

# **EFL teachers' attitudes towards using teaching materials in Finland**

Bachelor's Thesis  
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract  <p>Tämä tutkielma käsittelee englannin kielen opettajien asenteita oppimateriaaleja kohtaan Suomessa. Aiemmin on tutkittu, kuinka esimerkiksi opettajien asenteet oppilaita kohtaan ovat vaikuttaneet opetukseen ja sen laatuun. Tämä tutkielma pyrkii osoittamaan vaikuttavatko opettajien asenteet oppimateriaaleja kohtaan heidän käyttämiinsä oppimateriaaleihin ja sitä kautta opetukseen.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena. Tutkimusta varten observointiin englannin kielen opetusharjoittelijan ja kokeneen englannin kielen opettajan pitämiä oppitunteja sekä haastateltiin samoja opettajia koskien heidän käyttämiään oppimateriaaleja ja asenteitaan oppimateriaaleja kohtaan. Observointien aikana todistettua oppimateriaalien käyttöä verrattiin haastatteluissa ilmi tulleisiin opettajien omiin näkemyksiin, lisäksi opettajia verrattiin toisiinsa tuoden esille kokemuksen ja koulutuksen tuomia eroja oppimateriaalien käytössä.</p> <p>Tutkimusdata kerättiin helmikuussa 2018 ja kerätty data koostui observointien aikana kirjatusta muistiinpanoista sekä opettajien haastatteluista, jotka nauhoitettiin ja myöhemmin litteroitiin. Tutkimusdataa analysoitiin soveltaen temaattista analyysia observointien muistiinpanoihin, sekä hyödyntäen vertailevan tapaustutkimuksen periaatteita vertaillen opetusharjoittelijan ja kokeneen opettajan asenteita ja opetusmateriaalien käyttöä.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että opetusharjoittelija käytti kokenutta opettajaa enemmän itse luomiaan ja muita materiaaleja kuin oppikirjaa. Kokenut opettaja sen sijaan painotti oppikirjan ja kustantajien materiaalien käyttöä. Tutkimus osoitti opettajien olevan melko tietoisia omista asenteistaan ja oppimateriaalien käytöstään. Molemmat opettajat arvioivat oman oppimateriaalien käyttönsä lähes prosenttitarkasti samaksi kuin observoinneissa todistettu materiaalien käyttö ja oppimateriaalien käyttö oli linjassa heidän nimeämiensä preferenssien kanssa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen pienen otannan ja kvalitatiivisen otteen vuoksi tutkimuksen tulokset eivät ole laajennettavissa suurempaan mittakaavaan. Tutkimusta voitaisiin laajentaa suurentamalla otantaa sekä laajentamalla sitä eri kouluihin, ottaen huomioon myös koulujen rahoituksen vaikutus oppimateriaalien käyttöön. Tutkimus tarjoaa kuitenkin tärkeää tietoa opetusharjoittelijan ja kokeneen opettajien asenteiden ja materiaalien käytön eroista sekä vallalla olevista näkemyksistä oppimateriaalien käytön suhteen.</p>	
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Previous studies have researched various aspects of language regarding teachers' attitudes and perceptions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These studies have included teachers' attitudes towards their students as well as teachers' intentions and beliefs about what students should learn and how they should learn it (Arenas 2009: 616). The studies have found that teachers' attitudes are closely related to the resulting quality of teaching. The consensus about teachers' attitudes and beliefs affecting teaching is that teachers' conscious and subconscious attitudes can affect and have affected their actions in the classroom.

Teaching and learning materials play a major role in foreign language teaching in Finland. Luukka et al. (2008: 95) report how the majority of foreign language teachers have named textbooks the most important teaching materials along with the corresponding workbooks. However, the use of teaching materials differs between schools and teachers by teachers deciding to use other teaching materials in addition to or in the place of textbooks and other contrived teaching materials. While the use of teaching materials in Finnish schools is influenced majorly by the national core curriculum, teachers' choice over teaching materials guides the contents of teaching and the working methods in the classroom (Luukka et al 2008: 90).

The use of authentic materials in foreign language teaching has a long history and it can be argued that the potential advantages of authentic materials in language teaching have been recognized over contrived materials for decades (Gilmore 2007: 97). The use of authentic materials in foreign language teaching is claimed to have multiple benefits, such as improving learners' motivation, giving learners a real image of a language and allowing learners to form an idea of being able to use authentic language (Peacock 1997: 144). The benefits of using authentic texts also include the overall associations to authentic texts being more vibrant, lifelike and tied to the language and culture at hand. This being said, researchers and teachers have not been able to sufficiently prove through empirical research learners' true motivations for learning a language and it has proven problematic to establish a causal link between authenticity and rising learning motivation (Gilmore, 2007: 107).

As the benefits of using authentic materials in comparison to using contrived teaching materials such as textbooks in language teaching can be difficult to prove from the learners' perspective, I set out to discover how teachers can affect language teaching and learning by their personal choice of teaching materials. Even though authentic materials have arguably many potential advantages and positive attributes in foreign language teaching, Finnish foreign language teachers rely 98 percent of the time on the textbook and other contrived materials and use authentic materials such as printed media or fiction only seldom (Luukka et al. 2008: 94-95). I included the aspect of authenticity in the present study, as authenticity is one of the major factors foreign language teachers have to consider when contemplating between what materials to use. I sought to find out why foreign language teachers opt for using textbooks most often and whether they see authenticity integrated into textbooks today. In short, I wanted to combine the elements of previous studies on teachers' attitudes and teaching material use, to find out what English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' think about different teaching materials and how they are using the said materials, and whether the teachers' attitudes affect the way different materials are used by the teachers in teaching.

## **2. AUTHENTICITY AND TEACHING MATERIALS**

### **2.1. The definition of authenticity**

Longman's Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards and Schmidt 2013: 42) defines authenticity as the degree to which language teaching materials have the qualities of natural speech or writing. Authentic materials are consequently defined as materials that were not originally developed for pedagogical purposes; authentic materials can include the use on magazines, newspapers, advertisements, news reports, or song lyrics (Richards and Schmidt 2013: 42). One can argue, that due to its status in a renown dictionary, this definition of authenticity is the one future foreign language teachers should adopt. However, there are multiple other definitions of authenticity and what it means to be authentic.

According to Gilmore (2007: 98), authenticity relates to eight interrelated meanings, which range from the language produced by native speakers for native speakers to the language produced by a real speaker to a real audience. Other meanings include the qualities bestowed on a text by the receiver, the interaction between students and teachers, the types of task chosen, the social situation in the classroom, assessment, and culture. These different aspects of authenticity demonstrate, how authenticity can relate to something and everything from the text or media itself to its producers, receivers and the overall purpose and creation of the communicative act (Gilmore 2007: 98).

Gilmore (2007: 98) defines authenticity in the same way as Morrow (1977: 13) before him: "An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or a writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort". Guariento and Morley (2001: 347) share this view of authenticity, regarding an authentic text as one that is created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced. By defining authenticity in this way, authenticity of a text or a teaching material can be validated by referring to the source of the material and its context.

## **2.2. Teaching materials**

This section on teaching materials is divided into three subsections. The first subsection (2.2.1.) focuses on authentic teaching materials. The second subsection (2.2.2.) focuses on contrived teaching materials and the third and last subsection (2.2.3.) discusses the use of teaching materials in Finland.

### **2.2.1. Authentic materials**

Authenticity and the authentic approach to teaching are centered around teaching materials and highlight the role of materials design as not just a professional skill of coursebook writers and designers, but also as a quality of individual teachers in specific teaching contexts (Mishan 2003: ix). Mishan (2003: x) points out that materials design has been neglected as a research area in English Language Teaching (ELT), even though “materials-focused approaches have a long history, with instances of the use of authentic texts for language learning occurring as early as 9<sup>th</sup>-century England” (Mishan 2003: 3). This might have to do with the fact that publishing houses want to remain the primary source and profiteers of material design, and therefore are not interested in supporting studies that could possibly reduce their status.

The use of authentic materials in foreign language (FL) teaching also has a long history; Henry Sweet, who is considered to be one of the first linguists, made regular use of authentic texts in his books in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was aware of their potential advantages in language teaching over contrived materials (Gilmore 2007: 97). Sweet was an advocate for what he called ‘connected texts’. Connected text was real authentic texts instead individual sentences. He argued that through complete text, students would learn to establish and strengthen correct associations between words, their contexts and meanings. In practice, Sweet thought that teachers should illustrate grammar rules with appropriate paradigmatic and real-life texts. From these texts learners could then find more examples and make logical conclusions from. The arguments that Sweet made in the favor of using authentic texts are modern in the sense, that his points are still valued and practiced to this day. (Mishan 2003: 4.)

Authenticity plays a large role in the learner's autonomy in the language learning context. An effective autonomous language learner will make use of a variety of different authentic materials and sources, in addition to independently seeking contact with the target language and learning. Authentic texts are best explored in an autonomous learning environment. (Mishan 2003: 9.) Case studies have found that particularly learners with high competency in the target language benefit from exposure to authentic materials, whereas authentic texts can pose a problem to learners with lower competence (Fernández-Toro and Jones 1996, cited in Mishan 2003: 9). Exposure to authentic texts can help gain confidence in the foreign language, as well as stimulate the learner to further independent discovery and learning (Mishan 2003:10).

It has been hypothesized that using authentic materials in teaching can be inherently more motivating to students in comparison to using contrived teaching materials such as textbooks (Peacock 1997: 148). Cross (1984, cited in Gilmore 2007: 107) suggests that authentic texts are intrinsically more motivating to learners as we are showing them that they can understand and cope with actual authentic texts and language. Through authentic texts students can start to form an idea of being independent language users as they are becoming able to understand authentic language. This differs from learning language from a learning orientated material such as textbooks as students can see them as fake or inauthentic in nature. Although, Cook (1997, cited in Gilmore 2007: 98) points out how terms associated with authentic materials such as "real" and "natural, as well as terms having to do with contrived materials such as "unreal" and "fake", are artificially produced and emotionally loaded creating a division between the two.

The benefits of authentic materials also include the overall associations to authentic texts being more vibrant, lifelike and tied to the language and culture at hand, which can make authentic texts more compelling to a reader and language learner (Peacock 1997: 144). Supporters of these claims include Allwright (1979, cited in Peacock 1997: 144), Freeman and Holden (1986, cited in Peacock 1997: 144) and Little and Singleton (1991, cited in Peacock 1997: 144). Nonetheless, researchers and teachers have not been able to sufficiently prove through empirical research the learners' true motivations for learning a language. Peacock (1997) explained how the benefits of authentic materials improving motivation have more to do with rising concentration and involvement, and that intrinsic motivation from the learners'



perspective did not significantly differ between authentic and contrived materials. It can be problematic to establish a causal link between authenticity and motivation and taking this into account, the results are not surprising (Gilmore, 2007: 107).

Gilmore (2007: 97) reports “how the debate over the role of authenticity, as well as what it means to be authentic, has become increasingly sophisticated and complex over the years and now embraces research from a wide variety of fields” ranging from linguistics to ethnology. Guariento and Morley (2001: 347) point out how there is now a consensus in language teaching, that the use of authentic materials in the classroom is beneficial to the overall learning process. However, on the question of when authentic materials should be introduced into the classroom there is less agreement (Guariento and Morley 2001: 347). Authentic materials can pose a problem as the language is not created for teaching purposes. As authentic language can be more vibrant and demanding in nature, it can be difficult to find suitable texts for specific classes or groups that have corresponding lexical simplicity and content familiarity to the learners.

According to Guariento and Morley (2001: 348) authentic materials are widely available and generally used at post-intermediate level. It is possible to use and select authentic texts that will stretch the learner’s ability to learn both in terms of development and the range of a new language when the learner’s language competency is high. Consequently, the use of authentic materials in lower levels of language competence is rarer and can even prevent the learners from responding in meaningful ways as well as lead them to feel frustrated and demotivated as the language presented in the authentic texts is out of their level on understanding. Simplification of authentic texts can take place while still maintaining authenticity in the sense of learner response but not as much in the text itself. An alternative of this has been that partial comprehension of text is no longer considered to be necessarily problematic, since this is something which occurs in real life. Provided students are developing effective listening and learning strategies for extracting the information they need from difficult authentic texts, total understanding of the text at hand is not generally necessary. Rather, the emphasis has been to encourage students to make the most of their partial comprehension. (Guariento and Morley 2001: 348.)

### **2.2.2. Contrived materials**

The 20th century brought forth some of language teaching's most contrived methods such as the Audiolingual and Direct methods. These methods were not necessarily less effective than other teaching methods, but they were very structured and had a harsh contrast to language learning's true nature as a natural and authentic activity. During the 1960s more natural approaches, and the overall concept of learning a language through and as a method of communication, started to take over. Today the Communicative method has become engrained in language teaching together with the married concepts of authenticity and tasks. (Mishan 2003: ix.) The Communicative Language Teaching rejected previous structural approaches to language teaching and learning and opened the way for the use of authentic texts (Mishan 2003: 1). Before the use of authentic texts in teaching became common, contrived teaching materials and structured tasks were the norm of teaching.

One of the main questions regarding use of teaching materials and material design over the past few decades has been over authentic materials in comparison to the more commonly used contrived teaching materials. Gilmore (2004: 370) reports how in the past contrived materials have not taken authenticity into account, which is understandable as material writers have traditionally tended to construct exercises to reinforce particular grammar points or to present specific vocabulary rather than illustrate natural language and discourse. However, there is now some evidence that material writers are beginning to acknowledge the benefits of authentic features and are including them in contrived materials (Gilmore 2004: 370).

As contrived materials have not taken authenticity into account in the past, they have been reinforcing an unrealistic image of perfect and native-level language use as the goal of foreign language teaching. Gilmore (2004: 368) implies that learners in the classroom are given the impression that spoken discourse is neat and tidy by using contrived teaching materials. Participants in textbook speaking exercises are traditionally only saying exactly what needs to be said without hesitation for the conversation to flow perfectly in turns from speaker to another without any pauses or overlapping. Gilmore (2004: 366) demonstrates how real-life counterparts of the textbook dialogues were measured as roughly twice as long as the textbooks ones, with an emphasis on the answering portion of the conversation. Textbooks

exercises omit natural aspects of language such as false starts and temporal overlap, which in conversation represent normal performance errors made by all speakers and consequently teach learners that even native speakers make mistakes in judgement and language in conversation (Gilmore, 2004: 368).

An unrealistic image of language and discourse provided by purely contrived teaching materials can also hinder the acquisition of efficient listening strategies such as focusing on content words from which to figure out what is being discussed which is an extremely important strategy to know when listening to authentic conversations where a learner simply cannot understand every single word spat out in the middle of a heated discussion. The textbooks' representation of conversation makes learning of a language seem unrealistic and unattainable and creates scenarios where learners feel they will never reach the lofty heights of this kind of perfect speech. Gilmore (2004: 371) argues "that if our learners' goal is to be able to operate independently in the L2 outside the classroom, then at some point they have to be shown the true nature of conversation".

While it has been argued, that contrived materials bring forward a poor representation of real language (Gilmore 2007: 98), it has also been stated that contrived materials are starting to and do include more authentic texts and language (Peltola 2014: 17). The division to authentic and contrived is starting to compare like with like, rather than being a meaningful discussion. Wilkins (1976: cited in Guariento and Morley 2001: 347) points out how authentic texts are filling the gap between authentic and contrived, bringing contrived materials and classroom orientated language learning together with the real world and language use. Through textbooks and other contrived materials integrating more authentic language, learning oriented teaching materials are becoming more authentic and less contrived in nature.

### **2.2.3. Materials use in Finland**

Luukka et al. (2008: 53) explain, how in Finland the national core curriculum defines and dictates the main issues of education and teaching. The national core curriculum includes the values and goals of teaching, the aims, content and teaching methods of different subjects as well as students' evaluation.

(Luukka et al: 53.) In addition to the national and local curriculums and different teaching strategies, textbooks play a major role in how actual teaching is and has been organized in Finland. The effects of textbooks on teaching are considered so great that textbooks can even be seen as a kind of a hidden curriculum (Luukka et al: 64).

When studying language teachers' material use in Finland, Luukka et al. (2008) found that textbooks have a stronger position as a teaching material of choice in foreign language teaching than in native language teaching. Consequently, fiction does not have as big a role in foreign language teaching whereas Finnish teachers use fiction frequently in teaching. 53% of foreign language teachers reported using fiction writing "seldom" and 28% reported using fiction writing "never" in teaching. Also, the use of printed media, such as newspapers, was lower in foreign language teaching. However, foreign language teachers reported using different kinds of teaching applications and games more than Finnish teachers. Internet as a source as well as online teaching materials were utilized more by the foreign language teachers. Overall, foreign language teachers found the textbook along with the workbook the most important teaching and learning materials. (Luukka et al: 94-95.)

Peltola (2014) researched Finnish EFL teachers' use of authentic materials and how the role of teaching experience can affect the use of authentic materials. Peltola (2014: 16) found out that, the main reason for teachers to bring in authentic materials is that they find them more motivating to students. The participants in Peltola's study agreed that authentic materials should be used in teaching but differed in their opinions about how. Some reported not using as much authentic materials as they probably should, while others concluded that EFL textbooks today are rich in authentic materials but that teachers can find the most suitable materials to use, as they know their class and their students and can choose a specific material targeted just for them. (Peltola 2014: 17.)

Practically speaking teachers use other self-chosen teaching materials in addition to using textbooks and by doing this, they can have an effect on how much influence textbooks and other materials have on teaching in the actual classroom. Teachers also use the same materials in different ways, modifying them to suit the purposes of a specific task or to target a specific group for example. This being said, the overall role of textbooks as a guiding institutional factor in Finland should not be dismissed (Luukka et al: 65).

### **3. THE PRESENT STUDY**

In this chapter I will present the aims, data and methods as well as the method of analysis of the present study. In the first section (3.1.) I will present the research questions of the present study, followed by the methods of data collection (3.2.) and why they were chosen to answer the research questions. In the third section (3.3.) I will describe in detail what kind of data was collected and in what form. In the fourth section (3.4.) I will introduce the participants of my study, give background information and rename them for the sake of anonymity in the study. Lastly, I will discuss the methods on data analysis (3.5.) from the point of view of the classroom observations and the interviews.

#### **3.1. Research questions**

The topic of the present study is EFL teachers' attitudes towards using different teaching materials in Finland. The aim of the study is to find out what kinds of teaching materials Finnish EFL teachers use and what kinds of attitudes they have towards these different materials. In addition, I wish to find out whether these attitudes project themselves into teaching and whether the teachers prefer some materials over others. I expect teachers to prefer self-made and authentic materials to textbooks and other contrived materials, as textbooks and other contrived materials tend to be overlooked as scripted or manufactured texts rather than authentic. Although, authenticity is often seen as integrated into textbooks and textbook texts can even be seen as purely authentic texts of an author, as textbook texts are often produced by native English speakers. Even as I expect teachers to prefer other materials over contrived ones, I also expect teachers to have a positive attitude towards textbooks as the quality of EFL textbooks in Finland is quite good. Consequently, my research questions are:

1. What kinds of teaching materials do Finnish EFL teachers use?
2. What is the proportion between using textbooks and other materials in teaching?
3. What attitudes do teachers have towards teaching materials?

### **3.2. Methods of data collection**

The chosen methods for data collection in the present study were classroom observations and interviews. The reason for choosing to collect the data through classroom observations as well as the interviews, was that the research was conducted as a qualitative study with multiple research questions. The aim of this research was to discover the different kinds of teaching materials used by Finnish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers, how the different materials were used in teaching in proportion to one another as well as the underlying attitudes and preferences towards using the different teaching materials in teaching. In order to analyze the different kinds of teaching materials used in a Finnish EFL classroom and the proportion between the use of these different teaching materials, teaching and use of teaching materials had to be studied in detail through classroom observations. After this, interviews made it possible to get to know the teachers' personal attitudes and preferences toward the teaching materials used during the observation. The interview questions were created to answer the specific research question about teachers' personal attitudes and preferences towards using different teaching materials. In conclusion, the observation period was chosen to answer conclusively to the first two research questions, after which the interviews were conducted to provide answers to the remaining third research question about teachers' attitudes towards teaching materials.

### **3.3. Collected data**

The data collected were field notes from the classroom observations and recordings of the interviews. The observations were conducted as a naturalistic and non-participant observation (Guthrie 2010: 109). The observations consisted of four 45-minute lessons that were given in a week of time by two different teachers, hence I observed two 45-minute lessons by each teacher. During the classroom observations I kept a log of the different kinds of teaching materials used in teaching by the teachers and how long each material was used in class. The amount of time each material was used was recorded in minutes and the materials were labelled either as textbooks and other contrived materials or as self-made or authentic materials. Later on, they were put into context in an estimation of how much of the class contrived materials took in comparison to self-made materials (for example one fifth of the entire class or 20%). The observation period also made it possible to compare the teachers' attitudes and opinions about their material use to their actual use of teaching materials in the classroom. After the observation periods the

same teachers were interviewed on their attitudes and preferences towards using different kinds of teaching materials. After careful revising of the interview questions, both the observation and interview data were collected in February 2017. The interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes each and were recorded and transcribed.

### **3.4. Participants**

The two English teachers I interviewed had varying amounts of work experience. The first teacher was in the middle of her first teacher-training period and considered this year to be the first year of teaching experience for her. She had taught both lower and upper levels of comprehensive school during her training period. I will be referring to her as teacher trainee from this point on for the purposes of clarity and anonymity. The teacher trainee's only subject was English. The second teacher was a more experienced teacher and had twenty years of work experience as a teacher. Six years of teaching at the lower levels of comprehensive school, six years of teaching on the upper levels of comprehensive school, six years of teaching both the upper levels of comprehensive school and high school and in between these jobs she taught in a vocational college and worked as a teacher in a workshop for unemployed young adults. I will be referring to her as the more experienced teacher from this point on for the same reasons mentioned above with the teacher trainee. The more experienced teacher had taught both English and German during her career as a teacher but was only teaching English at the time of the interview. Both interviewees were female.

### **3.5. Methods of analysis**

The data from the classroom observations was analyzed by categorizing the different kinds of teaching materials recorded in the field notes by using a thematic approach. The amount of time used for each teaching material was counted together and presented side by side to show the proportion between the use of different teaching materials. Their use was later discussed through the methods of comparative case study in this research. In a comparative case study, the goal of the study is to discover possible similarities and differences between the specific instances of a phenomenon being studied (Campbell 2010: 175). The teaching materials use was presented next to one another but not compared to one

another. The teachers' own views on their material preference, which were found out through the interviews, were compared to their actual recorded material use through the observations. To provide clear points of comparison, I divided the different possible teaching materials into roughly two categories. The categories in question were: 1. Textbooks and online materials provided by the textbook's publisher, and 2. Materials created by the teacher themselves or authentic materials (such as texts, movies, music or podcasts, games and mobile applications).

The recorded interviews were transcribed. Using thematic approach, I highlighted the parts where both participants were discussing the same things during the interviews and then categorized them to apply a logical chapter division to the study. The answers were analyzed by focusing on the highlighted parts. One important category was one, where the teachers discussed how much they used different teaching materials and made estimations in percentages. Through these estimations, the teachers' own views on material use were then compared to their actual recorded use of teaching materials, providing with both similarities and differences between the teachers' personal attitudes on teaching materials and their manifestations in teaching. Graphs were added to demonstrate the proportions of use between different teaching materials according to teacher and in comparison to one another.



## **4. RESULTS**

In the following chapter, I will present the results of my study and consequently provide answers to my research questions. I will present the collected data from the interviews and classroom observations by going over them side by side and creating a comparison between the two interviewees' answers during the interviews as well as between the uses of different teaching materials during the classroom observation. I will point out both similarities and differences between the participants' views and attitudes on teaching materials, in addition to presenting figures to demonstrate the amount of time they spent using different teaching materials during the classroom observation.

I have divided the following chapter into three sections. In the first section (4.1.) I will answer the first two research questions about what kinds of teaching materials are used by the teachers and the proportion between using textbooks and other materials in teaching. In the last two sections, I will present the participants' views on different kinds of teaching materials and answer the third research question on teachers' attitudes towards teaching materials. The second section (4.2.) will discuss the benefits and shortcomings of textbooks and other contrived materials, and the third section (4.3.) will focus on the participants' views on authenticity and the benefits and shortcomings of authentic teaching materials.

### **4.1. Use of different teaching materials**

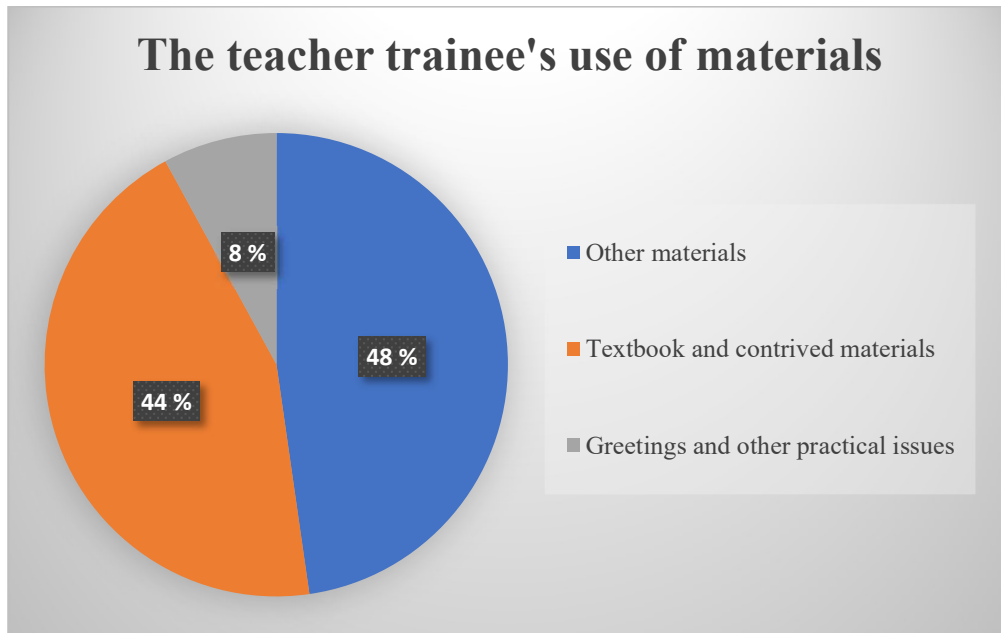
In the interview the participants named a collection of different kinds of teaching materials, some of which appeared in both of the interviewees' answers and some of which were evident in the use of teaching materials in the classroom observations. The teacher trainee mentioned Flashcards and other card games, party games, YouTube-videos, newspaper articles and handouts as favorable teaching materials. She also stated, "Internet is the perfect treasure chest" indicating that the Internet is full of potential teaching material. However, she named card games as her "number one" teaching material when talking about teaching materials other than textbooks, namely because she felt that card games were motivating for students. The more experienced teacher repeated some of the same materials mentioned by the teacher trainee, but added slideshows, teaching videos, novels and short stories and differing from the teacher trainee's view, also mentioned textbooks and other contrived teaching materials as favorable teaching materials.

Both participants had a hard time coming up with even a rough estimation or percentage of how much they used textbooks in comparison to other teaching materials. The teacher trainee “wanted to say half and half”, but then stated that it depends on whether one defines taking a task from the textbook and altering it for a different purpose than the original as using the textbook or not. The more experienced teacher estimated that three quarters of her teaching is based on textbooks. She also wanted to point out, that even if something is taken or done straight from the textbook she always puts her own touch to it at the latest when the task or text is reconstructed by checking it. She also stated that she often uses the textbook as a base but brings in elements of other teaching materials to use hand in hand with the textbook materials. For example, if the topic of class is houses and living, she starts out by going through the theme with a text or using a thematic vocabulary from the textbook and then goes on to show a real-life example, such as a short clip from the reality-show *Love it or list it* to demonstrate how real-estate works.

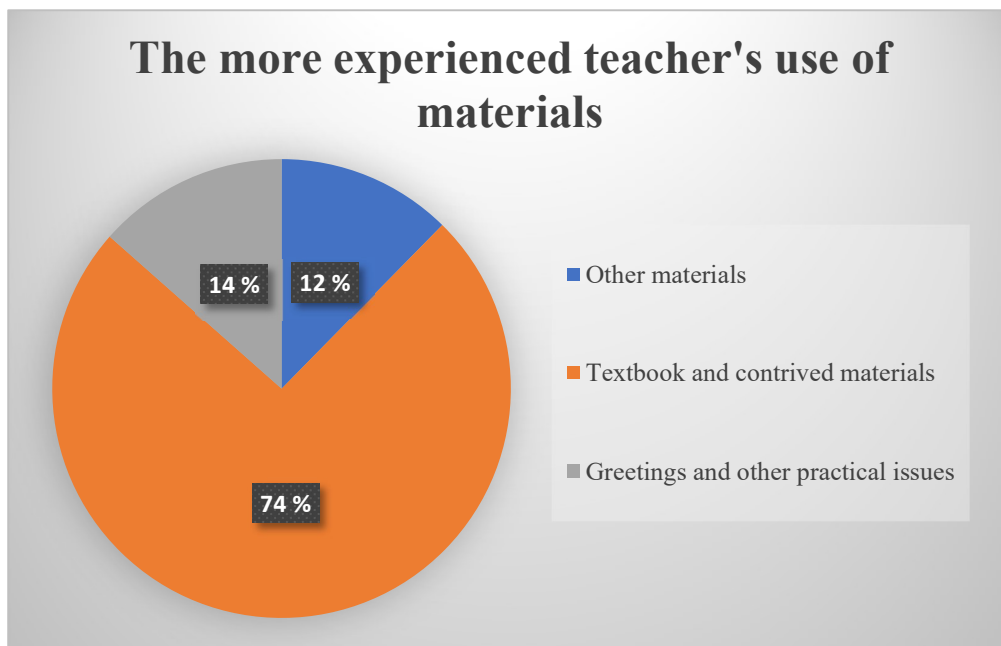
The data collected from the classroom observations was coherent with the participants’ own evaluations of time used per different teaching materials. During two classes that lasted 88 minutes combined, the teacher trainee spent 42 minutes using other materials such as card games, handouts compiled by herself, music and YouTube-videos. She spent 39 minutes using textbooks or other contrived teaching materials such as the online materials from publishers or the teacher’s guide. Seven minutes were spent with greeting the students, checking who is present and other practical issues. During two classes that lasted 89 minutes combined, the more experienced spent only 11 minutes using other materials such as a party game. She spent 66 minutes using textbooks or other contrived teaching materials. 12 minutes were spent with greeting the students, setting up tests for a few students who had been sick the previous week and other practical issues. The teacher trainees estimated percentage of 50 percent using textbooks in comparison to other materials was quite accurate as the actual percentage was 48 percent (Graph 1). The more experienced teacher’s evaluation of 75 percent using textbooks in comparison to other materials was also accurate, as she spent 74 percent of the time using textbooks or other contrived materials (Graph 2). If one were to eliminate the amount of time used for greeting the students and other practical issues, and compare only the use of materials to one another, the percentages of the favored teaching materials would be even higher than the original estimations. These results are not altogether surprising regarding the material preference as the more experienced teacher stated during the interview, that she is a large supporter of textbooks, in comparison to the teacher trainee who was afraid of having to lean on the textbooks too much. But the preciseness of the teachers’ estimations caught me by surprise. One can

argue that the participants are quite aware of their material preferences and can realistically estimate how much they use different teaching materials.

Graph 1. This graph illustrates the teacher trainee's use of time per teaching material and classroom activity in comparison to one another in percentages.



Graph 2. This graph illustrates the more experienced teacher's use of time per teaching material and classroom activity in comparison to one another in percentages.



## 4.2. Teachers' views on textbooks and other contrived materials

The participants had encountered multiple different kinds of shortcomings in textbooks and other contrived teaching materials. Some of the shortcomings can be generalized to include the majority of English textbooks and some were more textbook specific. The teacher trainee reported that some materials have been “really good”, but that most textbooks she has encountered have been out of date and have repeated the same, old examples in addition to having “an ugly layout”. “Sorry, but a lot of times they have too many things going on the same page, or the layout is incoherent and kind of gray and dry unfortunately, in addition to these, one-sidedness is often a problem”, she explained. The more experienced teacher took into consideration the evolution of textbooks along the years and described the different kinds of shortcomings she has experienced during her teaching career. Concluding that teaching materials have become less structured over the years, as seen below in Example 1:

Example 1:

”Jos aloitetaan sieltä menneisyydestä, sieltä 20 vuoden takaa niin oppikirjat oli aika lailla pelkästään sellaisia, ne oli ajateltu kynän kanssa käytettäväksi ja silleen järjestyksessä ja jos silloin ajatteli, että haluaisi jonkun puheharjoituksen tunnille niin se piti ihan itse luoda. Ja alakoululaiset ja yläkoululaisetkin tarvii vielä sellaisen pienen tuen tai rungon sen keskustelun pohjaksi, ettei ne osaa vielä vapaasti jutella niin sellaiset puuttui sieltä matskuista aina.”

“If we start from the past, twenty years ago textbooks had been mostly designed to be filled in with a pencil from start to finish and mostly in that order, and if you thought that you wanted to have a speaking exercise in class, you had to create it yourself. On both the lower and upper levels of comprehensive school the students still need a little support or structure behind a conversation task, they do not know how to speak freely and all of those were missing from the teaching materials back then.”

Contrary to the past, she now feels that textbooks have evolved and today represent more of “a language portfolio” than a traditional textbook. This has led to some of the most basic tasks being omitted from the textbooks, which has made it harder to differentiate students according to their skill level as there are no basic tasks to offer for the weaker students. She also wondered, whether the bookmakers are “always in a hurry to finish the last portions of the books, which more often include the teacher’s test packages and answer sheets” because they seem to include many mistakes regardless of the series or the publisher. She would like publishers to “put more money into the test packages and answer sheets, because when you are using the textbook, you also want to ask the right things in the test, and not things not included in the material”. Hence, the test packages that correspond with the textbook’s content are ideal for teachers who rely more on the textbook. She also confirmed that her local colleagues as well as other

foreign language teachers from a Facebook-group for foreign language teachers in Finland have encountered the same kind of shortcomings in textbooks as she has.

The answers on whether textbooks and contrived materials for teaching English are of a good quality overall in Finland varied between the participants. The teacher trainee thought, that the quality of English textbooks in Finland was “just okay”. Compared to the more experienced teachers answer which stated, that “all of the textbooks and other teaching materials designed for teaching English, including teachers' guides in the past and all electronic materials such as ready-made layouts for smart boards today, have been a really good quality all these years”. However, the participants agreed that the quality of English textbooks and contrived materials is better than the quality of textbooks and contrived materials of other foreign languages in Finland. The teacher trainee summed up her experience with foreign language textbooks regarding other languages than English and the overall quality of foreign language textbooks in Finland with the following statement: “The smaller the language is, the worse and older the materials are.”

Despite the more experienced teacher's large repertoire and knowledge of different kinds of teaching materials, she makes a stand for using textbooks and other contrived materials designed for teaching purposes due to their good quality, rather than using mainly outside material or making all the material for yourself (Example 2).

Example 2:

“Mä sanoisin isosti sillä lailla, että mun mielestä englannin opetukseen tehdyt oppikirjat ja kaikki niihin liittyvät materiaalit siis no ennen vanhaan pelkät opettajan oppaat, mutta nykyään myös kaikki sähköiset materiaalit missä on smartille pohjia ja videoita ja kuuntelutehtäviä, mä sanoisin että ne on ollut tosi laadukkaita kyllä kaikki nämä vuodet.”

“I want to emphasize that in my opinion all the textbooks and teaching materials made for teaching English, like in the past teacher's guides, but also all of the electronic materials, where there are ready-made bases for the smart board and videos and listening exercises today, have been of a great quality in the past years.”

Even though, the more experienced teacher saw textbooks and teaching materials created for language teaching purposes good in quality and preferable to using only other materials, she also saw the lack of authenticity in textbooks as one of the biggest limitations in teaching material use. If textbooks do not contain enough meaningful content and authentic language, the teacher is forced to skip chapters and units. According to her, one of the main benefits of textbooks is that they have everything between two

covers and the information is easily accessible to students, this benefit is hindered when the teacher skips chapters and brings in outside material to increase authenticity. Drawing from this, one of the main hindrances of other teaching materials is that as handouts get lost and URL-links expire, other teaching materials are not always as accessible to the students or a lasting option. The teacher trainee also pointed out that there is emphasis on using versatile materials that activate all channels of perception with incoming stimulus, along with electronic materials in the foreign language teachers' studies at her university. She concluded that she has integrated that emphasis to her own teaching methods and philosophy, and that it affects the way she sees the use of teaching materials.

According to the more experienced teacher, one of the biggest benefits of other teaching materials and the reason behind using other teaching materials is that the teacher is building a bank of teaching materials that she can edit and use repeatedly, and that compile the knowledge of multiple different textbook series and language teachers and authors. Teachers start spotting the themes and trends of language teaching as they get more teaching experience and will be able to consider these changing and recurring themes in the use of teaching materials. For example, if students tend to have a problem with the same grammar rule, regardless of the textbook in use and the class, the teacher will be able to spot this and choose the best material to tackle that problem. She explained that she tends to use more of her own materials with high school senior groups because the ready-made materials have had many mistakes in them and she has gathered a lot of teaching material for the seniors. The teacher trainee agreed that the most common situation in which to use other materials than textbook ones is when the textbook is in some way lacking in that chapter or grammar rule. Motivation to learn was also considered an important reason behind choosing a teaching material or method over another by both teachers.

### **4.3. Teachers' views on authenticity and the use of authentic materials**

The participants had different views regarding what it means to be authentic, but both agreed that it has something to do with originality and native speakers of a language in foreign language teaching. The teacher trainee was well educated on the subject and stated right from the start, that no one knows what authenticity is or everyone knows, but everyone also has a different idea of what it is. She spoke from the perspective of a future foreign language teacher and explained that authenticity is not depending too much on the course books but using a variety of teaching materials. She also pointed out that even though

materials developed by native speakers are not necessarily better than teaching materials developed by non-natives, native made materials should also be used in teaching. The more experienced teacher described authenticity as a native speaker, speaking and being listened to. In her opinion, authentic teaching materials should not only be original newspaper articles, short stories or song lyrics that were not designed for a teaching purpose, but that contrived teaching materials designed by native speakers are authentic in nature. Both participants viewed authenticity from a very professional standpoint as something that should be used in teaching foreign languages as well as something to do with teaching materials. Their views differed mainly on the aspect of authenticity and textbooks, as the teacher trainee saw authentic materials as materials not designed for teaching, but for a different purpose such as a newspaper article, and the more experienced teacher regarded authenticity as being integrated into the traditional teaching materials such as textbooks by native textbook designers and authors.

Regarding the question when authentic materials should be used in teaching, the more experienced teacher answered that authentic materials should be used “in every case” meaning all of the time, but the limitation of time and goals set by the curriculum are important factors in limiting the use of teaching materials. On the other hand, she pointed out that especially on the lower levels of comprehensive school and when giving remedial instruction, it is important to use materials that are purposefully simplified or emphasized to suit the skill level of the language learners, rather than authentic materials. The teacher trainee also thought that authentic materials should be incorporated into the classroom as much as possible, but that personally she would not teach grammar with authentic materials, unless as a warm up exercise or as a real-life example. The teacher trainee was concerned that multiculturalism and religion might be limiting in the use of authentic materials. She told an example of her own life, where students from a certain religious group had to leave the classroom during the use of some authentic materials because they were not allowed to listen to popular music or watch videos. This kind of scenario worried her, and she wondered whether she would be able to give a wholesome image of a foreign language as a teacher without the use of authentic materials. Other factors mentioned by the two teachers that might limit the use of teaching materials included funding and drawing from that, the lack of electronic devices in schools with smaller funding.

## **5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The aim of the present study was to find out what kinds of different teaching materials Finnish EFL teachers use and what is the proportion between use of different teaching materials in teaching. In addition to this, I sought to find out the underlying attitudes towards using specific teaching materials in teaching and to see for myself whether these attitudes would manifest in the teachers' teaching in a classroom setting. Authenticity and teachers' views on authentic teaching materials were also explored in the study as a theme and contrast to the use of textbooks and other contrived teaching materials. The study was conducted by observing two classes of one English teacher and one English teacher trainee, and by interviewing the same teachers on their use of teaching materials after the observation period. The teachers' answers were presented in comparison to one another, to create a contrast between the views of a young novice teacher and an experienced teacher.

The results of the study showed that the teacher trainee's and the experienced teacher's use and reasons behind the use of different teaching materials differed in multiple ways. The teacher trainee put more emphasis on using other versatile materials in comparison to using traditional textbooks and contrived teaching materials, while the more experienced teacher leaned more on the textbook and used other materials sparingly and often together with textbooks. This was in line with Peltola's research (2014), which concluded that experienced teachers relied more on textbooks than less experienced teachers. This may have to do with the organization of language teachers' studies at university level, as versatility and multimodality in teaching are encouraged along with the use of electronic materials today while the focus points have lied elsewhere in the past. However, the more experienced teacher was more critical of the errors and shortcomings of textbooks and other contrived materials such as teacher's guides even though she used them more, whereas the teacher trainee was also critical of textbooks, but on a more general level and of the overall quality of textbooks rather than specific aspects of textbooks. This can be explained by how the novice teacher did not have a lot of overall experience as a teacher or with different textbooks, where the more experienced teacher had worked with numerous different textbooks from different publishers during her twenty years as an EFL teacher.



Both teachers had a difficulty categorizing their use of teaching materials to using only textbooks and other contrived materials in comparison to using other materials as well as making estimations of their material use. They felt that the definition of using only textbooks and other contrived materials depends on whether one defines taking a task from the textbook and altering it for a different purpose than the original, as using the textbook or not. This was not surprising as they both wanted to emphasize making the textbook materials their own and putting their own spin on them instead following the textbook religiously. Textbooks and other contrived materials were also considered to be used more often together with other teaching materials, supporting one another. While the teachers were hesitant about making estimations about their material use, due to do with the difficulty of categorizing material use to textbooks and other materials in the first place, their final estimations about their material use and preference were extremely accurate. This shows that the teachers were quite aware of their personal preferences and attitudes towards teaching materials as they were able to make accurate estimations of their material use.

Both of the participants agreed that authentic materials should be used in EFL teaching and that textbooks do include authentic language in the form of short stories and music, but also in the form of being integrated into textbooks through native designers and authors of textbooks. Even though the participants had very similar views on authenticity and how authentic materials should be used, they used teaching materials in very different ways. The more experienced teacher valued textbooks and contrived materials over purely authentic texts and used textbooks more than other materials in teaching, whereas the teacher trainee used significantly more self-made and authentic materials. This differed drastically from the main results of Peltola's study (2014: 18, 23), which showed that there were not many differences between the recently graduated teacher and the experienced teachers with the use of authentic materials. Although Peltola's study (2014) focused more on the nature of authentic tasks rather than the proportion of use. In addition, Rossi (2013: 54) found that authenticity was viewed as something additional and not a part of the standardized curriculum. Rossi's (2013) findings on authenticity being something additional in the classroom, also differed from the results of the present study as both of my interviewees considered authenticity to be integrated into textbooks and not as something that has to purposefully be brought into the classroom to include it. Consequently, this explains why the more experienced teacher leaned more on the textbooks and contrived materials, as she felt that authenticity had been integrated into the textbooks and that she could alter the ready-made tasks when needed.

Previous research regarding use of authentic materials has concluded that Finnish teachers have found the national curriculum limiting in the use of materials. Peltola (2014: 18) reports how the lack of time was a common theme arising from the interviews in her study, and that experienced teachers emphasized the role of time as a limiting factor in comparison to novice teachers. Rossi (2013: 54) also mentions time constraint issues. Considering the findings of the previous research, I also expected to find mentions of the national curriculum as a limiting factor for the use of different teaching materials. However, the national curriculum was not mentioned in the present study as a limiting factor for the use teaching materials, but as a guideline. The national curriculum was also mentioned in the context of how it dictates what textbooks offer in terms of content. Factors mentioned by the two teachers that might limit the use of teaching materials included multiculturalism and religion, quality and level of authenticity in textbooks as well as funding and drawing from that, the lack of electronic devices in schools with smaller funding.

The limitations of this study include its small focus group due to the restrictions of the bachelor's thesis. The sampling of the study and the amount of data is too small for the results to be generalized or made an exemplification of for a larger scale. If the study was conducted using a larger sampling with either qualitative or quantitative methods of data collection, the results could be generalized to give a more general understanding of the research questions at hand. In the future this study should be conducted in larger scale to provide more generalizable results. The focus group could be widened to contain multiple schools with different levels of funding and resources, as well as multiple teachers with varied amounts of work experience. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to explore the views of other foreign language teachers either overall from the perspective of all language teachers or from the viewpoint of a specific language, as this study was conducted from the viewpoint of English teachers and the teaching of English as a foreign language.

The results of the present study are relevant as they provide us with information about differences and patterns of using different kinds of teaching materials among Finnish EFL teachers as well as underlying views and attitudes on and towards using specific teaching materials. The results also draw attention to the division of old and new school of EFL teachers, as the novice teacher of the study preferred other materials over traditional ones such as textbooks and the more experienced teacher preferred textbooks

over creating all new materials. In addition, the results show that authenticity is still a relevant theme of language teaching and teaching materials, even though the focus and trends of language teaching have shifted from authentic materials to multimodal and electronic ones. Taking this into account, the study was successful as it was able to point out the differences between the novice and the experienced teacher as well as the current state of using teaching materials and attitudes towards teaching materials. Even though the results of the study cannot be generalized, they still provide valuable information about teaching materials and how attitudes towards teaching materials can affect teaching.

Regarding the implications of this study, the results of the study are beneficial for future language teachers in the process of finding their teaching identity and forming preferences and attitudes towards different kinds of teaching materials. More experienced teachers who may have become oblivious to the underlying attitudes steering their use of teaching materials can also benefit from this study, as the study offers concrete evidence of teachers' attitudes affecting their teaching. More importantly, research regarding teachers' attitudes towards different teaching materials and how they may affect the use of teaching materials in the classroom, can prove useful to publishers and textbook designers. Consequently, the result may benefit the Finnish National Agency for Education when planning and organizing the national core curriculum, as the curriculum dictates what contents are taught and therefore allows and restricts teachers' choices over the different teaching materials for teaching that content.

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