

GO FOR IT!:
English-speaking world in English textbooks

Bachelor's thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Englanti tunnetaan maailmalla lingua francana, ja se on Suomessa myös usein ensimmäinen koulussa opetettava vieras kieli, nykyään ala-asteen toiselta luokalta lähtien. Aiempien tutkimusten mukaan oppikirjat tarjoavat pohjan opetukselle, ja näin ollen niiden sisältö määrää suurilta osin, mitä oppilaat oppivat tunneilla. Kulttuuri on myös tärkeä tekijä kielenopetuksessa, ja siksi tämän tutkimuksen aiheena on englanninkielisten maiden kulttuurien esiintyminen ala-asteen Go for it! -oppikirjoissa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää, mitkä englanninkieliset kulttuurit ovat esillä kirjoissa ja millaista kulttuuritietoa kirjat välittävät. Tavoitteena oli myös selvittää, saavatko tietyt kulttuurit enemmän huomiota kuin toiset. Tutkimusmenetelmänä käytettiin laadullista sisällönanalyysia. Jokaista kolmea oppikirjaa tarkasteltiin yksitellen, sekä kirjalliset että kuvalliset kulttuuriviittaukset kirjattiin ylös ja lajiteltiin kategorioihin aihealueen perusteella.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että vaikka suomalaiset oppikirjat yleensä painottavat brittiläistä kulttuuria, Go for it!- sarja jakaa monipuolista tietoa kaikista suurimmista englantia ensimmäisenä kielenä puhuvista maista, eli Yhdysvalloista, Yhdistyneestä Kuningaskunnasta, Australiasta, Kanadasta ja Uudesta-Seelannista. Osa kulttuurisisällöstä oli suoranaista, esimerkiksi tekstin, valokuvien ja tietovisojen muodossa esitettyä, mutta osa sulautettuna kirjan kuvitukseen. Kirja kattaa kulttuuritietoutta urheilusta taiteisiin, historiaan ja legendoihin. Huomattavaa on, että kulttuuritietoudesta tulee syvempää ja rikkaampaa samaan tahtiin, kun oppijoiden kielitaito kehittyy. Koska tämä tutkimus rajoittui vain tekstikirjoihin, tulevaisuudessa olisikin syytä tutkia, millaista kulttuurisisältöä sarjan muut osat, kuten tehtäväkirja ja digiopetusmateriaali, tarjoavat.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

English, with over 1,500 million speakers worldwide is known as a lingua franca, a common language between nations (Crystal 2003). It is often the first foreign language taught in Finnish schools, now usually starting from the second or third grade of elementary school. In addition to the language skills, in English classes students are "familiarized with linguistic and cultural diversity and the distribution of English" (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014: 237). Students are also taught to appreciate different languages and cultures. One of the aims is also to raise the students' interest towards the cultural diversity. Because the culture aspect is widely visible in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, I have chosen to examine how the cultural content is presented in English textbooks. According to studies, textbooks often form the backbone of language teaching and that is why it is crucial to analyze what is in them.

Lähdesmäki (2004: 279-280) points out that culture has always been a part of language teaching, but during the last 20 years, teaching of the cultural knowledge has changed from explicit to implicit. She has also drawn attention to the fact that whereas before the cultural knowledge had its own sections, now it is often embedded in the texts and activities. Learning about cultures is important because, as Kaikkonen (2000: 52) describes, learning about languages and cultures is a two-way process. While students learn about other languages and cultures, they become aware of their own language and culture. Moreover, they may notice some linguistic or cultural features that are such a normal part of their daily routines that one does not even recognize them.

I chose to examine the newly published *Gor for it!* -textbooks from grades 3 to 5. There has been much research on culture in EFL textbooks, but it mostly focuses on the globally produced textbooks (see e.g. Weninger and Kiss (2014)). Therefore, this textbook series was chosen because it is fairly new and designed to fit the demands of the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (SanomaPro 2016), hence, it should represent the current state of the

cultural education in Finland. The aim of the present study was to get a picture of which English-speaking cultures are presented to Finnish elementary school students and, therefore, of which cultures they gain knowledge during the first years of their English studies.

2 TEXTBOOKS IN EFL

Textbooks have an essential role in EFL teaching in Finland; thus, they are an important part of students' learning process. National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (Finnish National Board of Education 2016) does not define textbooks to be used as a part of teaching, but research reveals that 98% of foreign language teachers in basic education rely on textbooks when planning their lessons (Luukka, Pöyhönen, Huhta, Taalas, Tarnanen, Keränen 2008: 94). Moreover, according to Pitkänen-Huhta (2003: 12), the textbooks offer the very base for language teaching. However, it is good to keep in mind that textbooks alone do not tell us what happens in a classroom, because teachers can use materials in different manners, and publishers offer various other materials alongside the textbooks.

Lähdesmäki (2004: 271) describes English textbooks aptly as supermarket carts where one throws at least milk, bread and couple other basic groceries one cannot live without. In addition to that, one throws into the cart some varied delicacies. In other words, textbooks include from chapter to chapter the same basic items with some extra items around them. Based on the author's experience, English textbooks made for Finnish elementary schools usually include storybook-like texts with lots of pictures, vocabularies which are often presented through pictures and then there is often cultural knowledge, either explicitly or implicitly, embedded in the stories or the activities. These elements could be described as those basic groceries. In addition to these, as the varied delicacies, the books often offer games, comic strips, songs and plays. With this material, the teachers use their consideration on how to use these elements.

As mentioned earlier, the textbooks regulate the lessons, activities, homework and the use of time in lessons in general. Research that was conducted in a secondary school EFL classroom in

Finland by Pitkänen-Huhta (2003) shows that both the teachers and the students reported that most of the texts read during the lessons are from textbooks. They both say that textbook texts were read often, and other texts sometimes. Consequently, textbooks have a great power, because they emphasize certain elements and leave others for lesser notion (Luukka et al. 2008: 64).

Nevertheless, Finnish learners are in an exceptional position, considering that the majority of the schoolbooks used in Finland are also planned in Finland and especially for Finnish students, instead of using global materials. López-Barrios and Villanueva de Debat (2014 :41) divide the advantages of locally designed teaching materials into four categories: contextualisation, linguistic contrasts, intercultural reflection, and facilitation of learning. The most important of these categories regarding to the theme of this thesis are contextualisation, meaning using references to the characters and phenomena familiar to the learners, and intercultural reflection, which means using the similarities and differences of the culture of the learners and the target culture as a guide examining the target cultures.

Textbooks have, however, sometimes been criticized as well. According to Lähdesmäki (2004: 271), teachers often find them “frustrating, annoying and dictatorial”. In addition to that, Hutchinson and Torres have expressed (1994: 315) that textbooks tend to make teachers inactive. They discuss how textbooks offer all the information the teachers need and give instructions on what to teach and how to teach. Therefore, there is a chance, that teachers may passively follow the textbooks without using their autonomy in the classroom and blindly trust the textbook designers’ judgement on what is important.

Likewise many others, Alptekin (1992) and Gray (2000) have done research concerning the role of textbooks in EFL; moreover, the role of culture in EFL textbooks. According to Alptekin (1992: 138), the textbook writers often, consciously or not, spread their own views and beliefs of the target cultures. Both Alptekin (1992) and Gray (2000) raise that the biggest problem with cultural content in EFL materials is the stereotypic way the cultures are represented. Gray’s survey (2000: 277) also reveals that many teachers find that EFL materials may include culturally uncomfortable topics, such as the drinking culture in Britain. For example, in cultures where alcohol is a taboo, this theme might be found even offending. On that account, it is important that

teachers still have their right to influence what they choose to highlight and what to give less attention.

3 CULTURE

3.1 Definition of culture

One of the key elements in this present study is the definition of culture. Culture is hard to define because it has different meanings in different contexts, and it can be seen from different perspectives. Simplified, culture is the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by language, habits and routines, religion, cuisine, music and arts. In general, culture can be described as “ways of people” (Valdes 1990: 21).

According to Hofstede (2005: 3), culture is patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that are learnt through one’s life. As a source for this learning is the environment one lives in, as for instance family, school, workplace and other communities around one. Some view culture as education, arts and literature only, but according to Hofstede’s theory, culture is more than just enlightening the mind. In line with Valdes’ view above, Hofstede describes culture as the everyday things people do, such as greeting, eating and gesticulation. These habits that are learnt from the social surroundings are common, even though the people’s personalities differ. As Hofstede (2005: 5) states, personalities and the ability to feel emotions do not differ between the cultures, but the way people express these emotions is determined by the cultural background.

Hofstede (2005: 7) identifies several layers of cultural differences. First, elements like words, gestures, objects and the way people dress form the outer layer. These elements are the most visible outward, but also continually changing. Secondly, the middle layer consists of the known people that represent something important in the certain culture, as for example influential athletes or politicians. Rituals, which, in essence, means the socially important habits, practices

and ceremonies, are also part of this middle layer. Lastly, the core layer forms of the cultural values; of the ideas and qualities that the culture holds in high regard. The core layer is the base of the cultural identity, but difficult to discover from the outside.

3.1.1 The role of culture in EFL

According to Kaikkonen (2000: 51), culture is always a part of foreign language teaching. Therefore, it should not be considered as one section of teaching, but rather as an integral component of everything that happens in a language classroom. Valdes (1990: 21) also points out that the culture may not be the theme of the lesson, but the knowledge is still there and therefore the students learn incidentally. This leaves also space for students' own thoughts and questions.

The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (National Board of Education 2016) emphasizes the importance of language and culture education as a part language teaching. It also presents that the students' interest in the linguistic and cultural diversity and the surrounding world should be supported, while they are also encouraged to communicate in authentic environment (National Board of Education 2016: 236-237). In addition to that, students are not only taught to appreciate different cultures. but they are also encouraged to think of their own language and cultural background. As National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (National Board of Education 2016: 237) states, one of the aims of English teaching is "to motivate the pupil to value his or her own linguistic and cultural background and the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world and to encounter people without prejudices."

Attitudes towards language can also be seen as a part of language teaching. Positive attitude towards the language and the cultures around it mediates from teacher to the students. Textbooks also convey an attitude by what is chosen to be in the book and what is left out (Lähdesmäki 2004: 272). This can be, for example, that some cultures are highlighted, and others omitted, or even that the whole culture aspect is forgotten or barely present. Cultural education and language awareness also play an important role in motivating students. It is important for students to see the authenticity of the language, and bind that together with the cultures around it. In these

circumstances the language is not just a discrete object one has to learn, but something that has a value when navigating in this multicultural world.

3.1.2 English-speaking cultures

Even though English is widely understood as a global language, this study will focus on the English-speaking cultures that use English as their primary language. This focus is based on Kachru's model of "Three Circles of English" (Kachru 1992, cited in Bolton 2006: 291). In this model, the inner circle refers to the communities where English is used as the first language, in other words Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States and New Zealand. The outer circle refers to the societies where English is widely used, but shares its position with another language. In these countries English may have an official status, but is due to the societies multiculturalism, it is only one among the others. Nigeria, India and Singapore are examples of Outer circle countries. The expanding circle refers to the societies where English is used as an international or foreign language. Countries in this circle include for example China, Japan and Korea. In addition, Finland could be included in the Expanding Circle.

The concept of these three circles was first created to categorize the origins of world Englishes (Bolton 2006: 293), but the categorization is still valid and therefore this study will be based on the Inner Circle's cultures. In many contexts United Kingdom is considered as one unit, but in this study, the Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English cultures will be seen as separate due to organization of the materials this study is based on.

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

4.1 The aim and the research questions

This present study focuses on the cultural knowledge the English textbooks offer for students. Moreover, this study focuses especially on locally produced textbooks that are published in Finland and used in Finnish basic education. The aim of this study is to find out which of the English-speaking countries are represented in English textbooks and what semiotic resources are used to refer to these cultures. As it was mentioned earlier, the English language can be seen as a lingua franca (Crystal 2003), but the norm is that English textbooks often focus on the cultures of the Inner Circle (Kachru 1992, cited in Bolton 2006: 291). Based on the author's experience, the assumption is that also in this series at least American and British cultures will be present.

Even though the textbooks often offer the very base for teaching, this study does not reveal what the students are actually learning in class, but only what the *Go for it!*- textbooks itself have to offer. The research questions are as follows:

1. Which English-speaking cultures are represented in the textbooks?
2. What kind of cultural knowledge is presented?
3. Are some cultures given more emphasis than others? Which ones?

4.2 The data

The data was collected by examining *Go for it! 3* (Kanervo, Laukkarinen, Paakkinen, Sarlin and Westlake 2016), *Go for it! 4* (Kamervo et al. 2015) and *Go for it! 5* (Kanervo et al. 2017) - textbooks which were published by a Finnish publisher Sanoma Pro Oy in 2015 and 2016. This material was chosen to be analyzed because it is newly published and therefore it provides recent information of what kind of cultural knowledge the Finnish elementary students are offered. As mentioned earlier, in Finland the school books are mostly designed and published in Finland, and

the same applies for the *Go for it!*- series. Moreover, the books were designed by a Finnish task force Pauliina Kanervo, Anna-Maija Laukkarinen, Jouni Paakkinen, Heli Sarlin and Paul Westlake, and formed to fit the demands of the new National Core Curriculum 2014 (SanomaPro 2016). Because the books are planned especially for Finnish schools, the books have hints referring to Finland and Finnish culture as well. Some examples of this are the Finnish stand-up comedians Sami Hedberg and Ismo Leikola performing in the stand-up show (*Go for it! 4*: 63) and the conversation of the weather in Finland (*Go for it! 3*: 18).

Even though the *Go for it!* -series offers also exercise books and online-materials, because of the limitations of the study, only the textbooks were examined as it can be presumed that the greater part of cultural information comes from the pictures and the stories that these textbooks include. Moreover, textbooks generally create the cultural context that the other materials are built on. It is, however, good to keep in mind, that both, the exercise books and the online-materials may offer some additional cultural knowledge as well.

Each textbook in the *Go for it!* series starts with a foreword page which introduces the reader to the book's structure. Textbooks are divided into five units, which all consist of three story-like texts. In addition to the texts, the units include vocabularies, games, songs, act- exercises and comic strips. Some of the units also introduce *Easy street & Fast lane*- texts which offer the teacher a chance to differentiate.

Go for it! -series tells a story of an English family, the Nutties. The Nutty Family includes mom Rosemary, dad Herb and their children Coco, Hazel and Chip. Also, their cats Salt, Mustard, Pepper and Chilli are also an important part of the family. In addition to the nuclear family, their grandparents Basil and Honey live with them. In the beginning of the *Go for it! 3*, the family lives in London, England and through that, the book opens the door to the English culture. As the story goes on, The Nutties take part on a competition called Britain's Fastest Family, which results in them to win a year in the USA. There, in *Go for it! 4*, the Nutty family becomes familiar with the American lifestyle and explores a variety of different areas in a form of a road trip. After that, in the beginning of *Go for it! 5*, on their way back to England they notice their cats have gone missing and when looking for them, they end up traveling around Australia,

Canada, New Zealand, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Hence, the *Go for it! 4 & Go for it! 5* take the student on a trip around the English-speaking world.

4.3 Method of analysis

As a method of analysis, I used content analysis. This method was chosen considering the aim of the study and because it establishes the opportunity for studying the textbook closely. According to Krippendorff (2013: 24), content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use”. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002 :87) also point out that content analysis does not usually aim to make generalizations but rather to describe and understand a certain phenomenon. As reported by Krippendorff (2013: 35), content analysis is based on a text that is surveyed with the help of a research question from a certain context. He also explains that the content analysis is shaped by the researcher’s former knowledge of the topic when the text is studied to find the inferences that are expected to answer the research questions. Finally, he emphasizes the importance of validating the meaning of the findings.

With these guidelines, I started the process of analysis by browsing the books to get an overall picture of the cultural content. With the help of this information, I created the categories that will be introduced in Chapter 5. While examining the books throughout, I made notes and organized the content into the appropriate categories. Each textbook was examined individually, and notes were made on the similar manner about each book. As mentioned earlier, Lähdesmäki (2004: 279-280) points out that the cultural knowledge is often embedded in the texts and activities, and therefore, both the texts and pictures were considered when conducting the analysis.

5 ANALYSIS

In this chapter the findings of cultural content are categorized and analyzed. The categories were created based on the cultural content found in the books and formed to provide a clear and varied presentation of different cultural aspects.

As mentioned in 4.3, the books were analyzed one by one in a similar manner, and the categories were created in relation to the findings. Categories are as follows:

1. *Vocabulary*: takes into consideration which variants of words were used, in other words, if the authors have decided to use the American, British or another variant. Differences in spelling were also recognized.
2. *People*: both authentic people and created characters were included in the analysis. Characters' cultural background was defined by their appearance, language use and location.
3. *Places and tourism*: countries, cities, towns, tourist attractions and sights mentioned in the books.
4. *Products and everyday life*: typical culture-related products will be introduced, as well as the other features that relate to the way of life of a certain culture, for example the traditional dishes.
5. *Symbols*: flags, maps and languages that are used were taken into account, as well as units of measurements and currencies.
6. *Art and sports*: both sport teams and sports in general were considered, even the less common ones. Concerning the arts, everything from stand-up comedy to literary was favored.
7. *History, Legends and Practices*: covers references to historical events, celebrations, groups of people and legends.

In this paper, the *Go for it!* – books will be referred to as *G3*, *G4* and *G5*, where the number stands for the number of the book. For example, *Go for it! 3*, is abbreviated to *G3*.

5.1 Vocabulary

The British vocabulary prevails throughout the series, and so does the British spelling as for example in the words *colour* (G3: 14, G4: 20) and *chilli* (G3: 39). Mostly the texts offer the British versions of words, as for instance of words *candyfloss* (G3: 26), *lift* (G4: 21), *autumn* (G4: 67) and *plaster* (G5: 38), whereas in American English their equivalents *cotton candy*, *elevator*, *fall* and *bandage* would be used.

However, some differences between American and British vocabulary are introduced and even discussed in texts. For example, when the Nutties have a barbeque, they serve *crisps* and *lemonade*, or *chips* and *soda*, as their new American neighbor corrects them (G4: 35). The connection between the words *sneakers* and *trainers* is also introduced, as well as the confusion between the concepts of *football* and *soccer* (G4: 41).

British vocabulary is used also when the Nutty family travels through the United States, with the exception of the few words that were mentioned above. This can be partly because of the readers' skill level. If the reader were more skilled, there would probably be more references to different equivalents, but when the readers are beginners, it is clearer to stay with just one variant. However, it is not clear why this one variant is the most often British English. In this textbook series it can be because the main characters are British, but in a broader perspective the reason can be the prestige of British English in Finnish education, or that British English is considered to be the oldest and purest form of English, and other variants are then drawn from that.

5.2 People

While the books tell a story about the Nutty family, it introduces various other people and cultures around the world. Nutties themselves can be seen as a modern-day family in multi-ethnic Britain. Different ethnic backgrounds are represented indirectly as Rosemary noticeably has a

darker skin color (*G4*: 8), even though that does not necessarily convey the meaning of a foreign background in the multicultural society of England.

The neighbors of Nutties, the Smith family (*G3*: 9) personifies the image of the average English family. The family consists of dad Barney and his two children, Will and Kate, not forgetting their dog Ginger. Even though the Smiths are a single parent family, they epitomize the picture of a typical English family with their orange hair, school uniforms and polite attitudes, of which the last-mentioned appears for example in the way that Kate addresses their teacher as *Sir*. Orange hair and freckles seem to be the earmark of an ordinary English person as the opponent family in the Britain's Fastest Family- competition (*G3*: 109), and even the Smiths' dog, also shares these characteristics.

In *Go for it! 4* the Nutty family meets many typical American characters as for example policemen (*G4*:10), a rancher (*G4*: 87), a park ranger (*G4*: 95) and a lifeguard (*G4*: 102). First of all, the policemen show up when the Nutties drive on the wrong side of the road, which in itself is a reference to the difference between American and British cultures. That occurrence gives a good example of how everything is done bigger in the USA when not only one, but two police patrols, and an additional helicopter comes to stop them. Secondly, both the conversation between Hazel and the rancher, and the pictorial evidence to animals around them, disclose the way the life on a ranch revolves around the livestock. For example, the rancher seems to be unaware of what one could eat, if not meat.

In this book, the Nutties' guide to American life, Rock Bush (*G4*: 22), and Hazel's friend Grant Hill (*G4*: 33) appear as a representation of the average American people. Even though Rock Bush is somewhat an odd character, his roof top house with beautiful garden may be interpreted as a portrayal of the American dream, of the place where everything is possible. He can also be seen as embodiment of the obesity in America with his diet and allergies to healthy food (*G4*: 24).

In addition to these fictional characters, the books have references for example to the current American president (*G4*:70). Correspondingly, former presidents, such as Abraham Lincoln and George Washington are mentioned when the Nutties visit Mount Rushmore (*G4*: 83). All of these

are shortly mentioned in the text, and not introduced in more depth. Also, the current president is not mentioned by name, but only as resident of the White House.

Go for it! 5, again, introduces the reader to many nationalities and cultures. The main characters in this book in addition to the Nutties, are the Spice Kids, the band that consists of four people, all from different nationalities (*G5*: 15). The name of the band may refer to the English pop group *Spice Girls*, but the group itself does not share the characteristics of this 1990's favorite. Spice kids includes Pepper from Ireland, Sally from Australia, Cherry from New Zealand and Mike from Canada, and they cross paths with the Nutties several times in the book, but their characters do not necessarily carry much cultural information of their origins. As a matter of fact, their nationalities transpire only from the flag patches attached to their instrument cases.

On the other hand, *Go for it! 5* offers more references to actual authentic people than the *Go for it! 3* and *Go for it! 4*. This is presumably, again, because of the readers' skill level. When the readers are able to understand longer texts, it is more applicable to introduce real life characters and their stories. Some examples of this are Ned Kelly (*G5*: 76), an Australian criminal whose story is presented in a form of a cartoon strip, and Annie Taylor, Bobby Leach and Nik Wallenda (*G5*: 94), who each became memorable after crossing the Niagara Falls. Their stories are introduced in short reports, except for Bobby Leach, who is introduced in a form of an interview. Photos of them at the event of crossing the Niagara Falls alongside the text bring their stories to life, and give the reader context.

All in all, the people mentioned in books are mostly fictional, but represent some characteristics of the cultures they come from. *Go for it! 3* introduces the English urban way of life and the people matching to that image, *Go for it! 4* shows the life not just in general in America, but how it from state to state, where as in *Go for it! 5*, the characters only scratch the surface of the culture of each country.

5.3 Places and tourism

Places and different tourist attractions play an important role in the *Go for it!* -series as the theme is travelling around the English-speaking world. However, the first book, *Go for it! 3*, takes place in London only, which might lead to the appearance that all the English people would live there. Furthermore, the sights of London are well on display, and the story even takes the reader to many of these places. For instance, the Nutties explore the London Eye (*G3*: 49), London Zoo (*G3*: 59) and Tower of London (*G3*: 93).

In *Go for it! 4*, the Nutties make a roadtrip through the United States, and through this the reader gets to see the diversity of the country. Knowing the size of the country, it is obvious that even though it has some common cultural features, the states themselves have a culture of their own. One great example of this is the map of the United States (*G4*: 78-79), which shows some of the cultural features linked to the states. Even though these exemplary features are quite stereotypical, like alligators and palm trees in Florida and Georgia, surfers in California and Hawaii, cowboys in Texas, they create an image that the lifestyle may vary greatly from state to state.

During *Go for it! 4*, the Nutty family visits ten different states and countless number of tourist attractions. They explore New York city (*G4*:16-17, 54-55, 57), fly to Washington D.C to see the White House (*G4*: 70), stop in the national parks of California and Wyoming (*G4*:81) and tourist around San Francisco (*G4*: 105-106) and Hollywood, Los Angeles (*G4*: 111). Unlike *Go for it! 3*, this book offers photographs besides the illustrated pictures (*G4*: 28-29, 100-101), which takes the reader closer to the context.

Go for it! 5 offers continuation to this change, as it provides numerous photographs of the places and sights from the cultures considered in this book. All in all, the book presents the historic side of Wales, Scotland and Ireland with pictures of castles, dungeons and other historic sights (*G5*: 6, 102), whereas in the chapters of New Zealand, Australia and Canada the attention is drawn to the beautiful and manifold nature and wildlife (*G5*: 45, 55, 58, 69, 71, 75, 78-79). The chapters in

regard to the latter ones are full of photographs of beautiful mountains, waterfalls, coral reefs and savannahs, as well as kangaroos, koalas and other animals.

Another progress in the series is that towards *Go for it! 5*, the books offer more and more information of the cultures instead of just mentioning some features in a written or pictorial form. This is presumably because the improvement of the readers' language skills. For example, while in *Go for it! 3*, the tourist attractions are shortly mentioned by name, in *Go for it! 4*, when the Nutties visit the Grand Canyon (*G4: 95*), there is batch of information about it as well. Moreover, in *Go for it! 5* the quiz of Ireland (*G5: 102*) summarizes interesting views and facts of Irish culture.

5.4 Products and everyday life

First of all, in *Go for it! 3*, the Nutties live in the London suburbs (*G3: 6*), in very English-looking townhouses which in itself is a classic element of English lifestyle. In addition to that, the pages are full of pictorial references to the English street scene with school uniforms (*G3: 9*), double-deckers (*G3: 18*) and black cabs (*G3: 68*). Typical English food is also featured with pictures of tea and scones (*G3: 45*), fish and chips (*G3: 68*) and English breakfast (*G3: 69*).

In *Go for it! 4* the Nutty family lives in the heart of Manhattan, which is filled with yellow cabs (*G4: 27*) and, as the main character, Hazel, says it; "everything big" (*G4: 45*). This probably refers to the enormous buildings and department stores, massive SUVs and the big portion sizes, which are all known to represent the American lifestyle. Children drive to school in yellow school buses (*G4: 26, 39*) and people eat hot dogs and apple pie (*G4: 31*). The book also shows evidence of the influence of the Latin culture in the form of Mexican food (*G4: 112*) when the Nutties visit a Mexican restaurant in Hollywood.

Go for it! 5 does not have that many references to typical products of each country. However, Haggis in Scotland (*G5: 29*) and pancakes and maple syrup in Canada (*G5: 78*) are introduced shortly through a photograph and caption. What is more, Australian hotcakes (*G5: 63*) are not

only mentioned, but have a more significant role when they are embedded in the storyline of a chapter alongside a half-page size illustrated picture.

5.5 Symbols

The most important symbols for the cultures in *Go for it!* -series are flags. This is probably because flags are the most common reference to a certain nationality and they are also seen as a symbol for a nation and the culture that the nation represents. The British flag is present often, more than 10 times in *Go for it! 3* alone. Sometimes it is displayed directly as a flag, but also as a base for an advertisement (*G3*: 97) and painted in the setting of a tv-show (*G3*: 109). In addition to that, the flag of UK is also used as a symbol for the English language in general (*G4*: 50, *G5*: 26). On the contrary, the English flag is shown only indirectly in Hazel's shirt (*G3*: 25). Other symbols for the British culture in *Go for it! 3* are the map of United Kingdom (*G3*: 1, 92) and the use of pounds as the currency (*G3*: 76).

In *Go for it! 4*, the flag of the United States is an important symbol of the country, even though it is not seen as often as the flag of UK in *Go for it! 3*. Other symbols are as well the map of the USA (*G4*: 41) and the use of dollars (*G4*: 46). One significant thing especially for Californian culture is the use of Spanish as a second official language, and that is present in the book as well (*G4*: 112) when the Nutties' Spanish waiter answers them in Spanish.

Go for it 5, yet again, offers symbols for every culture present. The flags of all the countries the Nutties visit are featured in pictures, likewise the Australian map (*G5*: 57). The maps of Wales, Scotland and Ireland are displayed already in *Go for it! 3*. From second languages, French in Canada (*G5*: 87) is well on display as whole chapter is built around the bilingual menu of a Canadian restaurant. On the contradictory, Gaelic language in Scotland is acknowledged only on a list of "strange stuff from Scotland" (*G5*: 28).

5.6 Art and sports

Of the themes in this section, sports get definitely the most attention. Especially *Go for it! 4* and *Go for it! 5* are rich in references to sport teams and different kind of sports in general. The change from *Go for it! 3* to *Go for it! 4* is significant, and it gives the image that sports play an important role in the American culture. *Go for it! 3*, on the other hand, does not include many allusions to the English arts and sports, apart from the Uriah Heep -poster on the wall of the Nutties' living room (*G3*: 38) and a summer camp advertisement which offers football and horseback riding (*G3*: 118-119).

Go for it! 4 gives introduction to various sports teams, like New York Rangers (*G4*:29) and Harlem Globetrotters (*G4*: 59). Some of the references are embedded in the pictures, but some play an actual bigger role, for example when the Nutty family plays basketball against the latter one of the teams (*G4*: 59). The book also refers to the sports and arts in the American schools where the schools are known for their after-school clubs and sports teams. American football, baseball (*G4*: 41), drama clubs and music lessons play an important role in schoolchildren's afternoons, and the Nutties are not an exception: Hazel goes to drama club and dance classes, belongs to school choir and takes guitar lessons, and Coco is a cheerleader (*G4*: 53). Of somewhat less common sports at least bull riding is on display (*G4*: 89) when the Nutties explore Texas and grand mom Honey decides to ride an electronic bull at the farmers market.

Go for it! 5 introduces at least one sport of every country the Nutties travel to. For example, they see a team practice Rugby in New Zealand (*G5*: 31), and curling and river dance in Ireland (*G5*: 102), as well as hockey in Canada (*G5*: 79) are all mentioned inside an info spread of each country. Furthermore, an illustrated picture of a surfer hints towards the appearance that surfing is popular in Australia (*G5*: 59). Bagpipes (*G5*:24, 29) is mentioned more than once as it has obviously been a relevant part of Scottish history and culture. Moreover, it shows both in the storyline when Hazel is trying to play it, and inside the "strange stuff about Scotland" spread, where it is featured with a photograph and a caption.

5.7 History, Legends and Practices

When it comes to historical events, celebrations, groups of people and legends, *Go for it! 3*, once again, has less explicit cultural knowledge available than the other two books examined. In addition to the pictorial allusion towards the Lochness monster (*G3*: 92), which actually refers to the Scottish culture, not English, the book only contains two “Keep calm and...” -posters (*G3*: 68, 93) which refer to the times of World War II, when the original posters were created to raise the Brits’ spirit (Irving 2014).

Go for it! 4, on the other hand, has references to certain holidays, such as Valentine’s day (*G4*: 62), 4th of July (*G4*: 62), Halloween (*G4*: 62), Mother’s Day (*G4*: 62) and Christmas (*G4*: 62), but they are only referred to as pictures within a calendar. For example, in July the calendar has a picture of the flag of USA and some fireworks, in May there is a picture of Rosemary holding a Mother’s Day card and in December there is a picture of Santa Claus. Even though these holidays are very important in the American culture, the book does not open them in more depth. Nonetheless, the Nutties have a barbeque with their neighbors (*G4*: 33), and this can be seen as a normal practice of the American people.

The books also have some hints towards certain indigenous groups mostly in the form of pictures. Examples of this are a teepee (*G4*: 117), which probably refers to Native Americans in the United States and an igloo (*G3*: 112), that supposedly refers to the Eskimo people. Moreover, the Hopi girl (*G4*: 94) that the Nutties meet when they venture the Grand Canyon offers another glance to the Native American culture. Two Amish people (*G4*: 88) showing in the picture from the farmers market the Nutties visit, in turn, offer a glance to the religions that are practiced in the USA.

Go for it! 5 is considerably richer in the information of legends and history behind them. For example, where the *Go for it! 3*, refers to the story of the Lochness monster only with a picture, now this book tells the outline of the story (*G5*: 23). Also, the story of the Bigfoot in Canada (*G5*:

100) and the Maori legend in New Zealand (*G5*: 47) are both told in the book as shortened versions.

6 CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that the *Go for it!* -series includes notably wide collection of cultural presentation. As the author had supposed, American and British cultures were present, but in addition to that, all of the other inner circle countries as well. Furthermore, the British culture was not seen as a block, but English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish cultures were introduced separately. None of the outer circle countries were mentioned but there might be a change to that in the still unpublished *Go for it! 6*, as the *Go for it! 5* hints towards that on its last page, asking the reader to “*Join the Nutties for Go for it! - the crazy race around the world!*” (*G5*: 121).

The cultural information the books offer is varied, from sports to history and legends, as shown in the analysis. The cultural content is also presented in multiple ways, as for example in text, pictures, photographs and quizzes. Some of the information is explicit, like the introduction of Grand Canyon (*G4*: 95), which is done through illustrated pictures and text where a park ranger familiarizes the Nutties with its depth, length and age. Contrarily, some of the cultural knowledge is presented implicitly, like considerable proportion of the pictorial references. For example, there is an indistinct poster of the Royal Family (*G3*: 68) on the wall of a store that shows on the background when the Nutties go shopping in London. These implicit references can serve as an initiator for a cultural lecture if learners discern it, or if the teacher proposes closer enlightening to the topic.

The norm has been that the cultural information in local textbooks in Finland is established on British culture (see Lindström 2015), but in this series the other cultures were taken into account sufficiently. Because the textbooks base on the Nutties travels, the reader is familiarized with all of the Inner Circle cultures. It is true, that there is a whole book devoted to both English and

American cultures, whereas the Australian, New Zealander, Canadian, Welsh, Scottish and Irish cultures are all incorporated in one book. However, due to the reader's skill level, in *Go for it! 3* the knowledge is more superficial and based largely on pictorial references whereas in *Go for it! 5* the texts are more culturally informative. Basically, this means that the series actually offers more interesting information about Australian, New Zealander, Canadian, Welsh, Scottish and Irish cultures than about English.

All in all, the culture that gains the most references in the books is the American. The whole *Go for it! 4* is devoted to the American culture, and it offers a varied presentation of the different sides of American culture from coast to coast. Again, because of the readers' skill level, *Go for it! 4* offers more written information than its predecessor, and thus has more cultural information as well. However, it must be acknowledged that the author is more familiar with the American culture than the others, and, therefore, the references to American culture may have been discovered easier.

Because of the limitations of this study, only the textbooks were examined, and therefore, it would be beneficial to study what kind of information the other *Go for it!* -materials, the exercise books and online materials, offer and if the ratio between the cultures is the same as found in this research. This research also focuses only on the three first years of the learners' English studies, and, consequently, it would be interesting to study how the presentation of cultural information changes when the language skills improve towards secondary school and upper secondary school. It should also be noted that generalizations about cultural content in all Finnish EFL textbooks cannot be made based on this research only, because, as said earlier, teachers still have their claim to use the materials in the manner they see the most suitable.

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