasks in the target language in their classrooms, students reported to have communicated less in the target language than they were encouraged to (Harjanne et al. 2015, 921).

1.2 Teaching materials

The term ‘teaching material’ often denotes any type of materials used for teaching. These may include textbooks and workbooks made for students, as well as teacher’s guides, but also online materials like digital content related to a book series, printable worksheets from different online sources, or any other material that teachers use to facilitate language learning. (Tomlinson 2011, 2). In this study, however, the term is limited to materials created by materials developers and authors for the specific use of language learning in a classroom.

Teaching materials have long been an interest of study in many fields including education, sociology, linguistics and history (Karvonen et al. 2017, 40). However, a lack of systematic and established research can be seen regarding language teaching materials in Finland, since they have mainly been the topic of master's theses (Mäkipää et al. 2024, 107; Hiidenmaa 2015, 27). Publishing houses have conducted research on their own teaching materials, but the results of these surveys are not publicly shared (Hiidenmaa 2015, 28). Furthermore, Tomlinson notes that research carried out by publishers often focuses on the popularity of the materials and not how well they serve their purpose (Tomlinson 2011, 5). Some Finnish studies of teaching materials have been conducted to examine how well they reflect the general pedagogical theories of the field (Karvonen et al. 2017, 48), but not language research theories. Much attention has not been paid to the differences between teaching materials (Karvonen et al. 2017, 51).

In this study, the authority on language learning theories and language teaching materials are the recent works of Tomlinson and Masuhara, who are leading experts on language acquisition theories and language materials development. They have researched the principles for materials development for language learning and published many works on the topic together and respectively (e.g. Tomlinson & Masuhara 2004, 2021, Tomlinson 2011, 2013, 2016, 2020), and greatly influenced the field of foreign language teaching all over the world. (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, vii–viii.)

Tomlinson states that most English language teaching materials fail to provide students with the competence to use the language successfully, because they focus too much on linguistic items and explicit grammar instead of language learning research (Tomlinson 2008, 3; Tomlinson 2016, 5). Teaching materials seem to be designed to help the teaching of the English language rather than learning it, as they are based on teaching methodology and not language learning research (Tomlinson 2008, 3; Cook 2016, 14). They also seem to aim to have students pass examinations rather than acquire an authentic language for use (Tomlinson 2018, 189; Mäkipää et al. 2024, 128). Digital materials are no different. They do not possess an intrinsic value and need to fulfil the same principles for facilitating second language acquisition as course books and other teaching materials, which they often do not (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 62).

According to Tomlinson and Masuhara most course books follow a pedagogy called Focus on Forms (FoFs), where a single language feature is selected and focused on separately in each

unit (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 195). Short texts are chosen to exemplify the teaching point, which students then produce in controlled exercises and are then tested on. They argue that publishers expect the authors to focus on this type of explicit teaching of discrete language features. (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 60.)

1.2.1 Materials use and development

In their questionnaire of over 300 language teachers, Luukka and her colleagues found that 98 percent of teachers use textbooks in their teaching as their most notable teaching material (Luukka et al. 2008, 94–95). Similar results have been shared more recently, Mäkipää and his colleagues found that physical books are still the most popular choice for teachers on both primary and lower secondary levels (Mäkipää et al. 2024, 126). Hardly any research exists on how textbook series are chosen by schools or teachers in Finland (Karvonen, Tainio & Routarinne 2017, 51).

Teaching materials, although created on the basis of what should be learned, also construct the ideals of learning (Kubota and Austin 2007, 78). Due to their popularity and systematic use, textbooks and teaching materials often determine the methods, goals and content of teaching (Lähdesmäki 2004, 273; Richards 2014 in Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 189). This sets a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of teaching material developers. SLA principles should be used to assess how well teaching materials support second language learning (Ellis 1997, 78 in Guilloteaux 2013, 232).

In Finland, English language teaching materials are especially made for each grade following the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as well as the National Curriculum of Finland (Kopperoinen 2011, 75). Language teaching materials are often created by a team of in-service language teachers and native speakers of the language in question (Vuorinen 2015, 117). As their basis, the creator teams use existing teaching materials and teachers' feedback on them. The team of creators and editors then plan the pedagogical material around a story, write the texts and create exercises and extra material accordingly. (Vuorinen 2015, 118.)

Tomlinson and Masuhara believe that teacher trialling and feedback is the most reliable way to get information on the usefulness of the materials in order to develop them (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 72). However, it was found that teachers and students may have

contradictory views on what happens in the classroom, as teachers seemed to report how they hope to teach rather than how they actually teach (Harjanne et al. 2015, 922).

1.2.2 Teaching materials and SLA

Cook argues that no coursebooks are truly based on SLA research, and that most coursebook writers even ignore them completely (Cook 2016, 13). Although there is still debate on how foreign languages are best learned, it should not stop coursebook creators from trying to follow the guidelines that are generally accepted (Tomlinson 2008, 4). Teachers who have studied the English language in depth seem to use more self-made materials to support their teaching than other teachers do (Mård-Miettinen et al. 2021, 8). This goes to show that teachers with knowledge of the English language and SLA are more aware of the shortcomings of the available coursebooks.

International studies on English language textbooks on the basis of SLA research have been conducted (e.g. Opoku-Amankwa, Brew-Hammond & Kofigah 2011, Criado & Sanchez 2012, Guilloteaux 2013, Nida 2021, Tomlinson & Masuhara 2008, 2013, 2018). In these studies, it was found that most textbooks emphasize closed questions with dichotomic or simple answers, and rarely leave room for free production or spontaneous participation (Opoku-Amankwa et al. 2011, 306–307). Explicit grammar, controlled practice and modelled production seems to dominate the structure of most global coursebooks (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 190–191).

According to Tomlinson and Masuhara, teaching materials should include authentic and diverse, spoken and written texts in the target language (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 130; Tomlinson 2008, 4). The texts should be somehow meaningful and relevant to the students' lives (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 131). In their list of SLA principles, Tomlinson and Masuhara mention, that tasks should provide affective and cognitive engagement, and make use of mental resources, like the inner voice or visual imaging, that is usually used only with a native language. Learners should be allowed to focus on meaning rather than language systems and grammar, and be exposed to authentic language in use. Communication and interaction is important for the acquisition of a language, which is why students should be encouraged to interact with one another in the L2. Noticing how the target language is used in authentic communication is more important than learning how the language works. (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 176.)

1.3 Tasks and input in teaching materials

In the case of language teaching materials, a ‘task’ should denote any proposition of action given to the learners in learning materials that means to advance the learning of the language in question. As such, the definition includes both large-scale projects and short one-answer exercises, while excluding any actions that are not directly intended to further the cause of language learning. (Littlejohn 2011, 188.)

Input is communicational data that a learner is exposed to, and that can be in the form of spoken or written language, but also images, gestures and facial expressions (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 40). Input can come from native speakers and writers of the target language, but also language learners. It has been found that L2 learners’ interaction allows a more relaxed setting for language acquisition, where learners self-correct more than in interaction with a native speaker. (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 25.)

1.3.1 Tasks

A task includes a process, a mode and a content. The process is what the learners are expected to do. The mode is a specification of who, if anyone, the learner is expected to work with. The content is the text or other medium on which the learners are to work. (Littlejohn 1992, 37 in Guilloteaux 2013, 233.) In coursebooks, tasks are not necessarily divided into exercises according to this or any other definition. Instead, a single exercise might include several separate tasks if the process, mode or content is changed (Littlejohn 2011, 189). Analysing tasks in this detailed manner helps to differentiate tasks from one another, and to understand the underlying intentions behind teaching materials (Littlejohn 2011, 190).

The process of a task has three sections that can be analysed in more detail to understand exactly what the learner is expected to do. The first one Littlejohn describes as “turn-taking” to investigate what sort of role the learner is expected to take in the classroom discourse. Different options vary from active participation by producing language with or without provided material to simply listening and not taking any sort of active role. (Littlejohn 2011, 190.)

A second part of the process is what the learner is supposed to focus on regarding the language itself. The focus can either be on meaning, the semantic aspects, of the language, or in the grammatical forms (Littlejohn 2011, 190). Lastly, the process includes the mental

operation that the learner is meant to have during the task. The mental operation, according to Littlejohn, can be anything from simple repetition to broad cognitive processes like hypothesising or negotiating (Littlejohn 2011, 190).

A task is also defined by the mode of participation it requires. This is likely the most restricted part of the task definition, as there are only so many modes of participation available in a classroom. The possibilities include individual work, pair work, group work and working with the entire class. (Littlejohn 2011, 190.)

Finally, all tasks have a content, which means both the provided input (material) and output produced by the learner (Littlejohn 2011, 190). The source of the input can be the course book materials, the teacher or the learners, but it can also come from outside the course book or classroom (Littlejohn 2011, 196).

Another aspect of task content is its form. It can be written or spoken, single words or sentences, or proper discourse (Littlejohn 2011, 190). Input can also come in the form of a graphic (Littlejohn 2011, 196). A popular task type in language textbooks is to produce words or sentences from a picture or a longer text or story from a series of pictures.

Task content can be of various natures: factual, fictional, personal information, general knowledge, and many other things (Littlejohn 2011, 190). In his example analysis, Littlejohn has categorised the natures of the task content as “fiction”, “non-fiction” and “song” (Littlejohn 2011, 196).

1.3.2 Input

Krashen hypothesised that a learner will keep absorbing language systems as long as they receive comprehensible input (Krashen 1985 in Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 40). By comprehensible input he means input that is just above the learner’s level, with language structures that they understand with the addition of one new structure or meaning ($i + 1$) for them to acquire from the input (Krashen 1985 in Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 18).

Types of input include non-interactive input, which means predetermined text that a learner is not involved in modifying. Non-interactive input could be premodified by authors to simplify or enhance the input for the benefit of the readers. This type of input is usually found in teaching materials. (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 40–41.) Authentic texts, such as literature, are considered non-interactive unmodified input, in other words texts that mean to

communicate rather than teach (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 41). Although there has been much conversation about the use of authentic texts in language teaching, it has been proven to provide rich and realistic forms of the language, which can prepare the learner for in-life communication problems (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 337). The issue with authentic texts in teaching context has more to do with choosing the appropriate text for the learners and their level (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2021, 42).

2 Research questions

Most English language teaching materials have been found to focus too much on language systems instead of providing communicative competence based on language learning research (Tomlinson 2008, 3; Tomlinson 2016, 5). Teaching materials are created based on teaching methodologies and not language learning theories, which the authors sometimes even discard completely (Tomlinson 2008, 3; Cook 2016, 14). Ellis suggests that language learning theories should be used to evaluate teaching materials (Ellis 1997, 78 in Guilloteaux 2013, 232).

The aim of this study was to analyse Finnish teaching materials of the English language to discover whether they reflect universal SLA principles, and to assess their potential to support students' language learning. The research questions were as follows.

- 1. How well do Finnish teaching materials facilitate English language learning?**
 - a. How do the external aspects of the workbooks appear to support learning?
 - b. How well do the task types of each workbook follow the recommendations of SLA research?

- 2. Which book series has the most potential to facilitate English language learning according to SLA principles?**
 - a. How do the workbooks of each grade level compare?
 - b. How do the book series compare?

3 Method

The aim of this study was to objectively interpret text data from English Language teaching materials following a pre-approved framework to assess how well the course books follow the theories of second language acquisition research. Researchers who have analysed textbooks and study materials in Finland have most often approached the subject with qualitative content analysis (Karvonen et al. 2017, 47). Qualitative content analysis is a way to interpret text data subjectively and is often used to evaluate the quality of textbooks (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, 1278). Materials analysis, in turn, attempts to describe materials from the perspective of a set criteria and is therefore considered a more objective approach than materials evaluation (Tomlinson 2013, 124). This study used a materials analysis method to qualitatively analyse and evaluate the content of two sets of textbooks in light of universally agreed SLA theories.

3.1 Materials and research ethics

The analysed book series were *Come with me!* (2021–2024) from Sanoma Pro, and *High Five!* (2016–2019) from Otava Publishing Company. These book series were chosen, because they can be seen as some of the most used teaching materials in Finland in the recent years. From these book series, only student workbooks were analysed, as the focus of this study was on the task types given to the students in the books. The analysis concentrated on books intended for grades 3–6, because one of the book series did not include early language teaching course books for grades 1 and 2, and because early language teaching usually concentrates on repetition of simple words and phrases, which would not have given valuable information for the purposes of this study.

According to Otava Publishing Company, *High five!* was written by five class and subject teachers ranging from preschool to high school. A further look into one of the authors reveals that they wrote their doctoral dissertation on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) but has not published any additional research since. Sanoma Pro publishing shares on their website that *Come with me!* was created by six class and subject teachers, one of whom is a native English speaker. Many of them have been involved in materials development before, taking part in the creation of previous language materials for English and other languages.

Another series from Sanoma Pro, *Go for it!* (2016–2019), has also been in frequent use in the last decade or so, but it was not included in this study for several reasons. Firstly, the workbooks were inaccessible at the time of the analysis. Secondly, the series is slowly being replaced by the publisher's new series *Come with me!*. And thirdly, the competing publisher Otava is yet to release their new English language book series Skylight in its entirety, so analysing two series from only one of the publishers would have given this study an unpleasant imbalance. The current setting gave the study an interesting angle on studying two book series that were not published at the same time. However, both series should follow the same National Core Curriculum (2016), which ensures that the recommended content and guidelines of teaching should be similar.

To ensure the privacy of the authors of the analysed coursebooks, no personal information is shared about them in this study. All general information about the analysed series and their authors mentioned in the study is public information accessible to anyone on the internet and as such selected by or with the permission of the authors themselves. No active participation from individuals was necessary and information about individuals was not gathered or stored for the purpose of this study. The coding data is stored in a secure cloud storage five years after the publication of this study. The study may be found to benefit both teachers and learners as it provides information on how language teaching materials could be used more productively to facilitate language learning. Publishing houses can also benefit from the study by finding information to help them create better teaching materials.

3.2 Analysis

This study implemented a language teaching materials analysis framework created by Littlejohn (1998; 2011) and an additional operational schedule created by Guilloteaux that evaluates how well textbooks reflect the criteria of SLA research (Guilloteaux 2013, 238). Combining these approaches, this study attempts to create an extensive overview of the teaching materials as pedagogical artefacts in light of SLA research.

As Littlejohn suggests, his framework is primarily focused on the methodology and content of the coursebooks from a pedagogical viewpoint and especially developed to analyse language teaching textbooks (Littlejohn 2011, 182). According to Tomlinson, Littlejohn's framework is more objective and analytical than most materials evaluation methods and that it is untainted

by subjective materials evaluation items (Tomlinson 2011, 3; Tomlinson 2003 in Guilloteaux 2013, 232). The framework has been used in several studies similar to the one at hand (e.g. Nida 2021, Opoku-Amankwa et al. 2011). Littlejohn states that the aim of his method is to enable an investigation of the nature of the materials rather than evaluating how well they serve a purpose or achieve their aims (Littlejohn 2011, 181). He also says that it is best to first analyse the materials as objectively as possible, and then evaluate them on how likely they are to produce the desired effects on students (Littlejohn 2011, 181). For that purpose, this study utilises Guilloteaux's evaluation schedule, which provides a means to study the teaching materials through SLA research (Guilloteaux 2013, 238).

Following Littlejohn's framework, the books were first analysed based on the external aspects and general contents, described in 3.2.1. After this, an analysis of the contents of each book was conducted, including the coding of the tasks in a single unit of the book, and finally, the evaluation of those tasks according to SLA principles. These steps are further introduced in 3.2.2 and 3.2.4 respectively.

3.2.1 Analysis of external aspects

In the first level of Littlejohn's (2011) framework, the explicit aspects of the course books are described. These include simple publication information as well as physical aspects. A general look inside the book then provides explicit information about the way the units are divided, what sort of search options are available, and possible patterns within the units. (Littlejohn 2011, 186.)

On this basis, an analysis of the external aspects of the seven workbooks was conducted. Each book was given an individual abbreviation to differentiate between the book series and books in the analysis. The explicit aspects of each book were then recorded in a spreadsheet using the Excel spreadsheet editor, following the schedule provided by Littlejohn (2011, 187). The recorded aspects were title, author(s), publisher, year of publication, edition, type, intended audience, estimated time, design, number of pages and units, content information and subdivision within the book.

After this, a single unit from the middle section of the book was taken under a more detailed review. The length of the unit in chapters and pages, the percentage it represented of the entire book and the sequence of activities were recorded into the spreadsheet.

3.2.2 Analysis of internal tasks

In the second level of Littlejohn's approach, a single unit from the book is analysed more closely to extract the general outlines of the exercises in the book (Littlejohn 2011, 186). The activities within that unit are then reviewed. The main goal is to divide the materials into separate tasks and to record what the students and the teacher are expected to do in each task. (Littlejohn 2011, 188.) This is done by analysing how the learner is supposed to learn, with whom (if anyone), and with what content (Littlejohn 2011, 189).

From each book included in the analysis, the unit selected in Level 1 was also reviewed in the second part of the analysis. Within the unit, differing parts in the sequence of activities were identified and included in the Level 2 coding and analysis. For both book series, this included a single chapter in the middle part of the unit, and a provided selection of revision tasks from the end of the unit. From the *Come with me!* books, an introduction section in the beginning of the unit was also included in the analysis. These parts were chosen, because coding the entire unit was not possible due to lack of resources as it would have covered about 20 percent of each book.

The task borders were defined using Littlejohn's definition of a task as an activity intended for learning that includes a process, a mode and content with which to engage (Littlejohn 2011, 188). Each task was given a unique code according to the book (HF or CWM), unit (U) and task number (T), for example HF4U3T18. The tasks were then assessed and coded following Littlejohn's schedule for analysing tasks (Littlejohn 2011, 191).

3.2.3 Coding

The first aspect of the task according to Littlejohn (2011) is process. In this section, the learner's expected form of participation was coded as 'free', 'scripted' or 'none', as seen in Table 1. Free participation in this context meant that the learner is free to choose if and how they want to participate. Scripted participation meant that the task includes a clear instruction of active participation. No participation meant that the task did not require the learner to engage in any way, apart from listening.

The intended focus was then recorded as either 'language system' or 'meaning'. The former was chosen whenever the task clearly intended the learner to actively consider the grammar or

other rules rather than the semantic aspects of the language. On all other occasions, the learner was expected to focus mainly on meaning.

Lastly, the mental operation of the learner was recorded as one of the following: ‘decode semantic meaning’, ‘select information’, ‘retrieve from long-term memory’, ‘repeat’ or ‘apply new language rule’. All apart from the last one were derived directly from Littlejohn’s (2011) framework.

Table 1. Coding procedure for ‘Process’.

1 What is the learner expected to do?
A Participation
Free
Scripted
None
B Focus
Language system
Meaning
C Mental operation
Decode semantic meaning
Select information
Retrieve from long-term memory
Repeat
Apply new language rule

The tasks were also assessed according to the intended mode (Table 2). The mode was recorded as ‘individual task’, ‘pair task’, ‘group task’ or ‘whole class task’. The latter was mainly recorded if the task was teacher-lead and could be assumed to be done by all students simultaneously; a “listen and repeat” type task, where the whole class repeats words or phrases after a recording.

Table 2. Coding procedure for ‘Mode’.

2 Who with?
Individual task
Pair task
Group task
Whole class task

The analysis of the content the learner is intended to work with was the lengthiest part of the analysis process. Both the input and output contents were assessed according to form, source and nature (Table 3). The input form was recorded as either oral or written ‘words, ‘phrases’ or ‘text or discourse’. One more option was ‘graphic/video’, which included all types of graphic content. The source of the input could be recorded as either ‘materials’, ‘learners’ or ‘outside’, the latter meaning mainly third-party books or the internet. The options for the nature of the input were ‘grammar’, ‘vocabulary’, ‘text: fiction’, ‘text: non-fiction’, ‘conversational’, ‘game’, ‘graphic’, ‘song/poem’ and ‘pronunciation’.

The intended output form produced by the learner was also recorded as oral or written words, phrase or discourse. In addition to those, a non-verbal option was recorded. Non-verbal output could include tasks with instructions such as “number images in order”, “draw line between...”, “circle”, “point at...” or “mark R for right and W for wrong”. The source of the output could be coded as ‘materials’, meaning a scripted form of output that could be seen to have a limited number of right answers. Another option was ‘learners’, denoting any task with free production possibilities, where each learner has a different answer according to their own choices. The coding choices for the nature of the output included all those recorded for input, with the additional options of ‘interview’ and ‘non-verbal’ for the non-verbal forms of output mentioned above. If the intended participation in the Process section was coded as ‘none’, then the output was not recorded, as it was not presumed.

Table 3. Coding procedure for 'Content'.

3 With what content?	
A1 Input form	B1 Output form
Oral: words	Oral: words
Written: words	Written: words
Oral: phrases	Oral: phrases
Written: phrases	Written: phrases
Oral: text or discourse	Oral: text or discourse
Written: text or discourse	Written: text or discourse
Graphic	Non-verbal
A2 Input source	B2 Output source
Materials	Materials (scripted)
Learners	Learners (free production)
Outside	B3 Output nature
A3 Input nature	Grammar
Grammar	Vocabulary
Vocabulary	Text: fiction
Text: fiction	Text: non-fiction
Text: non-fiction	Song
Song	Graphic
Graphic	Conversational
Conversational	Non-verbal
Pronunciation	Pronunciation

3.2.4 Code categorisation and evaluation of materials

Guilloteaux's procedure includes a further evaluation of the tasks in addition to Littlejohn's framework. It is conducted based on the principals of SLA research to evaluate the potential of each book to facilitate language learning. In this procedure, each task is given plus and minus points depending on whether or not they follow the principals of SLA research (Guilloteaux 2013, 234–235). To make the results comparable, the totals are divided by the number of tasks and multiplied by 100 (Guilloteaux 2013, 234). The books are then ranked on each feature, being rewarded a ranking from 1 to however many books are being analysed (Guilloteaux 2013, 235).

In this study, the coursebooks were only evaluated on each SLA principle separately and not given points or rankings other than the one provided by the percentage of each category. This

modification was chosen because Tomlinson's principles did not include guidelines on what should not be done when teaching languages (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 176), and to ensure a more transparent process of analysis and to evaluate the materials as a sample of Finnish teaching materials rather than comparing each of them to one another.

To evaluate the materials on their success to follow SLA principles, Guilloteaux has assembled a list of general guidelines drawn from SLA research. However, this list was not used in the present study, as both Littlejohn and Tomlinson state that no model or set of criteria is suitable for all studies, and that instead each researcher should gather their own criteria suitable for their specific context (Littlejohn 2011, 182; Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 58–59). Tomlinson suggests that a researcher should gather universal criteria from their own beliefs of how languages are best acquired, based on reading and research (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 59). However, Tomlinson has created a set of principles which he suggests could be used in evaluating teaching materials (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 176). This study relied on Tomlinson as a source of extensive reading and research, and the list he provides for second language acquisition principles. However, two principles from other studies by Tomlinson were added to the list: the use of meaningful texts and free production exercises (Tomlinson 2010 in Guilloteaux 2013, 233). Some principles were also removed from the original list, because they were found difficult to assess based on coursebook data alone (e.g. "Noticing how the L2 is used") or later removed because no tasks were coded to match the principle (e.g. using mental resources like the inner voice in the L2).

To evaluate the use of these principles within the coursebooks, individual task codes were selected or combined to create categories based on the selected principles (Table 4). The category Focus on meaning was derived directly from the code 'Meaning' for section 1B Focus. Cognitive engagement was seen to be provided in tasks with the codes 'Decode semantic meaning', 'Apply new language rule' and 'Retrieve from long-term memory', as opposed to selecting or repeating given information, which is a more passive operation. Interactive pair and group activities were combined from the 'Pair task' and 'Group task' codes in section 2 Mode. Meaningful texts were seen to be provided by tasks with both 'text: non-fiction' and 'text or discourse' codes in section 3A, which offer students information about the actual world rather than fictional texts developed solely for learning purposes. Authentic language in use could be seen to be provided by tasks with any form of outside input, because it seemed the texts and tasks provided by the materials did not include authentic texts or discourse that was not premodified by the authors. Free production was

naturally derived directly from the code ‘Learners (Free production)’ in section 3B Output source.

Table 4. A list of SLA principles and the codes included in each category.

Category	Codes
Focus on meaning	1B Focus
	Meaning
Cognitive engagement	1C Mental operation
	Decode semantic meaning
	Retrieve from long-term memory
	Apply new language rule
Interactive pair or group activities	2 Mode
	Pair task
	Group task
Meaningful texts	3 A1 Input form + A3 Input nature
	Oral: text or discourse + text: non-fiction
	Written: text or discourse + text: non-fiction
Exposure to authentic language in use	3 A1 Input source
	Outside
Free production	3 B3 Output source
	Learners (free production)

4 Results

The aim of this study was to find out how well Finnish teaching materials of the English language follow general principles from SLA research to facilitate language learning. The first section covers the general findings from all the analysed books as a whole and as separate series, starting from the explicit analysis and moving on to the more detailed evaluation of tasks. The second section reviews the comparison of the workbooks as individuals within a series and of the two analysed series.

4.1 The ability of teaching materials to facilitate English language learning

This section comprises of the procedure conducted following Littlejohn's (2011) framework for teaching materials analysis. The findings of first level of the analysis, consisting of a general objective analysis of the explicit aspects of the materials, are reviewed in 4.1.1. The second level comprises of a more detailed coding and analysis of the internal aspects of the materials. The results are presented in 4.1.2.

4.1.1 Explicit aspects

All analysed course books were published between the years 2016 and 2023 as first or second editions (Table 5). Each book is a student workbook intended for an entire academic year on the respective grade level. They each have around 200 pages divided into 4 units. All books are further divided into chapters within each unit and include extra exercises after the actual units.

The *High five!* books from Otava Publishing Company have a full colour cover and two-colour pages with black text and black and light blue graphics. The books have four units with four chapters each that add up to 210 pages for the first book with linear increase to 240 pages for the last book. In content info, the students can find the unit and chapter names as well as the phrases, grammar and pronunciation topics they will learn in each chapter. The books also contain a "May section" with extra activities for the spring, as well as festival topics and "My very own section" for free production exercises.

In the *High five!* books, a unit begins directly with a new chapter. A unit covers about 20 percent of the book with an average of 46 pages. Each chapter shows a "I can – I'll learn"

section in the beginning of the first page to tell the students what is included in the chapter in terms of grammar and vocabulary. The chapters have a “Ready, steady, go!” section with its own text in the textbook, and a vocabulary to go with it, to warm up for the actual text. This section mostly includes pair and group exercises as well as aural tasks. The midsection of the chapter consists of text, vocabulary and production tasks using the actual text in the separate textbook. Each chapter has a “Now I can!” review section as well as a “Go ahead!” extra tasks. At the end of the unit all covered topics are reviewed.

Table 5. Explicit aspects of analysed books by series.

Series	<i>High five!</i>	<i>Come with me!</i>
Publisher	Otava	Sanoma Pro
Years of publication	2016–2019	2021–2023
Full-colour pages	No	Yes
Chapters per unit	4	3
Page average per unit	46	39
Unit borders visible	No	Yes
Unit or chapter goals visible	Yes	Yes
Warm-up section	Yes	Yes
Division into lessons within chapters	No	Yes
Extra tasks for each chapter	Yes	No
Unit revision section	Yes	Yes

Come with me! is the most recent English language teaching material series from Sanoma Pro, published in the 2020s. The analysed books were all first editions with full colour covers and pages. The books are 197 pages on average, divided into four units with three chapters each. The provided content information includes unit and chapter names, topics of grammar and vocabulary for each chapter, and extra pages. Each unit equals almost exactly 20 percent of the book, with an average of 39 pages.

The units in the *Come with me!* books are each their own colour, and the unit division is made clear to the students by the two unit start spreads with unit goals, self-assessment and aural warm-up exercises as well as some fun tasks in “Play corner”. Each chapter begins with chapter goals, aural tasks and vocabulary exercises. The chapters include several homework corners with simple production tasks (close-ended) and a study tip to help the learning along.

The books have several smaller sections that appear in most chapters, including “Magic rules” grammar section with explicit grammar explanations, “Language corner” where a third language is investigated, “Sounds” and “Speak” sections where pronunciation is in focus, and “Culture corner” and “Emma’s friends” that introduce texts about the English-speaking world. Each chapter is closed with “I can!” review tasks and self-assessment, and each unit with review sections for each chapter.

The most notable differences, as seen in Table 5, are the choices in design and the length of the units. *High five!* comprises of long chapters with no mileposts between the units. With every unit and chapter looking the same, the students might suffer from the illusion of not moving forward. Meanwhile, the *Come with me!* series offers lots to look at with its coloured pages and abundance of task-related graphics. The clear division into units, each with its own colour theme, and a further division into lesson-length sections between the homework corners within the chapters, provide students with clear, reachable goals and a motivating breakdown of subsections. However, *High five!* includes extra tasks in every chapter for those students who tend to pull ahead.

Both book series clearly provide learning goals for each chapter to allow the students to take responsibility for their own learning, as well as unit revision sections to make test revision easier.

4.1.2 Internal task analysis

The more detailed analysis of each individual coursebook was conducted by coding the aspects of each task following Littlejohn’s procedure, as described in 3.2. The amount of each code was turned into percentages for comparability. The percentages were then used to calculate average amounts of each code in each of the book series and as Finnish teaching materials of English language. In this section, the more remarkable findings of the coding analysis are revealed.

The first aspect of a task, according to Littlejohn (2011) is process. The form of participation in the task process expected of the students in the analysed workbooks was mostly (94,6%, Figure 1) coded as “scripted”, meaning that the materials give specific instructions for active participation. Only two of the analysed books offered the option of free participation in one task each, meaning that the students are free to decide if and how they want to participate, for example, in general conversation. An average of 5,6 percent of the tasks required no

participation, usually meaning that the student is only expected to listen to a recording or review information.

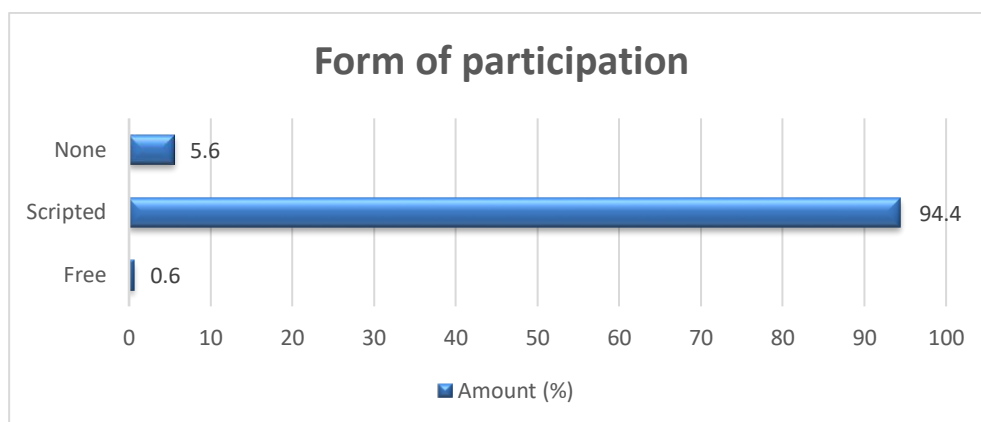


Figure 1. Average code distribution in form of participation.

Another part of the task process is focus. Two possibilities of expected focus were given in the coding of the task: language system and meaning. Of all the tasks, 78,2 percent on average expected focus on meaning rather than language system (Figure 2). The remaining 22,8 percent were mostly explicit grammar explanations and exercises. Allowing the learner to focus on meaning is one of the positive principles of SLA research. Focus on meaning included a clear majority of tasks, which means that the analysed materials mostly allowed their intended learners to focus on meaning more than language systems.

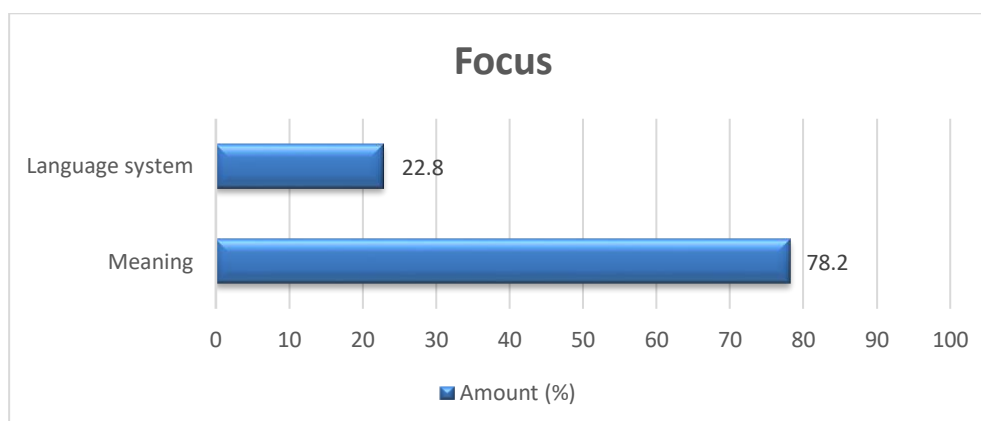


Figure 2. Average code distribution in task focus.

For mental operations, five categories were coded from the analysed workbooks. Decoding semantic meaning was chosen in 24,2 percent of tasks on average (Figure 3), although standard deviation between the workbook percentages was 7,6 with 14 as the lowest and 37 as the highest percentage. In this category fell mostly text-related tasks as well as translation exercises. Selecting information was an equally popular choice in most books, with an average of 22,4 percent and a standard deviation of 3,9. Tasks coded in this category were often tasks where, instead of language production, the student is expected to select the right information by connecting, numbering, colouring or copying a word or phrase.

Retrieving from long-term memory was often chosen for code in the tasks of revision exercises found at the end of the unit in each of the books. Tasks coded from the revision sections covered 20 percent of all tasks on average. However, as only one chapter from each unit was coded along with the revision exercises, the amount of the revision tasks is out of proportion compared to the rest of the tasks. This is why the category “Retrieve from long-term memory” seems most dominant out of all categories of mental operations with 36,2 percent of codes on average.

Simple repetition of information was coded in 18 percent of tasks on average. This could mean exercises that instruct the student to listen to and repeat after a recording, or writing words or phrases already written in the exercise or input text. Both selecting and repeating information are task types that do not require cognitive engagement and thus are not seen as a good exercise type in SLA principles.

Applying a new language rule was added in the coding options to accommodate the materials of this study, because some tasks did not seem to fit any of the coding choices provided by Littlejohn’s procedure. Only 8 percent of tasks were coded to this, since it was mostly used for tasks that follow explanations of grammar rules.

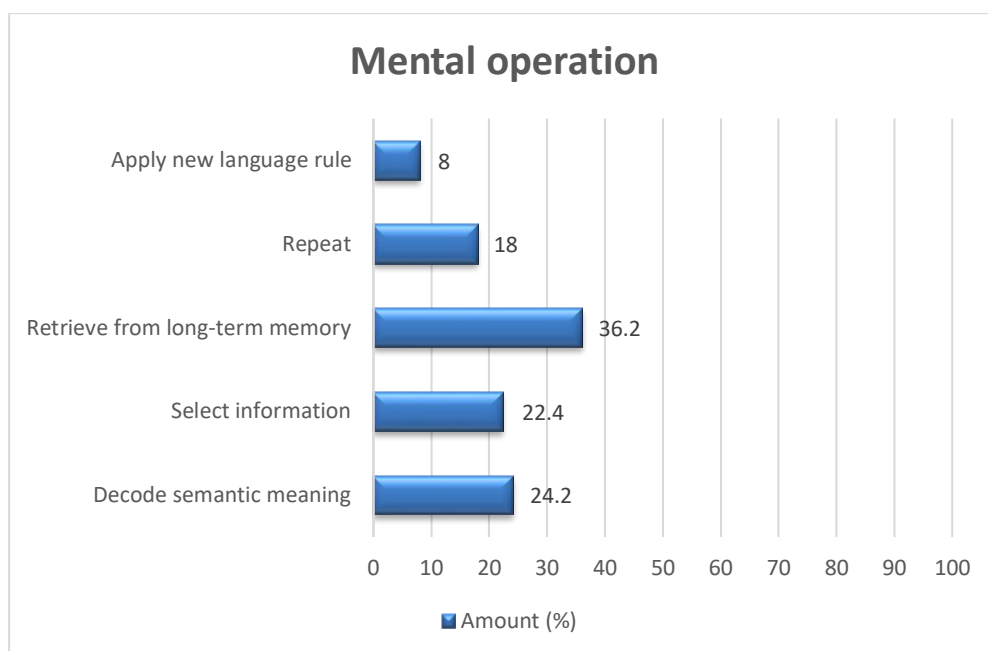


Figure 3. Average code distribution in mental operation.

The mode of participation is the second aspect of a task. A clear majority of tasks (78,5 %, Figure 4) was coded as individual tasks, which was mostly easy to analyse from the instructions provided by the book developers. The fluctuation between the books for this category was quite small, with the lowest percentage at 69,6 and highest at 84,8, meaning that all books clearly emphasised individual tasks rather than pair or group tasks.

Only some of the books offered tasks that could be coded as whole class tasks, but even those were mostly the type of exercises that the students perform individually, although at the same time with the rest of the group, like repeating words or pronunciation exercises after a recording. These tasks were coded as both individual and whole class tasks. True communicative exercises for the entire group were not found in the sample.

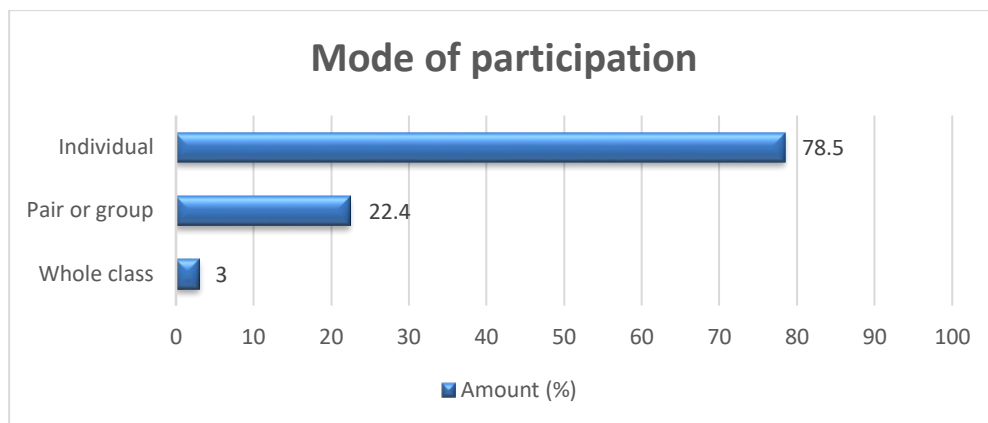


Figure 4. Average code distribution in mode of participation.

The form of input was most often coded as words (39,7 % on average, Figure 5), and only 16,5 percent of tasks on average were in the form of text or discourse. This goes to show that more tasks had to do with simple vocabulary than how the words are used in the language. One of the recommendations of Tomlinson and Masuhara was to allow learners to notice how the language is being used. This was difficult to verify from task types only, but from the forms of input, it is rather clear to see that many opportunities for authentic use of language were not provided.

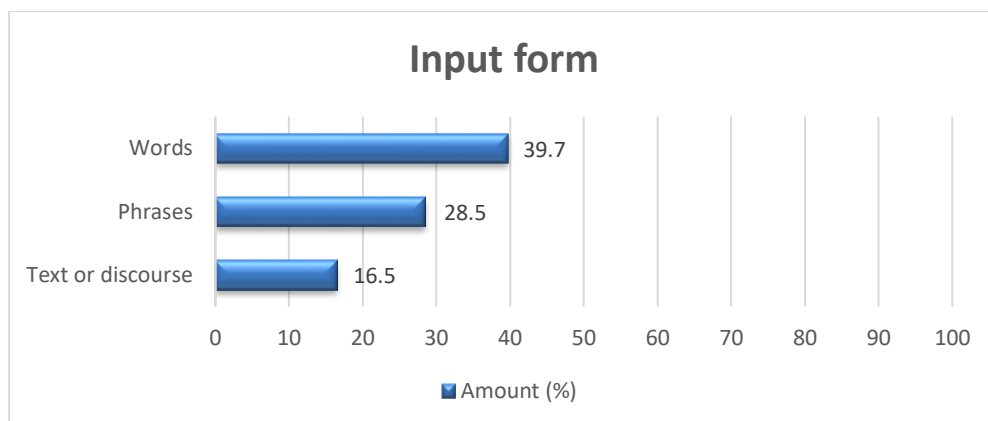


Figure 5. Average code distribution in input form.

For the third aspect of a task, content, input sources were among the most interesting codes in terms of SLA principles. In the sample of this study, 89,3 percent of tasks were coded as getting input from the materials (Figure 6), which meant texts created by the writers of the course books to serve the purposes of teaching the topic of each unit or chapter.

Only 2,8 percent of tasks were coded as getting their input from outside of the classroom, meaning mainly books or the internet. For the most part, this type of input can be seen as authentic language, or at least the closest possibility to find it. When students were expected to work with language provided by other learners or themselves, the input source was coded as “learners”. However, it is notable that even this type of input was mostly either restricted or strongly guided by the materials. Only a handful of exercises allowed the opportunity for the learners to produce language or other material freely and then use it as input for another task.

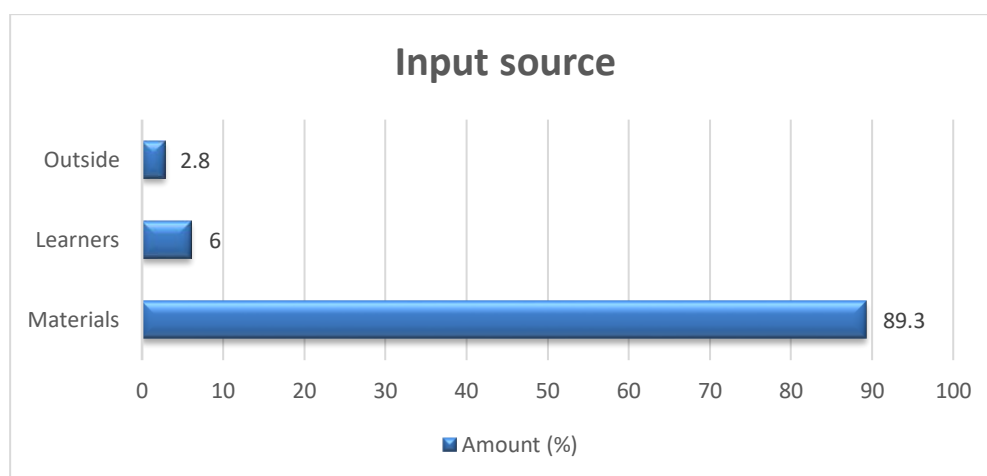


Figure 6. Average code distribution in input source.

The nature of the input in each task was coded in the sense of what the input is supposed to be teaching about. This in mind, an average of 37,7 percent of the input was coded to be about vocabulary (Figure 7). Texts, both fiction and non-fiction, come second at only 18,7 percent on average, with a close third from grammar at 17,4 percent. Although coded to be about a text, many of the tasks in this category were in the form of phrases or a graphic that had to do with the text under observation. Examples of these tasks could include ones where students were instructed to look at a picture in the textbook and guess what the text could be about, or to translate phrases derived from the text without actually working with the whole text.

Conversational input was usually phrases that were not directly connected to a text. These might be from grammar or revision exercises where the student is asked to translate sentences that work as examples of the grammar rule, or ones that are similar to those seen in a text earlier in the unit. These types of tasks covered 14,1 percent of the tasks on average.

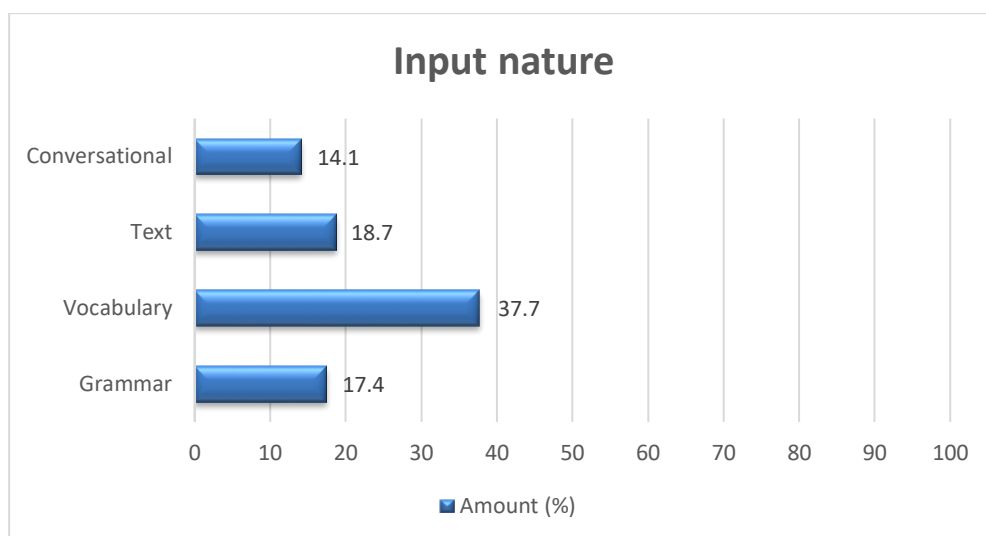


Figure 7. Average code distribution in input nature.

The form of output a student was expected to produce in the sample of teaching materials was most often (41,7 on average) individual words, spoken or written (Figure 8). A similar percentage was coded in input form (39,7) and vocabulary as input nature (37,7) above. All three codes show the same thing: a large amount of tasks had to do with vocabulary.

The second most common form were phrases at 30 percent on average. This is similar to the one in input form (28,5 %), which goes to show that many of these types of tasks are likely to be translation exercises. Because either the input or the output in translation has to be in something other than the target language, the actual amount of either input or output in the target language is not what is seen in these percentages. In six tasks, the output language was coded as Finnish, although this additional code was not coded systematically in each task and was more of an afterthought.

Only 7,9 percent of output on average was coded to have been in the form of oral or written text or discourse. These tasks include any kind of oral discourse, free or scripted, as well as any kind of text written or read out loud by the student, also the tasks where a student is asked to read the textbook text out loud. Given the variety of tasks that fall into this category, the percentage is alarmingly low. In practice, students hardly ever get to read or write, let alone produce, text or discourse themselves.

In contrast, non-verbal tasks covered as much as 16,3 percent of tasks in average. Although non-verbal exercises might still engage a student cognitively as they retrieve information from memory or decode the semantic meaning of an utterance, they do lack an active productive role where a student needs to produce language themselves. The amount of non-verbal

exercises fluctuated from 8,9 percent in one of the 5th grade books to 24,1 percent in a 4th grade workbook.

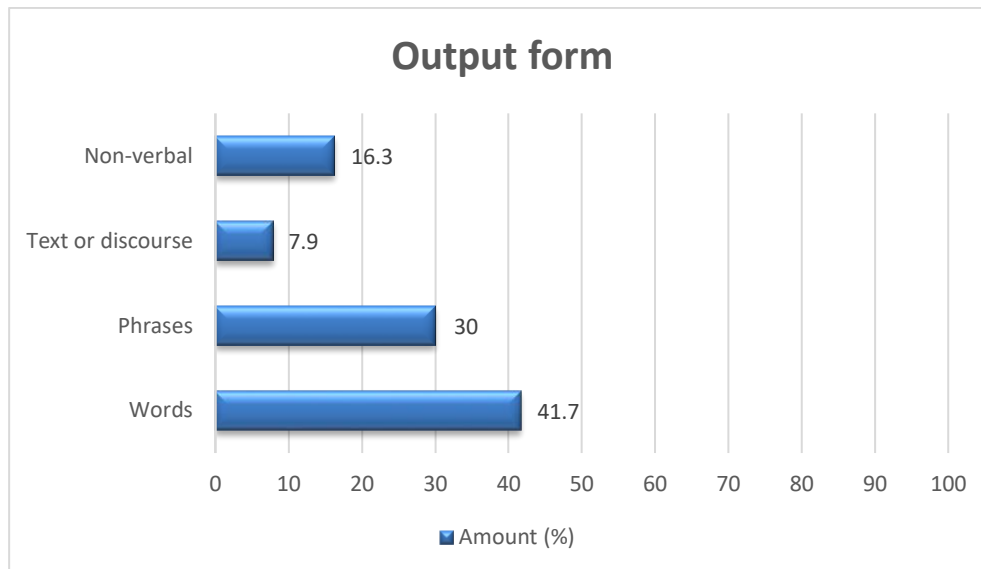


Figure 8. Average code distribution in output form.

The output source was coded as materials in 79,2 percent of tasks on average (Figure 9). This means that the output a student is expected to produce was scripted in the way that there is only one, or a very restricted amount of, right answers. This percentage fluctuated between 61,6 and as much as 93,4 in the different workbooks. Only 14,6 percent of tasks on average allowed any form of free production that was not predetermined.

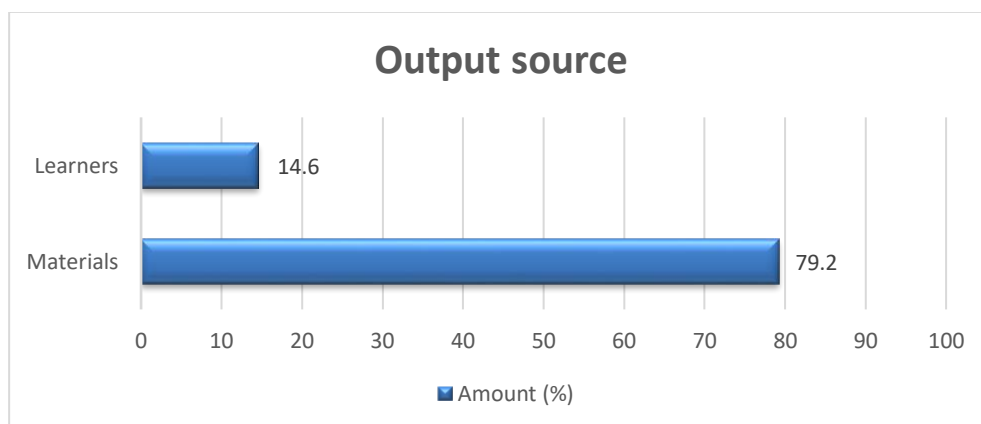


Figure 9. Average code distribution in output source.

The nature of the output that students were expected to produce in the analysed tasks had to do with grammar in 17,1 percent of cases on average (Figure 10). These tasks usually meant practicing or revising a language structure.

Similar to input form and nature as well as output form, vocabulary also covered almost 40 percent of output nature in the coded tasks. This connection further strengthens the result that the largest amount of exercises in the analysed workbooks have the students work with words and vocabulary. This means that parts of language are taken out of context and worked on as individual objects rather than observed as part of a whole. It is not too hard to imagine that this form of learning does not produce great competence in using a language in a natural way.

Conversational output in tasks was coded in 19,4 percent of tasks on average. These were usually exercises where conversational phrases were translated or analysed, or if a student was expected to produce anything that wasn't connected to a text in particular, but was more than individual words. Oral or written text were the nature of output in only 10,1 percent of tasks on average.

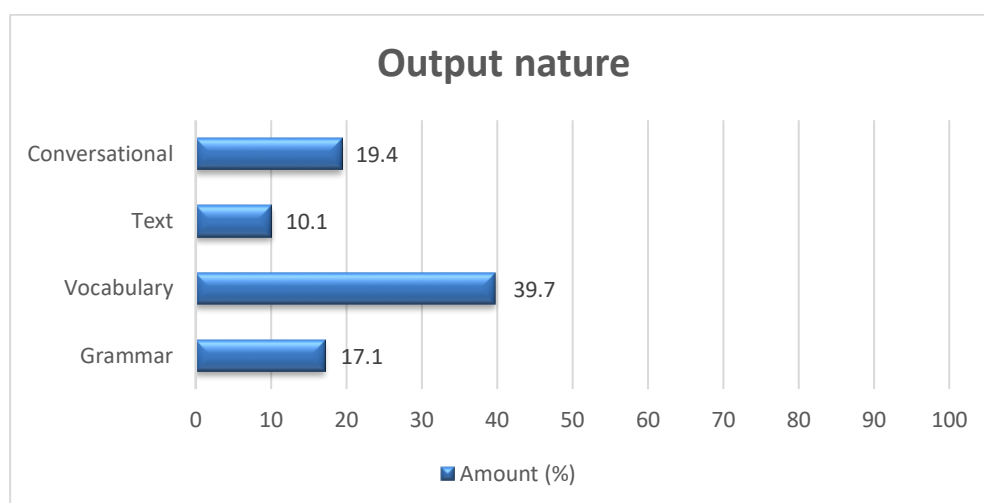


Figure 10. Average code distribution in output nature.

4.1.3 Evaluation of tasks through SLA principles

Codes were combined into categories to match six generally approved principles of SLA research derived from the research of Tomlinson (2018, 176). The averages of each category shed some light on how well the teaching materials share the values of SLA research in general. The code combinations for each category are listed in Table 6. The average

percentages for each category found in the analysed coursebooks combined are seen in Figure 11 below.

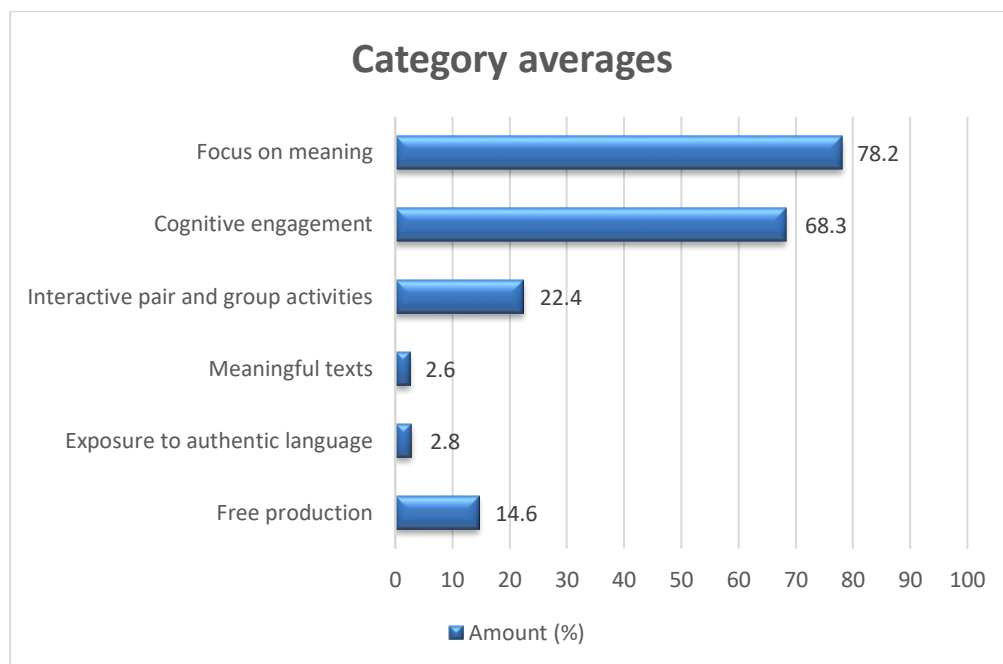


Figure 11. Average percentage distribution of SLA principle categories.

Cognitive engagement seems to be well covered in the analysed teaching materials as well. This included any tasks that were coded to require any type of active mental operation. However, the average percentage could be out of proportion due to the amount of revision exercises mentioned above, which were mostly coded as retrieving from long-term memory, which contributed a major part of the category. If the codes for long-term memory were discarded, the average of the category would be 32,9 percent. Although remarkably lower, it still holds its place as the second largest category. The actual amount can be imagined to be somewhere between the two average percentages.

Interactive pair and group activities as well as free production tasks play an integral role in language learning. In the first category are combined all codes from any type of pair or group activity, that are assumed to be interactive in some way or another. These codes constituted only 22,4 percent of tasks on average. Free production in any type of tasks in the analysed materials was rather minimal at only 14,6 percent of the tasks on average.

Meaningful texts and authentic language were hardly ever seen in the sample of materials. Only 2,6 percent of texts was coded as non-fiction, and a mere 2,8 percent of tasks included input from outside of the materials.

4.2 Comparison of the course books and book series

In this section, the workbooks are compared based on the SLA principle categories analysed in the last section. First, the notable differences between workbooks within a book series are examined. Then, the two book series are compared on each of the categories. Although a ranking similar to the one in Guilloteaux (2013) was conducted on the books, it is not the primary focus of this evaluation.

4.2.1 Comparison of the course books within their series

The first notable pattern in the category percentages of the books was that of pair and group activities in the *High five!* books. A slight linear increase of these types of activities can be seen in the percentages of the books, from 11,6 percent in the 3rd grade book to 22,2 percent in the 6th grade book (Table 6). Other differences between the lower and higher-level books in the series are that meaningful texts can only be found in the 6th grade book, and that the most free production is allowed in the two later years.

Focus on meaning maintains a steady course at just above 80 percent in each *High five!* book. The same, however, cannot be said about the cognitive engagement or authentic language being provided. Cognitive engagement fluctuates between 59,3 and 80,4 percent, and authentic language is only seen in three of the four books.

Table 6. Percentages of categories in *High five!* books.

Book	Focus on meaning	Cognitive engagement	Pair or group task	Meaningful texts	Authentic language	Free production
HF3	81,4 %	72,1 %	11,6 %	0,0 %	4,7 %	14,0 %
HF4	82,6 %	80,4 %	19,6 %	0,0 %	0,0 %	10,9 %
HF5	82,1 %	76,8 %	21,4 %	0,0 %	3,6 %	23,2 %
HF6	81,5 %	59,3 %	22,2 %	7,4 %	7,4 %	33,3 %

The *Come with me!* book series seems to keep percentages level in four of the six categories. Focus on meaning stays between 72 and 74 percent for all three books, and pair and group activities are found in 23 to 31 percent of the tasks (Table 7). Meaningful texts and authentic language tasks keep a steady low at 2,2 to 5,2 percent and zero to 2,2 percent respectively.

While two of the *Come with me!* books keep cognitive engagement well below average, the 4th grade book rises to the occasion with 75,9 percent. Interestingly, free production is

allowed in just under 9 percent of tasks in both 3rd and 4th grade level books, but for 5th graders the percentage is only 3,3.

Table 7. Percentages of categories in *Come with me!* books.

Book	Focus on meaning	Cognitive engagement	Pair or group task	Meaningful texts	Authentic language	Free production
CWM3	73,9 %	56,5 %	28,3 %	2,2 %	2,2 %	8,7 %
CWM4	72,4 %	75,9 %	31,0 %	5,2 %	1,7 %	8,6 %
CWM5	73,8 %	57,4 %	23,0 %	3,3 %	0,0 %	3,3 %

4.2.2 Comparison of the book series

When comparing the book series based on the categories of SLA principles, some clear differences between the two series arise. The *High five!* books rise above average in tasks that focus on meaning (81,9 %), while *Come with me!* averages almost 10 percent lower (Table 8). This means that the more recent series offers slightly more focus on grammar and other language systems. The *High five!* series wins this category with all individual book percentages well above average.

For cognitively engaging tasks, the difference in percentages looks similar, with *High five!* including engagement in 72,2 percent of its tasks on average, and *Come with me!* averaging almost 10 percent lower.

Interactive pair and group activities are better represented in the *Come with me!* books with an average of 27,4 percent. For this category, the *High five!* series averages significantly lower at only 18,7 percent.

Table 8. Series and combined category averages.

Series	Focus on meaning	Cognitive engagement	Pair or group task	Meaningful texts	Authentic language	Free production
High five!	81,9 %	72,2 %	18,7 %	1,9 %	3,9 %	20,4 %
Come with me!	73,4 %	63,3 %	27,4 %	3,6 %	1,3 %	6,9 %
Combined	78,2 %	68,3 %	22,4 %	2,6 %	2,8 %	14,6 %

The two categories that included non-fiction text in their tasks were poorly represented in all books. Both book series only showed a handful of tasks that included meaningful texts. While

High five! 6 had as much as 7,4 percent of these tasks, the rest of the books in the series failed to include any. In comparison, the *Come with me!* series included a small amount in each book, resulting in a higher average of 3,6 percent. Authentic language tasks were not much better represented, with a combined average of 2,8 percent. The *Come with me!* series offered a minimal amount of authentic language in its tasks (1,3 % on average). While not much better, the *High five!* series included slightly more of these tasks, with an average of 3,9 percent. One book from each series did not receive any points for the category.

Free production was clearly more popular in the *High five!* series. While still lower than recommended, the series average is 20,4 percent. The *Come with me!* books fall well below average with only 6,9 percent of tasks including any free production possibilities.

5 Discussion

The aim of this study was to shed light on the ability of Finnish teaching materials of the English language to facilitate second language learning according to generally approved second language acquisition theories. Following the third level of the procedure created by Littlejohn (2011), this section aims to draw general conclusions from the results to define the underlying principles and overall aims of the materials. According to Littlejohn, the conclusions should also include the expected roles of the teacher and the students that are implied in the tasks, and the standards required from the learners to perform as anticipated by the teacher and the materials creators. He says it should also be possible to define the role of the material as a whole in regard to language learning: to guide an entire semester or academic year of learning or to provide extra help alongside other materials. (Littlejohn 2011, 197.)

5.1 More SLA guidance needed in materials development

The main findings of this study were that Finnish teaching materials of the English language fail to include most second language learning principles in their task types. The only well represented principles were allowing the students to focus on the meaning of the language and creating cognitively engaging tasks. However, the latter may be overly represented in the sample, as the coded tasks included an amount of revision tasks that was out of proportion compared to the rest of the tasks. This means that from these positive findings, only the first one can be considered reliable.

The popular belief for some years has been that Finnish language teaching materials focus mostly on grammar. Although there is a good amount of tasks that focus on the language system, it is clearly not the main focus of the intended teaching. SLA research has found that allowing the learner to focus on meaning facilitates language learning better than explicit teaching of language systems (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 176).

However, the materials seem to focus on the meaning of individual words rather than authentic language in use. The amount of text-related tasks, not to mention those with authentic language, is minimal. This is in line with a recent study by Mäkipää and his colleagues where they found that authentic fiction and non-fiction texts were hardly ever used

in teaching materials (Mäkipää et al. 2024, 128). Teaching materials should provide a wide range of different types of texts, both spoken and written, that are found in the real world and not restricted by the learning agenda of a unit in a coursebook (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2018, 131). This goes to show that Finnish teaching materials of the English language do not include the “and literature” part that the subject usually contains.

Even if the materials work with texts, although premodified for teaching purposes, the tasks given to the learners are too narrow in their focus on vocabulary and certain phrase types in restricted, close-ended exercise types. Although some cognitive engagement was expected in most tasks, too many of them were still mechanical exercises where information is simply selected or repeated. Mäkipää and his colleagues had similar findings in their study, where they noticed that more mechanical exercises than communicative ones were used in coursebooks. They also note that mechanical exercises fail to engage learners cognitively. (Mäkipää et al. 2024, 128.) Shifting the exercise types into ones with open-ended questions and real engagement should not be too difficult for materials developers. Any necessary vocabulary and grammar could be acquired through exercises that allow free production and true consideration of *how* the language is used.

Another clear result of this study is the lack of interactive pair and group tasks. While some pair tasks were often provided in the beginning of a chapter or unit, they were not used regularly throughout the learning process as would be advisable. What is also notable is that these activities did not always require interaction in the target language, and instead learners were often allowed to discuss their thoughts in Finnish. It was found in a study by Harjanne and her colleagues that in pair and group activities students did not use the target language as much as they were encouraged to do (Harjanne et al. 2015, 921). Communication in the L1 can in fact be harmful for second language learning (Ellis 2005 in Guilloteaux 2013, 233).

Furthermore, even if the pairs or groups were intended to interact in the L2, the form of interaction was mostly predetermined by the materials, and possibilities for free production in pair interaction were scarce: only five tasks in the entire sample allowed free production in the form of oral phrases or discourse with a pair or group. Students should be encouraged to communicate in the target language, even if the utterances they produce are imperfect (Tomlinson 2020, 41).

5.2 Teaching materials as a tool for teachers

Based on the results of this study, it seems the workbooks intended for student use should not be the leading materials for language teaching, but rather a useful tool for teachers to utilize in addition to their own materials and methods. Tomlinson states that even the best possible coursebook should need additional materials to support the students' learning (Tomlinson 2018, 3). Tomlinson also reminds teachers that they are responsible for the materials that their students use for learning and as such should utilize all possible input sources for their learners (Tomlinson 2011, 2). This sets a heavier burden on teachers to ensure extensive and diverse methods of teaching that truly support language learning. To educate all language teachers on the best and newest teaching methods that are based on language learning research, in-service training needs to be provided (Mäkipää et al. 2014, 128).

Learners should be provided with clear, obtainable goals to schedule their learning (Tomlinson & Masuhara 2010 in Guilloteaux 2013, 233). From the review of the explicit aspects of the analysed teaching materials, it was found that at least in the case of one of the book series, teachers were expected to portion the materials into clear units, chapters and lessons themselves, so that the learners would not get bored or overwhelmed by the amount of tasks in each unit.

Any form of free participation was scarcely found in the analysed materials. The results imply that teachers are expected to offer students chances for free participation in the classroom by, for example, asking about their day and allowing the possibility to answer in any way they like, or not at all. It seems to fall in the hands of teachers to also provide additional interactive group tasks to encourage peer communication in the target language, as well as text from outside the materials to offer authentic input. Yet, most of all, teachers are expected to create their own free production tasks for their students, as any opportunities for free production were limited, especially in the more recently published book series *Come with me!*.

Perhaps, what is left unsaid in the teaching materials is that teachers know their learners better than any materials developer, and because of this knowledge, they should create interactive, free production group tasks where their learners would get to cognitively engage with meaningful texts and authentic language.

5.3 Limitations and future research

Although the findings of this study have successfully shed light on the shortcomings of Finnish teaching materials in their consideration of SLA principles, some limitations are due for acknowledgement. Because the study was conducted by one researcher alone, the definitions of the task borders as well as the coding of the tasks were inevitably subjective, however mechanically they were analyzed. To minimize this, the tasks should be coded by at least one other individual to ensure agreement on task borders and coding choices.

As the sample of this study only included the student workbooks and not the accompanying textbooks, it caused some limitations to the evaluation of the provided texts. The nature of the texts was determined solely based on the instructions or provided inserts included in the related tasks, and in most cases assumed to be fictional and premodified instead of authentic. In further studies the nature of the provided texts should be confirmed by reviewing the textbooks along with the workbooks.

Each teacher uses teaching materials in a different way, and many even make their own materials (Mäkipää et al. 2024, 126). So, to truly determine the ability of any materials to facilitate language learning, an in-use evaluation should be conducted to see exactly how the teaching materials are being used (Guilloteaux 2013, 231). Focusing a study only on materials created for student use can also give a limited picture of the materials available for teaching (Karvonen ym. 2017, 48). A fuller image could be provided by a study that includes all provided materials from each series, including the teacher's guide and digital materials, where additional tasks are often found. A further study could also include a questionnaire for teachers to find out how many of them take advantage of all the provided materials.

Future research could establish the connections between SLA theories, the Finnish National Core Curriculum and the most recent teaching material publications to find where the disconnection happens: between research knowledge and national guidelines, or the core curriculum and materials developers. What is also worth studying is how much knowledge do teaching material authors have about language learning theories, as some of them have been reported to be language subject teachers and as such should have studied the field to some extent. Finally, a study should be conducted inquiring the opinions of teachers on the currently popular teaching materials and how they seem to facilitate the learners' communicative competence and true language acquisition.

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