

# An analysis of communicative exercises of two English workbooks from the Finnish middle school

Bachelor's Thesis

Lasse Lyytikäinen

University Of Jyväskylä

Department of Languages and Communication Studies

English

April 2018

Tiedekunta – Faculty <b>Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen tdk</b>	Laitos – Department Kielten ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä – Author Lasse Lyytikäinen	
Työn nimi – Title  An analysis of communicative exercises of two English workbooks from the Finnish middle school	
Oppiaine – Subject Englannin kieli	Työn laji – Level Kandidaatintutkielma
Aika – Month and year Huhtikuussa 2018	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 17
<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena on selvittää kahden suomalaisen yläkoulun A1-englannin harjoituskirjan suulliseen kommunikaatioon keskittyvien tehtävien määrää ja laatua. Uusin opetussuunnitelma sekä yleinen kielenopetukseen liittyvä keskustelu tähdentävät kommunikoinnin ja suullisen kielitaidon tärkeyttä. Tämä tutkimus osaltaan selvittää näiden ideaalien toteutumista kahdessa englannin kielen harjoituskirjassa.</p> <p>Kirjat, joita tutkittiin, olivat <i>On the Go 1 Workbook</i> ja <i>Scene 1 Exercises</i>, jotka ovat peruskoulun seitsemännen luokan harjoituskirjoja. Näistä kirjoista pyrittiin tunnistamaan sellaiset tehtävät, jotka suoraan harjoittavat englanninkielistä suullisen kommunikaation kompetenssin kehitystä. Löydetty tehtävät jaettiin kategorioihin sen mukaan, mitä niissä tehdään. Analysoitaessa käytiin löydetty tehtävät läpi kategorioittain.</p> <p>Aineistosta löydetty tulokset ovat määrällis-laadullisia: suulliseen kommunikaatioon keskittyviä tehtäviä oli molemmissa kirjoissa alle kuudesosa kaikista tehtävistä. Lisäksi niiden monipuolisuus ja kommunikatiivisuus voidaan tämän analyysin perusteella todeta vähintään kyseenalaiseksi, sillä useimmissa näistä tehtävistä ei tapahdu juurikaan merkitysten neuvottelua, vaan ne ovat luonteeltaan enemmänkin toteavia ja yksisuuntaisia. Tulevissa tutkimuksissa voisi reliabiliteetin takia selvittää laajemmin, ovatko tämän tutkimuksen tulokset löydettävissä muistakin oppimateriaaleista. Lisäksi olisi tarpeen tutkia oppitunneilla tehdyn suullisen kommunikaation harjoittelun yhteyttä käytännön kielitaitoon.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords: workbook, oral communication, communicational competence	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository: JYX	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Theoretical framework .....	3
3	The present study .....	7
3.1	Research problem .....	7
3.2	Data and methods .....	7
4	Results .....	9
4.1	Quantities of communicational exercises in the primary sources .....	9
4.2	Quality of the found communicative exercises .....	11
5	Conclusion .....	16
	Bibliography .....	18

## 1 Introduction

Oral communication is a phenomenon, from which no-one escapes. One uses spoken language on a daily basis and much of one's successes and failures are direct results of how well one expresses themselves. In the school world, spoken interaction is key in every subject and course, as well as in being sociable and learning from others. English spoken interaction is especially important when one seeks to do practically anything outside the domain of their native language and culture. This is why English teaching is an integral part of all Finnish schools, including the middle school, where most classes, studying to become proficient in communicating in English, use workbooks of English. These workbooks are for their own part responsible for making it possible to learn how to communicate in English. That is why they must be subject to an inspection, such as the present study.

In the present thesis, two Finnish middle school English workbooks will be analyzed. What is meant by workbooks are classroom-intended study books that are composed of mainly exercises and activities. These exercises are often done in English classes and given as homework. Possible exercises include wordlists, crossword puzzles, discussion with a partner and the like. From these, it will be studied, which exercises invoke oral output from the students. Then the said exercises will be divided categorically and inspected further. The objective of this study is to map out these workbooks and the said exercises. It is also of interest whether the students could be able to acquire skills for real-life communication, which as a phenomenon is vast and will be looked into in Chapters 2 and 4. The books that were chosen for this study, are *Scene 1: exercises* (2015) by Hiitti, Lumiala, Parikka, Sloan and Tolkki and *On the Go 1 workbook* (2016) by Daffue-Karsten, Haapala, Ojala, Ojala, Peuraniemi, Rappold and Semi. The two workbooks are used in Finnish middle schools (junior high) in the seventh grade. The books are from the two major publishing houses in Finland: Otava and SanomaPro. Both workbooks are written according to the revised National Core Curriculum (Opetussuunnitelma, 2014).

Such a topic is relevant, although earlier research has produced a multitude of guides and principles for teaching materials development (cf. Aebersold and Field 1997; Azarnoosh,

Zeraatpishe, Faravani and Kargozari 2016; Tomlinson 2013). However, it is unclear whether the actual materials are designed according to any of these scientific frameworks. What is certainly known, though, is that teaching materials in general are not scientific works. While it is not a focal point of this study whether the two Finnish work books adhere to any specific studies, it remains to be looked into whether they follow the larger research canon.

The study is divided into parts that each serve their own purpose: first, in Chapter 2, the theoretical boundaries and frameworks for the data, that is the workbooks, are discussed. Then, in Chapter 3, the research problem and methods of this study are explained. Chapter 4 is for actual inspecting of the data and discussion of the relevance of the findings. Finally, the study is concluded in Chapter 5, which offers a practical overview of the results and their implications, with reflection on the possible shortcomings of the present study.

## 2 Theoretical framework

The qualitative approach of the analysis first begs for a definition of what is sought for, how and why. The most common concepts related to oral communication include competence and performance (Aebbersold and Field 1997; Yule 2010). Competence is defined as all the language skills one possesses in memory. The active part of this skillset is called performance: a person's ability to produce oral output in a language. Competence can this way be seen as an overarching aspect of knowing how to use a language. What oral rehearsal should mainly aim for, though, is performance. This is because the passive understanding of language usually precedes production. Competence and performance include other critical factors in them too, among them pragmatic skills. Pragmatics refers to the study of the difference of what is said and what is meant. This is followed by the notion that language is constructed largely in use and is often not prescribed. (Verschueren and Östman 2009). In addition to performance and pragmatic understanding, communicational strategies are of great value in oral competence. (Hietala 2013; Tahkola 2015; Tomlinson 2013)

The National Core Curriculum (2014), which is the state-governed curriculum for all public Finnish schools, states that as a basic value, students should be always encouraged to interact even if their linguistic resources were limited. The goal of language teaching, in terms of communication, is set as "students' ability to effortlessly take part in everyday discussions and being able to negotiate meanings" (pp. 351). The National Core Curriculum states that English should be used every time it is possible. The curriculum further promises "plenty of communicational practice". This poses a challenge for schoolbooks, which are an essential part of what is done in the classroom and often serve as a guideline for all language teaching. (Vellenga 2004)

Vellenga states that as teaching materials, mainly text- and workbooks are evidently the backbone of formal classroom teaching, they should be able to cover all the phases of a student's linguistic development. Hence, these materials should be the best option available and should hold all the ingredients of language learning. It must be stated here that naturally,

workbooks are by no means the only channel of learning and teaching in the classroom. Still, the authors of these books cannot know precisely how they are used in the classroom. Furthermore, as oral competence can be seen as more important than written competence, it should be so in any teaching materials as well. This means that in practice, workbooks of English will need to offer the widest possible range of stimuli. The notion of the importance of spoken language will be further addressed later in this Chapter.

Hietala, M. (2013) analyzed Finnish upper secondary textbooks and discovered that only few exercises in the books focused on creating authentic conversations, let alone small-talk. In addition, upper secondary school prepares students for their matriculation examination, which is entirely in a written format. This way it is understandable to some extent if authentic conversation is not seen as a primary institutional goal in the Finnish upper secondary school. However, from the middle school viewpoint, it must be recognized that vocational education is a viable option for many students. This means that the probability of these students encountering extensive written English is lesser than the probability of them encountering spoken interaction. This would, especially, call for social and communicative understanding of language use for these students and arguably, it might even be emphasized. Hietala, M. depicts the tasks and exercises, in the inspected upper secondary school books, as being mechanical. She argues that most of the oral rehearsing done with the framework offered by the books is detached from reality, as they only concentrate on the topic, almost never addressing cultural conventions or actual social interaction. She continues that real-life language use often contains surprising elements, non-verbal factors, hesitation and negotiation of meaning. Thus, oral activities based on formal, written language are seen as redundant and detached from social reality.

There are differences between oral and written communication. As Hietala, M. continues about oral communication, it involves for instance, gestures and facial expressions, not merely stating sentences aloud. These factors are accompanied by certain ongoing processes that are unique to oral interaction. For one, there is a constant process of remembering what has been said, just as there is a process of meaning-negotiation between the participants. It requires social and communicational understanding greater than just technicalities of language, to be able to overcome failed meaning-negotiation sequences. For example, if one participant of a

conversation does not understand a certain word, it could be useful, in order to keep the conversation going, to find an alternative way around this knowledge gap. Of course, the need for such measures depends on the importance of the word and the desired effect of the conversation, not to mention the participants, their backgrounds, skills and motivations. All this is what makes communicational strategies important and sets oral communication apart from any written exercises and activities with a narrow range of possible answers. Ahola-Houtsonen (2013) further argues that in real-life intercourse, oral competence in English is dominant compared to writing. She points out that there is no national guarantee of students managing spoken English, that is, from the high school viewpoint, and that there is a danger of written communication being taught out of proportion. Hence, this would suggest that students' oral performance (ability to produce oral output in a given language, (Aebbersold and Field 1997) is not valued in the educational system, although it is of quintessential importance in real life intercourse.

Luomala (2010) argues that even if EFL teaching has traditionally been primarily concerned about linguistic rules and vocabulary, it has overlooked the fact that real-life language use consists of much more than those. Tomlinson (2013) agrees with this, stating that developing oral skills in most teaching materials is done incoherently and the exposure for students is insufficient. Luomala's conclusion was that Finnish workbooks she studied offered too little practice to create pragmatic understanding of English. Her main point was that knowing the language technically does not transcend to communicational abilities on its own and thus does not suffice in terms of real-life language use. Luomala herself was focused on pragmatics and especially the social usage of language that differs from the literal meanings of utterances. In practice, the very existence of idiomatic expressions means that a learner must get to know the inner logic of a language. This cannot be fully done via the L1, so extensive oral practice in the target language ensues. It is also brought up in The National Core Curriculum that English should be the primary medium of all classroom communication. This way, the meaning of the workbooks' usage is alleviated as there, theoretically, will be oral output demanded from the students in general.

In the light of the previously mentioned points about the importance of oral competence, it becomes evident that workbooks must live up to certain goals. Mares (2003:132) as cited by



Hietala, J. (2015) argues that commercially published textbooks are essentially mainstream and that significantly different approaches would be unattractive for the buyers. This means that textbooks are presumed to manifest little variation in terms of what is included and how, which poses a problem for creating materials that apply the said notions of developing students' oral competence. Mares also criticizes both the publishers and their customers for branding new textbooks with so-called buzzwords such as "communicative". By this, he evidently means that there is less change in teaching materials than what is advertised. Tomlinson (2011) states that a materials evaluation cannot be prescriptive and should be based on actual usage of the materials. However, it is arguably relevant to assess workbooks on their own. This comes from the fact that different teachers have different emphasis and different skills, therefore, they utilize teaching materials differently. If an analysis of the raw material is being sought for, it must be done primarily by looking into the material itself.

This framework in its entirety suggests that there are serious limitations to EFL schoolbooks, which leads to the hypothesis that EFL workbooks lack in oral communication exercises. However, Finnish workbooks in particular have not been under inspection from a satisfactory number of different viewpoints. This study will focus on the communicative exercises of two workbooks and if they adhere to a theoretical framework. What is chiefly the aim, is to see if the said exercises contain aspects of important factors of competence, such as performance, pragmatic skills and communicational strategies.

### **3 The present study**

This chapter will make explicit the research problem that is the impetus for this study. The two research questions are included in section 3.1 and a description of the gathered data and how it is to be analyzed, in section 3.2.

#### **3.1 Research problem**

One problem with assessing any schoolbooks is that they are not scientific works. This again applies to the books studied in the present thesis. In practice, it means that there is no guarantee nor any actual responsibility for the authors to make the scientifically best books available. If the books are written merely according to old books and the author's opinions, it is largely questionable whether the books will be theoretically and objectively the most advanced option for teaching. The hypothesis of the present study is that English workbooks tend to lack in oral communication exercises. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the exercises that can be found, are rudimentary in nature. Tomlinson (2011 and 2013), who assessed a multitude of English teaching materials, came to this conclusion and thus, further backed this belief. It can be considered probable that Finnish workbooks make no exception, even when The National Core Curriculum has been tuned to demand a more communicative approach in middle school English teaching. This notion comes from the presupposition adopted from Mares who stated that there is usually relatively little change in any schoolbooks' methods and objectives. Finally, the gauge of this study can be compressed into two research questions, which are:

What is the quantity of communicational activities in the two workbooks?

How are those activities structured and how do they rehearse the main topics of developing oral communication?

#### **3.2 Data and methods**

The books in question are analyzed in relation to what kind of communicative practice they offer for the students. What is meant here by communicative practice, are exercises and activities that make the students form oral output of their own. The exercises sought for must demand the students to make up at least sentences of their own production. Hence, exercises

that drill, for example, mere pronunciation are not a focal point of this study. Tomlinson (2011) describes a communicative approach as language teaching where learning is chiefly conveyed through actual usage of language. He argues that in communicative teaching, learners will “talk to learn” instead of “learning to talk”. This framework shows that the workbooks do have certain objectives to reach. The books and their specific exercises are to be inspected in relation to previous research and the books’ own objectives to see what the quality of these communicative exercises are.

The books that were chosen for this study, are *Scene 1: exercises* (2015) by Hiitti, Lumiala, Parikka, Sloan and Tolkki and *On the Go 1 workbook* (2016) by Daffue-Karsten, Haapala, Ojala, Ojala, Peuraniemi, Rappold and Semi. These two books were picked because of two reasons. Firstly, they are from two different publishers: *Scene* from Otava and *On the Go* from SanomaPro. These are the main publishers for Finnish nation-wide workbook series. It was deemed appropriate to encompass an example of the supply of both, to see if there are meaningful differences. Secondly, analyzing just one book could possibly be too narrow an angle. Seeing what at least two different books have to offer allows for a better understanding of the bigger picture, which is communication in Finnish workbooks of English.

In the present study, the found activities and exercises are assessed quantitatively and qualitatively. Naturally, this can happen only after the bulk of the exercises is assessed, to find out what exercises fit the description. A percentage of the exercises of interest will be calculated to know, technically, the quantity and proportion of the said exercises. To make the books’ evaluation and comparison practical, the found exercises will be divided into categories that best describe their qualities. The categories will then be gone through with qualitative content analysis. It should be noted here that this method is highly interpretative, the data is analyzed without an overtly prescribed approach, but one that discusses the data and its significance. The essence of this latter method is to evaluate, whether the activities are a viable incentive for oral communication.

## 4 Results and Discussion

In this Chapter, the findings and their meaning will be put under inspection. Figure 1 shows the exercises divided into categories and creates a visual comparison between the two books. First, in 4.1 the data will be looked into quantitatively and second, in 4.2, in relation to its quality and meaning. This will, in practice, mean that the research questions underlying this study will be answered in these sections, the first in 4.1 and the second, more interpretive approach will be answered in 4.2. What underlies the Chapter 4 with the research questions is the presumption that the books would be utilized, in the classroom, in a straightforward manner and gone through systematically, with the hierarchy of all exercises and topics being evenly distributed. This notion is taken up with criticism in Chapter 5.

### 4.1 Quantities of communicational exercises in the primary sources

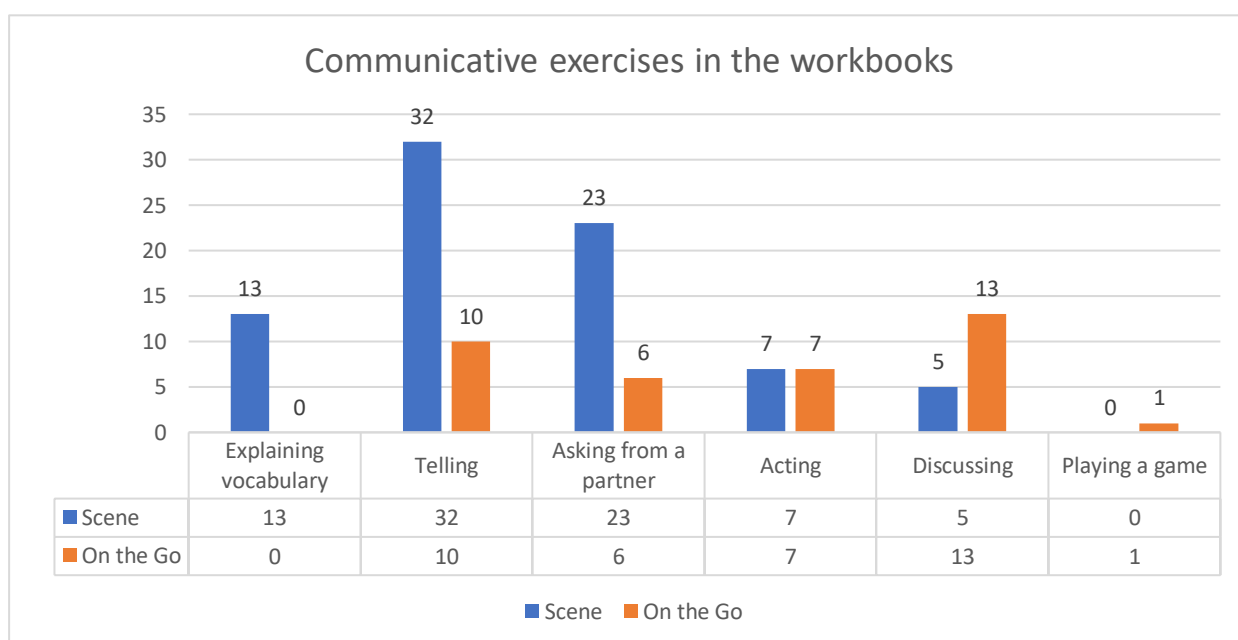


Figure 1. Exercises in the data divided to categories and compared

To understand Figure 1 and so, the books, here are the most prominent pieces of data. Figure 1 shows the oral exercises after the categorization and visually represents the differences of the books in this respect. It also helps with putting the size of any category into perspective. The following will further explain the constitution of the workbooks. In *Scene*, the total number of communicational exercises is 81, with the total number of exercises in general being 576. This makes up for a total percentage of communicational exercises at 14 %. *On the Go* has 37 communicational exercises among its total tally of 376 exercises. This makes up for a total percentage of communicational exercises at 10 %.

The final difference of oral communicational activities is circa four percentage points, so that *Scene* has more of them, proportionally, than *On the Go*. Considering amounts, there are 44 communicational exercises more in *Scene*, compared to the total 37 of *On the Go*. As to the difference between the representations of oral exercises, the four percentage points might sound small, but in reality, the amount of these exercises is more than doubled from *On the Go* to *Scene*. This has an unquestionable effect on the students' exposure to oral communication if the books are presumed to be gone through systematically. Some factors affecting these outcomes need to be mentioned in relation to this difference. Firstly, there are 200 exercises less in *On the Go* than in *Scene* in total, meaning that there is a 53 % increase in the number of exercises from *On the Go* to *Scene*. This begs the question of how the books are formatted. The two books both contain six units, which include word lists, from a text chapter from the textbook and exercises that match the topics and educational objectives, such as grammar lessons, of the chapter. The books are thus similarly formatted when looked on at a superficial level. However, *On the Go* consists of 208 pages, which is 44 more pages than in *Scene*. Still, as mentioned, the differences in the quantities of exercises are reversed and seemingly vast. This guides inspection towards a more qualitative approach, which will be presented in section 4.2.

The communicational exercises in the workbooks can be divided into six distinct categories by their usage. However, the books include only five categories each. This categorization is not based on any specific guidelines or scientific framework; it is born out of necessity for order and the categorization is distinct enough when looking at the actual exercises that it does them justice. Moreover, there were the same features in the exercises of both primary sources, which

led to the said categorization. The categories explained are thus: “Explaining vocabulary”, which means explaining single words that the student comes across in the texts and exercises to a partner. This category is relevant in *Scene* with 13 exercises, yet it is non-existent in *On the Go*. “Telling” is the biggest category by far in *Scene* and well represented in *On the Go*. These exercises invoke the students to tell about objects, opinions and their own thoughts relating to exercises done, to name a few. “Asking from a partner” is a category strongly visible in both books and in this, the students usually conclude first another exercise that demands them looking for answers in a text. Then they are to ask their partner related questions. “Acting” is the most complex category with a wide range of different acting sequences, it allows for free interaction and simultaneously gives the students something concrete to build and format the communication on. As is shown in Figure 1, both books feature seven acting exercises, which is a much greater proportion for *On the Go*. “Discussing” is evidently one of the goals of language teaching and could hence be easily seen as the ultimate exercise type in a learning material. In this category, the students can discuss freely around a topic. These situations are foreshadowed with more constructed exercises to give students resources to speak about the topics. “Playing a game” is a category, consisting of one game in “*On the Go*”, with a game that requires teamwork, reaction, asking questions and answering them.

The first striking observation about the primary sources is their unbalanced amount of exercises altogether. This is mostly explained by the layouts of the books: *Scene* formulates its exercises so that a single exercise often consists of several subparts, marked by a), b), c) and so on. This is not the case with *On the Go*, where exercises tend to be more distinctly parted. Due to this phenomenon, the books evade quantitative analysis and plain numbers do not suffice for a thorough analysis. The division of exercises into categories will be explained in the next section along with one of the found exercise categories. After that, the remaining categorizations will be made explicit.

## 4.2 Quality of the found communicative exercises

In *Scene*, one could find for instance an exercise divided to four parts with “a)” assigning the student with writing questions to an imaginary family from the textbook and then in “b)” they would continue and ask these questions from their partner. The partner would then proceed to answer the questions. This exercise type is present, in *Scene* especially, with a good 23 “Asking from a partner” exercises. This category is not as evident in *On the Go*, which features six of

these exercises. The exercises where one must ask questions from a partner and they in turn answer those has a few advantages: the learner gets to format their questions, i.e. their thoughts, first and then ask them, combining written and oral rehearsal. The respondent is also in a good situation as they can, if needed, often use the written framework as help. The question-giver in these exercises also gets to listen to the answers and may learn about reacting in this passive way as well. When the roles are reversed, both participants get rehearsal in both roles, actively and passively. The questions are often formatted according to some of the earlier material, so they contain vocabulary and grammar that has been rehearsed already. This way the questions and their answers could become relatively elaborate. In terms of competence and performance, this exercise type helps learners in both producing and interpreting language. As to pragmatics, there is some activity in those aspects also; the learner needs to fit their answers with the questions and the other way around. This ongoing negotiation trains one's situational awareness and relations between utterances. Hence, pragmatic skills are not neglected, keeping in mind the relative amount of "Asking from a partner" exercises.

"Explaining vocabulary" is a rudimental exercise type, commonly found in *Scene*. In these exercises, the learner explains wordlist items from the text or other key words to a partner. Despite its simplicity, this category offers an insight to the different meanings and usages of words. It enhances both participants' performance and larger competence considering vocabulary. In addition, as the learners negotiate different uses for the vocabulary items, they create at least superficial communication/recollection strategies with the words. This aspect might not come up this evidently in the actual exercises, but it is something that the teacher might be capable of emphasizing and improving upon.

"Telling" is a category that is featured heavily in both primary sources, although for *On the Go* this means a mere 10 exercises. Compared with the two previous categories, "Telling" contains close to no reaction or negotiation of meaning. It closely resembles "Asking from a partner", but these exercises are constituted of one partner at a time telling about their ideas on a topic. Possible prompts include telling about plans for the summer or one's hobbies. Thus, these exercises do not train pragmatic or social skills and are solely about formatting one's performance. *Scene* often features "Show and tell"-activities where the learner must talk about a concrete object, for instance, a photograph of them as a child. These activities help in making the language output concrete and shows connections between the language and everyday

objects. It is also useful to have these self-centered sequences for the learner because they get to practice the newly acquired vocabulary and grammar items in a safe way. However, one-sided telling of details does not fully back up the wholesome objectives of learning to communicate. The performance that is sought from the learner completing these “Telling”-activities can be seen, on one hand, as extremely productive in terms of output but on the other hand, as regressive and old-fashioned, in terms of communication in a broader sense.

“Acting” is possibly the most prominent category among the communicative exercises. This category features exercises that are freely formatted but do give a context for the situation. *On the Go* has, for example, an acting prompt where two learners imagine themselves being in a fast food restaurant. This kind of practice has a multitude of advantages to it: it gives the learners different roles that make them react and negotiate meanings throughout the activity. Moreover, it gives a context and an objective for the intercourse; learners must find ways to make that objective achievable and they get to practice functioning in an environment they will probably face in their future life. There is no mention of scripting these exercises beforehand in any of the books, so apparently they ought to be done with improvisation. Possibly doing some planning could help make the conversations more elaborate. This type of exercise trains the participants’ skills in performance, competence, pragmatic skills and even more broadly, in their social skills.

“Playing a game” gets an honorary mention with being featured once in *On the Go*. This game requires the players to work in groups and one at a time complete different tasks. Some of these tasks do not involve language: “Open your mouth and touch your left knee.” Some, on the other hand, do: “What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word ‘storm’?” (Which the other players answer). This exercise invokes asking and answering, shifting of communicational roles and reacting. It is, however of rudimentary content value: the competence and performance required are mostly word-level.

“Discussing” gives the learners plenty of choice. There are different kinds of discussions in the two books: from prescribed ones to those where all the responsibility of creating a discussion is left to the learners. Prescribed discussions are mostly A/B –exercises, where two participants



take turns and translate a ready-made discussion from Finnish to English. These discussions are straightforward in a way that real-life intercourse scarcely is. There is no negotiation of meaning, which constitutes to no reacting, because the answers are there already. Taking turns one at a time with no overlapping and no need to listen to the other person in the discussion take away the pragmatic and social aspects of oral communication. However, there are also prompts for free discussion in both books. In these, a context and topic is given, along with some preparatory questions or tips to help. These free discussions of course pose a problem: are the students fluent enough to handle the situation. With the help of some guidelines and the topic with its conventions being familiar from earlier activities, it is possible to challenge the learners to a stretch of conversation. Doing this helps them build an idea of their own competence. It will also scale their pragmatic and social skills and might highlight the importance of meaning negotiation.

After the categorization of the oral exercises, it remains to be discussed what the structuring of the books is like. Furthermore, the results are brought together to illustrate how the exercises adhere to the scientific framework described in Chapter 2. The said framework is by no means exhaustive, but performance, pragmatic skills and communicational strategies do form an overarching combination of skills that are quintessential to any communication. Overall, *Scene* and *On the Go* share practically the same categories of exercises. However, the variation in these activities is not extensive and, as implied within the category paragraphs, the use of communicational strategies is not focalized. Applying these strategies naturally does exist in some exercises, such as “Asking from a partner”, because in these discussions it is possible to negotiate meanings and for instance, rephrase questions based on the counterpart’s comprehension. Still, the exposure is insignificant in both quantity and quality. Practically, this means that a great deal of building oral competence is non-existent in the data, which could be considered alarming. Communication strategies, as argued by Hietala (2013), Tahkola (2015) and Tomlinson (2013), and discussed in Chapter 2, form a backbone for oral competence because they give the participant tools for meaning negotiation, although their knowledge of vocabulary or other structural elements were limited.

Continuing with the general theme of meaning negotiation, it can be argued that the supply of the found exercises does not meet the demand. Definitely, the National Core Curriculum’s

intention of making the students speak English whenever possible is not actively enforced in the books. Moreover, real-life conversation has unique characteristics, as introduced in Chapter 2, for instance, gathering information about one's counterpart in the conversation. This type of elaborate negotiation and thinking is, however, not demanded in most of the exercises. Only "Discussing" and "Acting" have this kind of content. Naturally, it is reasonable to divide building elaborate competence into manageable parts, but at least some resemblance to real-life instances ought to be represented.

What is positive, compared to the deficit in communication strategies, is the representation of building oral performance, with respect to the content of their language usage. In the exercises that rehearse this collection of skills, the students are given extensive information and practice around a topic in other exercises and then put to execute this learned skill in an oral form. This way, the students' knowhow of addressing the topics and merging that with structures of language is strengthened before and after the oral exercises. Generally, the structuring of both books is successful in binding the oral exercises together with the other material.

All in all, the overall picture of developing oral competence in *Scene* and *On the Go* can be regarded as unsatisfactory. As a whole, the material studied does not offer much exposure to life-like instances of language usage. The exposure that does exist, though, is not versatile and does not encompass a broad supply of rehearsing pragmatic skills or communication strategies. Again, it should be mentioned that *Scene* and *On the Go* are not identical, as *Scene* has a vastly larger representation of oral communication exercises. When pondering this aspect, some consideration still ought to be given to the differing structures of the books: as mentioned, *Scene* divides its exercises into smaller subsections, which in turn raises the probable amount of these subsections, compared to undivided exercises, which *On the Go* hosts. It is possible that in a classroom setting, the subsections of *Scene* are taken up with less dedication than the more sizeable appearing exercises of *On the Go*. This is however, a future research viewpoint and on the basis of the present study, it remains as pure speculation.

## 5 Conclusion

The analyzed workbooks showed plenty of variation between them. As mentioned in “Data and methods”, the books are from two main Finnish publication houses, which explains this division to an extent. Proportions and amounts of different exercise types were drastically differing. It is probable that these books are not able to offer a sufficient exposure to spoken communication. As Ahola-Houtsonen (2013), Luomala (2010) and Tomlinson (2013) all argued, this was to be expected in English teaching materials. Nevertheless, doing substantially little oral communication seems unfair to the students. It can also be considered unfair that two widely used workbooks are so different, with especially *On the Go* providing alarmingly few chances to better oral communication, which is not to say that *Scene* would be satisfactory in this sense either.

As to the categories and their contents: while it is promising to see that, for example, *On the Go* features “Discussions” amongst its exercises so that they form nearly one third of all the communicative exercises, it is safe to say that doing 13 discussions a year is not much. With respect to exposure, it is equivalent to a person’s daily encounters in their native language, or not even that. Again, it is reasonable to criticize the standpoint of this study and state that a teacher is able to lead the students into discussions in English without a workbook. However, referring to Vellenga (2004) and the discussion earlier, the workbook is the de facto main tool of teaching and often shapes the very realization of curricula. Thus, it cannot contain a largely unsatisfactory representation of oral communication. What was evident after analyzing the different categories, was that only a few exercises that would invoke two-way meaning negotiation from the participants. Several exercises do offer meaning negotiation, for instance, “Explain vocabulary”, but that negotiation is merely for the one speaker. “Acting” and some of the “Discussion” exercises are the best examples of learning to communicate orally in these books, as illustrated in Chapter 4.

As was contemplated by Ahola-Houtsonen (2013), Luomala (2010) and Tomlinson (2013), the written form of language prevails over spoken communication in the workbooks, although the learning goals might or should have a reversed notion. Furthermore, as to the National Core Curriculum’s (2014) ideal of the students using English whenever possible in the classroom,

that objective is arguably hindered by the absence of spoken language prompts. As Ahola-Houtsonen and Tomlinson further concluded, there are major differences between the two channels of communication and as oral competence includes its own specific guidelines, mainly being exposed to written language can hinder the adaptation of those.

Research in the future could find out if other workbooks share the same kind of representation of oral communication. It would also be most sensible to research the effect of oral rehearsal to perceived or measured oral performance outside the classroom and gain insight into how important it would be to have more oral input and output in English between the students. Also, for the sake of reliability, Finnish middle school teachers should be asked, how they address the topic of oral communication in their teaching, as was pointed out by Tomlinson (2011). The gauge of the present study is, regrettably, insufficient with respect to actual usage of workbooks and other resources. As was discussed in section 3.1, the fact that workbooks are essentially authored unscientifically makes it harder to assess them. The way these materials are made also affects the results of the present study. This is because, now that it is concluded that the books do not thoroughly follow a scientific framework of oral communication teaching, it could be argued that it is, in fact, no result at all. As was hypothesized and discussed within the theoretical framework, the absence of things like a broad exposure, multi-sided meaning negotiation or teaching communication strategies are not well represented in the books. Future emphasis on objectively and scientifically labored teaching materials is the goal to which this study has hopefully contributed.

## Bibliography

### Primary sources

Daffue-Karsten, L., Haapala, M., Ojala, A-M., Ojala, S., Peuraniemi, J., Rappold, P. and Semi, L. (2016). *On the Go 1 Workbook*. Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.

Hiitti, A., Lumiala, J., Parikka, E., Sloan, C. and Tolkki, N. (2015). *Scene 1 Exercises*. Helsinki: Otava.

### Secondary sources

Aebersold, J. A. and Field, M. L. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second language classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ahola-Houtsonen, T. (2013). *Learning and teaching English speaking skills at upper secondary school: The students' and the teachers' views* [online].

Azarnoosh, M., Zeraatpishe, M., Faravani, A. and Kargozari, H. R. (2016). *Issues in Materials Development*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Hietala, J. (2015). *Finnish upper secondary school EFL teachers' satisfaction with current textbooks* [online].

Hietala, M. (2013). *Practicing oral skills in Finnish upper secondary school EFL textbooks* [online].

Luomala, P. (2010). *Pragmatics exercises and pragmatic metalanguage in English united textbook series for Finnish upper secondary school* [online].

Mares, C. (2003). *Writing a coursebook*. In B. Tomlinson (ed.), *Developing materials for language teaching*. London: Continuum. 130-140.

*Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet*. (2014). The Finnish National Board of Education.

Tomlinson, B. (2013). *Applied linguistics and materials development*. London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Tomlinson, B. (2011). *Materials development in language teaching*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, 2011.

Vellenga, H. (2004). *Learning Pragmatics from ESL & EFL Textbooks: How Likely?* TESL-EJ, Vol 8(2).

Verschueren, J. & Östman, J. (2009). *Key notions for pragmatics*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford U.P.