

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

A material package for communicative grammar
teaching in upper secondary school

Master's Thesis

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| <p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Kieliopin opetus on ollut polttava puheenaihe koko kieltenopetuksen historian ajan. Näkemyseroja on sen suhteen, miten kielioppia tulisi opettaa ja miten siitä saisi tehtyä mielenkiintoista sekä oppilaille että opettajille, mutta myös sen suhteen, tarvitsisiko sitä opettaa ylipäätään. Globalisoituvassa maailmassa, jossa englantia on usein kansainvälisessä kanssakäymisessä käytetty yleiskieli, nopean ja tehokkaan kommunikoinnin merkitys korostuu, kun taas kielioppiin monesti liitetty mielikuva pikkuseikkojen hiomisesta voi tuntua jopa täysin turhalta. Pienetkin erot esimerkiksi sanavalinnoissa, -muodoissa ja rakenteissa voivat kuitenkin vaikuttaa oleellisesti siihen, miten viesti välittyy toiselle tai millainen esimerkiksi sen sävy on, ja siten kielioppi ja hyvä kommunikaatio voidaan nähdä toisistaan erottamattomina asioina. Tämä materiaalipaketti pyrkiikin yhdistämään kommunikatiivisuuden – eli kommunikaation ja tosielämän konteksteihin pohjautuvan mallin – kieliopin opetuksen kanssa ja näyttämään keinoja opettaa kielioppia aidon keskustelun ja viestintätarpeen kautta. Tavoitteena on tarjota erilainen lähestymistapa kielioppiin kokonaisuutena ja tarkastella sitä sääntöluettelon sijaan kielellisenä taitona, jota voi harjaannuttaa ja kehittää kohdekieltä käyttämällä. Näkemykseni mukaan tällainen lähestymistapa avaa myös oppilaille paremmin sekä kieliopin vaikutusta viestintään ja kanssakäymiseen että sen tarkastelun ja opiskelun hyötyjä yleisesti. Samalla tämä paketti tuo lisäsisältöä kommunikatiiviseen opetusmateriaalivalikoimaan, joka on tutkimuksessa tehtyjen havaintojen perusteella vielä niukka Suomessa.</p> <p>Tämä materiaalipaketti on kehitetty lisätyökaluksi lukion toiselle pakolliselle englannin kurssille ENA2: <i>Ihminen verkostoissa</i>, mutta sen tehtävämallit ja perusedat ovat helposti sovellettavissa muillekin kursseille, ryhmille, tasoille tai jopa kielille sopiviksi. Materiaali on jaettu kahteen osaan, joista ensimmäisessä tehtävät kumpuavat itse kielioppisäännöistä ja jälkimmäisessä puolestaan kurssiin kuuluvista teemoista. Kummassakin osiossa on neljä eri aihepiiriä ja jokaisesta aihepiiristä on kolme erilaista tehtävää: nopea kommunikatiivinen aktiviteetti, hieman vaativampi kommunikatiivinen tehtävä ja viimeisenä kommunikatiivinen projekti. Tämä rakenne mahdollistaa sen, että opettaja voi helposti löytää kulloiseenkin tilanteeseen sopivan tehtävän sekä toivotun aihepiirin että tehtävän pituuden suhteen. Tavoitteena on ollut luoda kätevä työkaluna toimiva kokonaisuus opettajalle, joka tahtoo lisätä kommunikatiivisia harjoituksia kieliopin opetukseensa, tai joka muutoin kaipaa lisäresursseja käyttöönsä hektisessä ja alati muuttuvassa koulumaailmassa.</p> | |
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1 INTRODUCTION

The role of grammar has arguably been one of the most debated topics throughout the history of language teaching (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 1). Views have swung from one extreme to another, as grammar has been seen both as the very core of language and as an inadequate or sometimes even useless tool for teaching good language skills (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 2, 5-6). Regardless of the prevalent views, grammar teaching has always been a so-called hot topic in the field of language education, dividing language teachers in terms of teaching methods, but also bringing them together in discussions on how to motivate students and help them learn.

The most current language teaching trends focus largely on fluency and the changing needs of language learners (Gürbüz 2011), as technology has made communication between people from around the world an everyday event. Due to this rapid change and the role of English as a lingua franca, English teachers face new challenges in deciding how and what to teach. Communicative competence has been a central point of interest in language education since the late 1970s and early 1980s, which has taken emphasis off the more traditional, form-focused approaches (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 115). However, despite the fact that this focus on communication has affected language teaching for several decades, the extent to which different ideas and methods are exercised today seems to depend highly on location, especially in terms of grammar teaching, as many schools still rely heavily on some of the older language teaching methods (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 219). Taking all these aspects into consideration, it seems that there is an increasing need among language teachers for new material and resources to help them adapt to the constant change.

This work is a continuation of my bachelor's thesis (Anttila 2015), the results of which suggested that communicative grammar teaching is perhaps not that widespread in English classrooms in Finland and that many teachers would like to have more tools for teaching grammar in new ways. As stated above, the role of grammar has been challenged many times in the history of language teaching and so one of the main goals of the present teaching material is to show ways in which grammar can be taught through real communication – that grammar is naturally present in all language use and that it plays an important role in conveying both basic and subtle meanings. The idea is that by teaching grammar in real-life contexts and through communication, it is easier both for teachers to teach it and for students to learn it and understand its importance. This does not mean that there is no room for more traditional grammar teaching methods anymore, but rather that with the right tools teachers can

quite easily show that grammar is an intrinsic part of all communication – not just something you have to learn by heart during grammar lessons.

This communicative point of view to grammar teaching was selected due to the role of English in the modern world. As stated above, it is very common for people of varying language skill levels to use English in, for example, social media and thus it feels natural to approach language use as the need to convey ideas and intentions in an effective and meaningful way. Combining this communicative mindset with grammar teaching can seem hard or even infeasible at times, but the goal here is to show the ways in which they actually walk hand in hand. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 121) state, the appropriate use of different language forms is an essential part of communicative competence. This means that in order to communicate effectively and meaningfully speakers need knowledge on forms and as such these two aspects can be seen as inseparable. Grammatical knowledge helps form texts and utterances that best convey intended meanings and nuances and also gives the tools to do so with less effort. In the present study, I view grammar as a skill rather than as a set of strict rules and guidelines – a view that is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

In short, the present work seeks to meet the challenges of teaching foreign languages in a constantly changing world of international communication. The idea is to guide teachers towards and give them ideas and inspiration for a way of teaching that bases itself on good communication without having to renounce grammar teaching altogether. In many ways, the key question is not how we should *teach* grammar, but rather how we should *see* grammar, as the teaching methods that are chosen largely emerge from the ways grammar is viewed and what it is thought to be by its very nature. When grammar is looked at as something that every language user absorbs and develops internally little by little through trial and error, it is perhaps easier to see how communication in itself can be an effective way of teaching grammar and its importance. Drilling exercises and other such more traditional ways of teaching can, of course, also be beneficial to many learners, but the effects on meaning and other such finer details can perhaps be best seen in real conversations and language use. This material package aims to show how this kind of grammar teaching can be done in virtually any language classroom without the need to adopt an entirely new teaching philosophy.

In chapter 2 I will focus on grammar teaching, first discussing the different definitions of grammar itself, shedding also light on the way I see and define it, and then moving on to recent developments in grammar teaching on a larger scale. Lastly, I will focus on grammar teaching in Finland, seeking to form an idea of the status and ways of grammar teaching in Finnish schools. Chapter 3 focuses on

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), looking at its history and definitions, its ways of approaching the matter of assessment, its benefits and, lastly, its challenges. These two chapters create the theoretical basis for the present thesis and shed light on how grammar, language learning and assessment are viewed. In chapter 4 I discuss the framework of my teaching material, describing in greater detail its aims, how and where it is meant to be used, what kind of task types there are and how assessment is viewed and how it can be accomplished when using the material package. This chapter further clarifies how and for whom the teaching material has been designed and constructed and how it can be used in language classrooms. I will also refer to some examples in the actual material, seeking to demonstrate how these different views and ideas are reflected in it. Lastly, in chapter 5, I will take a critical look at the present work and material package, discussing both the possibilities that it presents and improvements that could be made to further develop it and to open it up for even wider use and a larger audience. The material package can be found at the very end of the thesis.

2 GRAMMAR TEACHING

I will begin this chapter by addressing the issue of defining grammar and by explaining how grammar is understood and approached in the material package. Next, I will give a brief summary of the central trends and methods in grammar teaching, some of which date back to the 1950s and 1960s, but are still quite widely in use. The emphasis, however, will be on the more recent developments in language education, as they are arguably more relevant to the material package. Lastly, I will discuss some studies conducted on grammar teaching in Finland in order to provide context for the present work.

2.1 Defining grammar

Even though ideas and definitions of grammar vary, it seems that there has always been a wide consensus that grammar is, indeed, a very central part of language – in fact, Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 1) claim that there is no language without grammar. Differences between definitions are largely related to the very nature of grammar and what it consists of. Traditionally, grammar has been seen as a rather arbitrary system, the rules of which have to be learned and followed in order to be a proficient language user (Hinkel and Fotos 2002: 103). According to Shastri (2010: 109), these traditional views focus mainly on the formal and systematic study of language and include ideas of, for example, deductive teaching (i.e. teaching the grammar rules first and then applying them on different examples). This focus solely on form and discrete rules in defining grammar is nowadays often seen as insufficient, as aspects related to meaning and function are also considered to play a central role in it.

Dykes (2007: 5) defines grammar as “a language to talk about language”, stating that it is necessary to have “a naming procedure” in order to be able to meaningfully explain language and its components. This definition clearly emphasizes the instructional function of grammar – i.e. that it can be seen as a tool for teaching or sharing information about language. Many other definitions, however, approach grammar from a slightly different perspective, viewing it rather as a skill than as a fixed field of knowledge. Hinkel and Fotos (2002: 105), for example, argue that grammatical knowledge includes knowledge of when to use certain forms in order to express desired intentions. Huttunen (1986: i), too, states that, in addition to structural knowledge, grammatical skill has to do with the social functions of different structures. In other words, these definitions try to look past the idea of simple forms and rules and see grammar and grammatical skill also as the ability to choose

from various structures and other options the ones that best suit the intentions of the language user. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (2003: 24) discusses grammar as a skill, proposing the new term *grammaring* to truly capture the dynamic nature of grammar and to shake off the former conceptions of it. She goes on to argue that the old perceptions of grammar “as a body of knowledge” invoke negative responses in students, as they make grammar seem rather arbitrary (ibid.). According to Shastri (2010: 110), grammar is divided into three types: formal or prescriptive, descriptive and functional. He states that from these three, the Communicative Approach adheres to the principles of functional grammar, where the process of language acquisition is followed. Here, inductive teaching methods, exposure to the target language and the active use of it are seen as central features of grammar instruction (Shastri 2010: 111). It can thus be argued that functional grammar, too, advocates the idea of grammatical skill rather than grammar as a fixed or static entity.

The new National Core Curriculum for general upper secondary schools (2016) also seems to approach grammar from the point of view of its functions and of it being a skill that can be practiced through language use, which becomes clear when looking at the course descriptions. As an example, here is the course description of the second compulsory A-level English course:

2. People and their networks (ENA2)

This course includes practice of linguistically and culturally varying interaction in different interactive situations, including the international context, using different communication channels. The students enhance their ability to act as active interlocutors and language users who listen to what others have to say. They develop their skills in forming opinions and negotiating meaning. They diversify the selection of strategies needed in different interactive situations. Themes related to interpersonal relationships and, in this context, mental, physical, and social well-being are dealt with in the course. The students also reflect on the significance of technology and digitalization to interaction and well-being. (Finnish National Board of Education 2016: 117-118)

As can be observed from the excerpt above, no specific grammar content or structures have been assigned to the course. This means that it is for the teacher to decide how and what kind of grammar content to teach through these themes and aims given in the National Core Curriculum. It could thus be argued that grammar is seen as an inseparable part of these elements present in the course description, occurring naturally as students face the need to express themselves in various ways.

Another way of looking at grammar is presented by Hall (2011: 65), who discusses the Chomskyan term Universal Grammar (UG), which refers to an innate knowledge of central language regularities and phenomena that helps children acquire their mother tongue, and which as a concept has since been adapted to second language learning and teaching as well. He argues that those who support this UG perspective on language learning tend to see explicit grammar instruction as unnecessary, while

those who consider conscious knowledge of language to be an essential part of actually learning to use it view it as beneficial (Hall 2011: 69). In other words, the former group thinks it is insufficient to focus solely on form, while the latter feels the same way about focusing exclusively on meaning. In my view, this illustrates well how these different ideas of the nature of grammar affect views on how it should be taught, while both still giving it a very central role in language learning. This seems to be a common topic of debate nowadays when thinking about grammar and its teaching: the focus is not perhaps so much on whether grammar should be taught at all, but rather on what it actually is and what is the best way to learn it.

In the present material, I approach grammar through the ideas of grammaring and functional grammar, i.e. grammar as a skill and as a naturally occurring, dynamic entity. I promote the view that grammar learning opportunities emerge in real communication, through individual needs of self-expression. However, Dykes's (2007: 5) definition of grammar as "a language to talk about language" is also relevant, as cases of more explicit grammar teaching can also be found in the material. I will address this issue of form-focused instruction within the framework of Communicative Language Teaching in more detail in chapter 3. Nevertheless, my view is that grammar is not a strictly defined set of rules that is somehow independent from language use, but that it is rather something that affects language learning, use and comprehension right from the beginning. From our very first words and sentences we begin to "experiment" with grammar, we notice regularities in others' speech and try to copy them, and often we are not even aware of the grammar learning processes that take place in our minds. I adhere to Larsen-Freeman's (2003: 25-26) idea of *dynamism*, that is, grammar and language are dynamic both over time and in real time: on one hand, the larger language norms and regularities change inevitably over time as they are modified in use and, on the other hand, language users have to make active, real-time use of their available resources in accordance with the current situation – before actual communication, the speaker or writer goes through an active process of decision-making in terms of what to say and how to say it, which "clearly entails a dynamic process" (ibid.). To me it seems thus like a great understatement to call grammar simply rules.

2.2 Recent developments in grammar teaching

As stated above, a key concern in grammar teaching seems to be whether grammar is seen as a fixed body of rules and structures, or if it is treated more as a changing, dynamic being or a skill. This, of course, also has an effect on what kinds of methods teachers choose when teaching grammar. According to Shastri (2010: 109), traditional methods focus on teaching grammar deductively: an

approach in which rules are taught first and examples and practice come after, assuming that the target language will be learned through the memorization of these rules. In fact, as Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 13) show us, the actual use of the target language has not always been the goal of language or grammar teaching, as is the case with the Grammar-Translation Method, which was originally used to teach students to read literature in the classical languages, Latin and Greek. The goal was indeed to be able to read texts in the target languages, not really to communicate in them. It was also thought that this exercise of translating items from one language to another would result both in increased proficiency in native language grammar and in intellectual growth (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 13).

As foreign language teaching began to aim at teaching learners to communicate in the target language(s), new oral-based methods such as the Direct Method and the Audio-Lingual Method were developed (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 25, 35). After these, in the 1970s and early 1980s, came what Larsen-Freeman (1987) describes as “a period of great methodological diversity”, during which several new methods were developed, e.g. the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response, Suggestopedia and the Natural Approach. She also states that it was the new interest in the 1980s to improve learners’ communicative competence that “reunified the field” (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 220). What is important now to understand about all of these methods is that they all had their own ways of dealing with grammar, some putting more emphasis on it than others. Indeed, as Hinkel and Fotos (2002: 17) state, there has been strong debate on the place of grammar teaching in the curriculum during these years. This means that some methods – e.g. the Grammar-Translation Method – put grammar instruction in the very center of foreign language teaching, while others – e.g. CLT – focus more on other aspects of language and believe grammatical skill to develop alongside them. In fact, with the emergence of the Communicative Approach came a period of time when grammar teaching was seen as completely unnecessary or even detrimental (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: vi, Krashen 1981). This view has later been widely contested, which I will discuss in greater detail in chapter 3.

Nowadays it seems that no one method is particularly favored. Gürbüz (2011: 68) uses the term “post-method era” to describe the current situation, where there are no methodological trends, and where students’ changing needs can be seen as essential in guiding language instruction. He continues to argue that technological developments and globalization play a central role in today’s English language teaching, as they have changed the role of English by making it a part of the everyday life of people around the globe. This view is shared by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 220-221),

who suggest that new ideas in the language teaching field in the 2000s have emerged as a reaction to two influences: the constant development of technology and globalization. These ideas often bring about concerns related to e.g. culture and politics, as English as a global language can be seen as carrying notable power with it. In addition, as Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 221) point out, some have begun to question the use of native-speaker language as the standard in language instruction, as English is nowadays so widely used, taking new forms around the world, and does not need to be regarded as the property of native speakers. Considering these views, it could be argued that the teaching of an explicit “correct” grammar is questionable, as in the global world English is constantly under construction, constantly changing and evolving.

However, this idea of Postmethod is perhaps not without issue. Hall (2011: 101-102) discusses some of the central criticism and concerns related to Postmethod, suggesting that it runs a risk of becoming a method in itself in that it easily becomes part of the old narrative where each new method or approach is objectively better than the last one. In other words, even though the key idea of Postmethod seems to be that teachers can freely choose ways of teaching that best serve the individual needs of each student and group (Hall 2011: 100), there is a risk that it is understood as the new best way to teach, thus becoming an approach that teachers again seek to follow. Hall (2011: 101) also discusses two other problems related to Postmethod: First, it is not always true that teachers can just choose their preferred ways of teaching, as there are policies, expectations and other such factors that might affect their decision-making. Second, this idea of free choice can in reality be quite burdensome for teachers, as it leaves them with a lot of responsibility in terms of planning their teaching and materials, which, in turn, can lead to teachers relying heavily on textbooks. What is visible from all of these concerns is that teachers do seem to seek for some kind of guidelines for their teaching – sometimes they even have to do so. Thinking “outside the method” is thus perhaps not so easy. In my view, then, quality materials play a central role in today’s instruction, as teachers need materials that are easy to access and use in order to be able to meet all kinds of needs without it becoming an overwhelming burden.

2.3 Grammar teaching in Finland

The current trends and methods in teaching English grammar in Finland have not been studied that widely, even though grammar teaching in general has been looked at from many different angles. However, some theses and dissertations can be found that discuss these practices and also attitudes related to them. I have chosen some of these studies and will discuss them in order to form a picture

of current grammar teaching trends and attitudes towards grammar teaching in Finland. These studies were selected as almost all of them are very recent and they help in their own ways to see why there is a need for communicative grammar teaching materials in modern language classrooms in Finland. I will first take a look at the studies that are based on EFL teaching, after which I will briefly discuss two studies that focus on Finnish language teaching. Lastly, I will take a look at two English textbooks that follow the new National Core Curriculum. In my own experience, different teaching trends and methods are indeed widely discussed in, for example, teacher education, but what is perhaps lacking is a way of transferring this new information to older generations of language teachers. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson state (2011: 219), not all different practices have spread evenly to all schools or classrooms around the globe, and the same is true for Finland as a country. In my view, a lot depends on teachers' own initiative and willingness to find and try out new views, ideas and approaches.

As stated in the introduction, the present material package is a continuation of my bachelor's thesis, in which I sought to find out how grammar teaching has changed in Finland during the past decades and whether CLT is visible in these changes (Anttila 2015). The study is qualitative and the data for it was gathered with a questionnaire that was distributed via email to teachers around Finland. The results showed that a large portion of the selected respondents had implemented at least some communicative activities into their teaching, some on a very regular basis. There were, however, those who stated that their teaching had not changed during their career and who did not make use of communicative resources in grammar teaching. What is also worth noting is that all of the chosen respondents used some traditional grammar teaching methods as well, none of them relying solely on communicative activities.

In her master's thesis, Takala (2016) takes a look at how three different teachers teach grammar, the reasons behind the decisions they make in terms of their teaching and also how this teaching varies between different school levels. For her qualitative data, she first observed three different EFL lessons of three different teachers, whom she then interviewed immediately afterwards (Takala 2016: 30). From the point of view of the present work, it is particularly relevant to observe the findings Takala has made in terms of the different grammar teaching methods the teachers used and whether they match their personal teaching goals. What she discovered was that while the three teachers describe their goals as mainly communicative and otherwise very similar to the goals of CLT as a teaching approach, their actual practices do not quite fit together with these ideas (Takala 2016: 74-75). In other words, these communicative goals were not visible in the teachers' grammar teaching. Takala

(2016: 75) suggests that this might be due to the fact that traditional views of the nature of grammar are very persistent and perhaps thus make it difficult for teachers to approach its teaching from a communicative point of view. In my view, this study shows that there is a need for such teaching materials as the present one, as there clearly are teachers who struggle to bring the ideas and means of CLT into their grammar teaching even when they would want to do so. My argument here is that if teachers are given ready-to-use materials and tools for teaching grammar communicatively, they are more likely to at least try them out as opposed to when they have to design their own tasks and activities from scratch. They can also give them an idea of what communicative grammar teaching can be like and help get started with the transition from traditional methods to something different. Even though a great deal depends on teachers themselves in terms of what is taught in the classroom and in what ways, by designing all kinds of materials it is possible to lower the bar for experimenting with new methods.

The second master's thesis I am going to discuss is one by Sormunen (2014). In her study she examines upper secondary school students' opinions both about EFL grammar learning and teaching and about feedback and error correction, and also what they think is the connection between grammar and communication and how they would describe their usual grammar lesson. Again, what seem most relevant in terms of the present work are the connections students see (or do not see) between grammar and communication. What Sormunen (2014: 55-59) found out was that most of the respondents thought that practicing conversation was more important than practicing grammar, stating for example that it is more useful and efficient to learn conversation and that it is more important to be understood than it is to be grammatically perfect. Some also saw speaking as more fun than learning grammar. There were, however, those who thought it to be important to maintain a balance between the two and who saw grammar as a helpful and relevant part of making conversation (Sormunen 2014: 59). In addition, it is important to mention that, in general, the students did not find grammar completely useless, but recognized it as a central part of language learning, using and comprehension (Sormunen 2014: 70-71). In my view, many arguments can be drawn from these findings for teaching grammar communicatively. First, since many students find practicing conversation more important, efficient and fun, it would make sense to teach grammar in that way along with other teaching methods. By combining a focus on form with speaking and meaning-making, it can be easier for students to see the relevance of learning grammar in terms of conveying messages and being understood, and also to understand how their grammatical decisions can affect the outcome of a conversation. Second, since the students already saw grammar as a central element in language use, what better way to really show and practice its importance than in actual use in

authentic texts, discussions and contexts? Instead of dealing with grammar as an independent entity from other language areas, I consider it very important to show it in its “natural habitat”: real language use. In other words, I think that through communicative grammar teaching it is easier to show students that grammar is not something that is artificially created or “forced” on language, but rather it is something that is continuously present in our everyday lives. Lastly, some of the students stated that in their view, being understood is more important than always being grammatically accurate. This is a common idea in CLT as well, as will be discussed in the following chapters. However, grammar, too, has a lot to do with fluency and getting one’s message across as intended: by choosing particular forms we convey particular meanings, attitudes and so on. While it is true that many kinds of grammatical inaccuracies can occur without them disrupting the language user’s fluency or changing the meaning of their intended message, there are also those that can indeed result in misunderstandings. Again, I argue that with communicative activities it is possible to show students that learning grammar does not need to be a matter of learning to be grammatically impeccable, but rather a matter of learning to be grammatically *aware*.

Vornanen (2016) studied the contents of five different English textbooks in her master’s thesis, seeking to find out how these books view grammar and grammar teaching and which teaching methods are preferred in them. She states that while language teaching in general has moved to a communicative direction, it is hard to say whether these ideas are actually put into use when it comes to grammar teaching (Vornanen 2016: 7-8). It is clearly of interest to discuss the findings of this study here, as the present teaching material seeks to fill this exact gap in English grammar teaching. What Vornanen (2016: 64, 67) found out was that the studied textbooks did not implement a communicative approach to grammar teaching and that they had separated explicit grammar and moved it to the end of each book. However, she does also note that there were instances where meaning and use were clearly more emphasized than form. In addition, Vornanen (2016: 68) states that contextualization was lacking in all of the studied books, even though some did try to take it into account by, for example, having a narrative in the activity instead of separate, independent sentences. While some developments towards meaning- and use-focused grammar teaching can perhaps be seen here, the results do seem to suggest that aspects of real communication and production are still largely neglected in the grammar sections of English textbooks. While textbooks do not, of course, tell the whole truth about what happens in language classrooms, their impact should not be underestimated. As Tergujeff’s (2013: 52-53) findings show, teachers very often rely on textbooks in their teaching, going through them carefully, in addition to which they are also used by students outside the classroom. It can thus be argued that the nature of the teaching materials at hand can have a great

impact on the teaching methods and techniques teachers end up choosing. The present teaching material can hopefully work as an encouragement for teachers to try out the communicative activities that now seem to be missing at least from some textbooks.

The last master's thesis I am going to take a look at briefly focuses on the Finnish language instead of English, but the findings are nevertheless interesting from the point of view of other languages as well. Kaasila (2005) studied the differences in sentence structures between two groups of 7th graders, who had been taught grammar differently: the first group was taught according to their textbook, which focused on traditional grammar teaching, and the second group was taught by means of pedagogical grammar, meaning in this case that a focus on sentence structures emerged from language use, not the other way around. Both groups wrote essays after being taught in these ways and those texts were then analyzed. Kaasila (2005: 80-81, 84) made a number of interesting findings based on the students' essays, but what I found most interesting in the context of the present study was that the second group used a greater variety of text types in their essays and their texts were also more argumentative. She argues that using texts as the basis for grammar teaching encourages students to experiment with different text types, as they become more familiar with them in this way (Kaasila 2005: 87). How I interpret this is that by showing students grammar points, such as sentence structures, in larger contexts and in actual use it is easier for them to actually put them to use later on in creative ways. As will be discussed in the following chapter, Communicative Language Teaching promotes the idea that all language elements should be taught in context and through real use of the target language instead of providing students with isolated rules and examples.

In her article-based doctoral dissertation, Rättyä (2017) examines languaging and visualization exercises and what they can reveal about students' knowledge and ability to apply word classes and sentence constituents during activities. In addition to studying the link between these methods and grammar elements, she seeks to show that there is a need for new, meaningful grammar teaching methods and tries to both develop them and to form a deeper understanding of their theoretical basis (Rättyä 2017: 44). The data consists of teaching experiments conducted with student teachers in class teacher education in two different universities and also with eighth-graders in two different upper comprehensive schools. Based on her findings, Rättyä (2017: 110) argues that in order to teach grammar meaningfully, the learned content should be used continuously in diverse ways and previously learned knowledge should work as a basis for acquiring new information. In her view, languaging and visualization help both the student and the teacher to monitor the learning process, to give and receive feedback and to detect potential sources for misunderstandings or misconceptions

(Rättyä 2017: 110). If I compare these views and findings to the present teaching material, several similar ideas can be found. In teaching grammar communicatively, one of the key ideas is to deal with grammar in larger contexts instead of separating it from other language learning, as will be discussed later in chapter 3. I also argue that communicative activities, too, help both students and teachers to see how grammar elements are applied in practice: students get a chance to put their skills to real use, while teachers can observe this use, guide it, give feedback and make notes of possible problems to be discussed at a suitable time. Both of these studies are motivated by a need to renew the field of grammar teaching and to make it more suitable for the modern language classroom and modern language learning needs. Rättyä's dissertation is yet another example of the fact that in Finland, as in many other countries, grammar teaching raises many questions and is highly debated in the language teaching field, which is why new angles to it and materials for its teaching are needed.

Lastly, I will briefly discuss two English textbooks I examined in order to see how they approach grammar and its teaching. I also looked for exercises that teach grammar communicatively, i.e. in-context and through real speech or writing with a communicative goal. The books I have chosen are *Insights Course 2* by Otava and *On Track 2* by Sanoma Pro, both of which adhere to the new National Core Curriculum. They are both also textbooks for the same course that the present teaching material is designed for. I examined how grammar is presented in these books and whether there were communicative activities in their grammar sections. In both of them, grammar is separated as its own section and placed at the end of the book. Another similarity is that grammar rules and theory are in Finnish and they contain a lot of grammar terminology, lists and tables of words and expressions and sentence examples that are mostly out of context (or their context is expressed rather vaguely). In *On Track 2*, the foreword of the book encourages students to speak English as much as possible, stating that talking in the target language grows students' confidence and is altogether a valuable skill to have. This idea, however, does not seem to be present in the grammar section, as there are only a few exercises where oral skills are needed and almost all of them require simple "mechanical" translation of separate sentences or words. No communicative grammar exercises can be found and, in my view, grammar is presented in a very traditional way, as a separate entity and not as a dynamic part of language use. *Insights Course 2* has a more diverse grammar section: each grammar topic begins with a short summary or description of the topic, after which there is usually an "Engage" section, which encourages students to somehow use the grammar element/elements before it/they are looked into in more detail. After this comes the "Study" section, which consists of traditional grammar rules and theory, then the "Activate" section and, lastly, the "Homework" section. Similarly to *On Track 2*, there are a lot of traditional grammar activities, such as gap-filling exercises, multiple choice and

sentence translation and transformation. There are, however, some exercises that are more communicative in nature: story-telling and writing, describing events, routes etc. to a partner and searching for information online and reporting it to others. These activities seem to combine a communicative goal while still maintaining a focus on grammar – in many of them, students are instructed to pay attention to a certain grammar aspect as they are working. Even though in this book, too, grammar is largely approached in a somewhat traditional manner, clearly some effort has been made to present it in more practical contexts and uses. Still, I argue that there is plenty of room for additional communicative grammar teaching materials, as at least these books give rather limited opportunities for it.

In this last part of chapter 2, I have sought to form an idea of current points of interest in grammar teaching in Finland. What is clear is that grammar teaching is to this day a very complex matter in language classrooms and it seems that it could still be looking for its place in many ways. While grammar is generally viewed as an important part of language learning and use, there is evidence that both teachers and teaching materials struggle to keep their instruction in line with the larger-scale changes in the language teaching field, such as the grown emphasis of communicative competence. It thus seems important to develop means and tools with which it is easier for teachers to try new grammar teaching methods and techniques in their language classrooms. It can be hard to shake off old habits or to let go of deep-rooted methods and views, but I argue that with the right materials it is possible to quite effortlessly experiment with new and different ideas.

3 TEACHING GRAMMAR COMMUNICATIVELY

In this chapter, I will focus on building the methodological basis and framework for the material package. I will begin by looking at some definitions and ideas concerning Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), covering also the other key methods that can be seen as part of the Communicative Approach. Then I will briefly discuss aspects of assessment from the point of view of CLT, shedding also light on how assessment is viewed in the material package. After that I will explore the benefits that have been linked together with CLT, explaining why it could be useful for communicative methods to be a part of every language classroom. Lastly, I will address some of the central criticism that has emerged towards CLT.

3.1 Defining CLT

Around the 1970s, educators began to notice that students were often unable to communicate properly in the target language outside the classroom, which made them question the very form-focused language teaching methods of the time (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 115). In other words, even though the students were able to perform in the classroom, they seemed to lack understanding of the very function or functions of the target language. As Hall (2011: 93) states, this was a time when people were increasingly moving across international borders to work abroad and thus had an urgent need to use the target language. This led to the emergence of communicative competence as a new center of attention, defined by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 238) as “knowing when and how to say what to whom.” What evolved from these ideas was the Communicative Approach, which, according to Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 6), sees acquiring communicative ability as the goal of language learning. Adhering to this theoretical perspective, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) seeks to set the ability to communicate properly and fluently as the aim of language teaching (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 115). Unlike methods that mainly focus on approaching language through its structure, CLT emphasizes the importance of communication, using practices that are considered to improve communicative competence. It can thus be argued that accuracy, as Gürbüz (2011: 67) puts it, “only matters if lack of it interferes with communication.”

Communicative language learning is sometimes compared to first language learning. Shastri (2010: 110), for example, states that the Communicative Approach promotes grammar learning that is similar to the way a child learns the grammar of their mother tongue: he absorbs and internalizes it without

being explicitly taught its rules. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 121) describe it, “[t]he grammar and vocabulary that the students learn follow from the function, situational context and the roles of the interlocutors”. This means that the content that is actually learned rises from real communicative needs instead of being strictly dictated in advance. Of course, by choosing certain scenarios and topics for activities, the teacher can somewhat predict and/or control what kind of forms, expressions, vocabulary etc. will come up.

In terms of the actual language lessons and classrooms, a whole variety of practices can take place under the principles of CLT, depending on how each teacher understands and decides to apply these ideas, which gives the approach a certain flexibility (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 115). Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 7) similarly state that unlike with the more traditional grammar teaching methods, there are no particular instructional practices associated with CLT, i.e., there are no specific methods or procedures that are seen as emblematic of it. Instead, as suggested by Howatt (1984: 279), two different versions of the Communicative Approach can be identified: a weak one and a strong one. He further elaborates that the weak version entails an idea of “learning to use English”, while the strong version focuses on “using English to learn it” (ibid.). Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 131) explain this difference so that in the weak version of the Communicative Approach, the learning process is more controlled in the sense that the teacher provides learners with opportunities to practice their communication skills, while in the strong version the language as a whole is indeed learned through communication. Hall (2011: 94) states that it is the weak form that has had a greater influence on the language teaching domain in western cultures. As Savignon (2000, 2005: 645) argues, CLT can thus be viewed as a shift in thinking in terms of the *goals* and *processes* of language teaching and learning, which can then take many forms in practice.

In CLT, then, the learner is in the center of action (Savignon 2002: 4). According to Hall (2011: 93-94), in CLT the focus shifted not only from structures to functions and communication, but also to learners as individuals with specific needs. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 122) describe the role of the teacher in a CLT class as that of a facilitator and an advisor: they create potential communication situations and help and monitor students during activities. This gives students more responsibility in their own learning, which clearly differs from the more teacher-centered approaches. Even though there are no classroom practices that would be considered as an essential part of CLT, there are tasks and activities that often occur within communicative classrooms. These include information-gap exercises, problem-solving tasks and role-plays, all of which have communicative goals and are built around the specific content derived from a specific context (Hall 2011: 94).

In the present material I try to make use of these ideas of CLT and communicative competence in various ways. I define CLT as a method or an approach for teaching students to communicate effectively and purposefully by using their available resources, i.e., to make the best use of their language skills, even when they are limited. Knowledge of grammar helps students form utterances that best meet their communicative needs, which is why the present material package combines these two aspects. The contents of the teaching material seek to encourage students to put their existing knowledge into use, to experiment with new things and to generally learn communication skills in various ways while maintaining a certain awareness of grammar. This means that as they are working, students come across situations where they need to make use of particular forms in order to convey particular meanings. I argue that this is the key intersection where both grammar and communication can be learned in a meaningful way and in real-life contexts. I agree with the statement that in CLT the process is often also the goal, or at least a great part of it. What is perhaps still unclear at this point is how assessment and feedback are viewed and realized in CLT. I will now discuss this issue in the next part of the present chapter.

3.2 Assessment in CLT

Assessment can seem slightly problematic at first when thinking about communicative grammar teaching. After all, if successful communication is in the center of language teaching, how, then, do we deal with errors, structural problems and other such matters? How do we fine-tune our students' language use without compromising the idea of successful communication being the key goal of language learning? Is it necessary to explicitly assess students at all?

It is first necessary to understand that assessment does not take place only in the grading of exams and papers or other such definite situations. East (2012: 165) describes assessment as a continuum, which consists of all the various assessment situations and activities from the ones taking place in-class and mid-task to the ones that are considered more formal, such as tests. This means that assessment is an ongoing process that takes various forms. It is not necessary at all times to produce concrete material that can then be assessed through grades or written feedback. This idea is supported in the present teaching material in that even though some tasks and exercises result in material that could be, for example, graded, the central idea in these communicative activities is to assess the students in interaction and to give feedback continuously as they work.

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 116-128) describe a class in Canada for immigrants where principles of CLT are put into use. In their review, they also discuss how evaluation is accomplished and how students' errors are dealt with. In terms of evaluation, an important point is made: "The student who has the most control of the structures and vocabulary is not always the best communicator" (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 125). It should be kept in mind when carrying out communicative grammar exercises that the mindset behind the exercise is still communicative even though the topic is grammar. One possible effect of this is the way errors are reacted to: as Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 125) explain in their review, when fluency is in the center of an activity, the teacher can simply make notes of possible mistakes, if necessary, and come back to them later on when more focus is put on accuracy. In other words, it can be argued that assessment and feedback in CLT often value fluency over accuracy, but that this does not mean that there is no room at all for the latter. To me this means letting go of old ideas of perfect language and emphasizing instead the aspects that affect comprehension and conveying messages. If an error in grammar does not hinder the communication process, it is then, from the point of view of communicative teaching, unnecessary to correct it. It could be argued that forgetting, for example, the third person -s in a sentence does not usually lead to any trouble in understanding what the speaker wants to say, while the inability to mark a verb for tense might do so. The teacher should always take into consideration the context of the task at hand and decide from there which points are crucial for fluency and comprehension.

As East (2012: 175) points out, assessment should result in information on what the students already know and also what they still need to work on in the future. The goal is not to point out weaknesses, but to map each individual's skills and to help students use their current knowledge to advance further in their learning. This idea is also supported by the National Core Curriculum for general upper secondary schools (2016: 115), which states that one of the general objectives of foreign language teaching is that students are able to assess their own skills and to plan their future studies according to their own personal needs. Again we come back to the idea that the focus should not be on underlining flaws, but rather on helping students develop their language skills and use on a larger scale. When the goal is fluent communication, assessment should provide information on how each student could achieve just that – instead of a simple list of errors.

3.3 Benefits of learning communicatively

As stated before, CLT puts its emphasis on communicative competence. This entails several different

aspects, such as deducing other participants' intentions and learning the appropriate use of language forms (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 119, 121). As Hall (2011: 93) describes it, the goal is to learn to communicate effectively in the target language. In this time of globalization, advanced technology, social media and immigration, it is an everyday phenomenon for many people to come across situations where they need to use English, regardless of their language skills or level of proficiency. Gürbüz (2011: 68) states that it is especially the status of the English language that is affected by such phenomena, agreeing with the idea that more and more attention needs to be paid to language users' fluency. Many traditional teaching methods and approaches focus on perfecting students' knowledge on the form of the target language before actual use, but due to reasons such as the ones described above, there is a need to learn communication and self-expression early on in the learning process. I argue that this is one of the most important reasons for implementing communicative tasks and activities into teaching: they teach students to use their available resources to express themselves and to communicate in various situations, and they present different aspects of language – including form – in real contexts and in real use. It is also commonly thought that such activities allow the students to better stand out as individuals, as they can share their views, ideas and opinions (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 124). Even though there certainly is a place for form-focused instruction, a topic I will discuss in more detail in the following part of this chapter, in my view, communicative activities help build bridges between the more abstract forms and the more concrete functions and actions. Indeed, as Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 123-124) argue, in CLT there is a strong underlying idea that communicative tasks feel more useful to many students and thus boost their motivation to learn.

An important point in CLT is to learn that different forms and other linguistic choices convey different ideas, attitudes and so on – simply knowing a structure and using it in a grammatically correct way may not result in a situationally appropriate utterance. Hinkel and Fotos (2002: 107) talk about Grammar of Choice, arguing that students need to be taught about the effects and uses of different grammatical forms as a natural part of grammar teaching, since not doing so may lead to unnecessary confusion later on. As Cook (2016: 273-274) puts it, the rationale behind the teaching in CLT is that students learn to “use grammar for a purpose”. In addition, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 124) say that it is possible that in CLT more attention is paid to culture in the sense that some key parts of it, such as nonverbal communication, are more clearly present in communicative tasks. All of these suggestions point to the same idea that CLT aims at teaching real language and language in use, connecting for example grammar to authentic contexts and functions, thus trying to establish a focus on meaning while taking a look at different forms. Students can also learn the value of nonverbal

resources in communication, helping them manage in situations where their skills might prove limited.

As stated above in chapter 2.1, Shastri (2010: 111) states that CLT emphasizes Functional Grammar. Here, key to grammar learning is exposure to the target language and the use of it. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 120) agree with this idea in that in CLT “[t]he target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study”. This means that the target language is used and absorbed in many forms right from the beginning of the learning process. In this way, the language is hoped to become more and more familiar to learners, developing, for example, their internal understanding of grammar etc. I personally find this an essential argument for implementing communicative activities into language teaching: there should be plenty of exposure to and chances to use the target language, because it is arguably a very different thing to know a language or its grammar on paper than it is to actually use it in real life. By learning language through the use of it, learners’ personal communicative needs emerge at least somewhat naturally and thus they have a chance to learn new forms, vocabulary and other things in a context that is, at least in that particular moment, very relevant to them. This is, as Shastri (2010: 110) points out, similar to first language learning, and while more explicit instruction is useful and perhaps even necessary in many situations, it is my view that this idea of absorbing language through exposure and use should not be neglected in language classrooms.

As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 121) argue, communicative interaction can provide students with opportunities to practice meaning negotiation. This means that they work together by communicating to reach a conclusion or agreement. While many other methods allow students to work in pairs or groups, they do not always encourage students to actually talk much. When students work through communication, in my view, they work on many different levels: they try to complete the task which has its own specific learning goal(s), they negotiate meanings and take turns to talk, they use various structural elements and they search for words and other resources both individually and together to reach their goals. In a sense, the way of doing the task or activity is a goal in itself. Learning to negotiate meaning is an important part of everyday communication, which is why creating opportunities for it in the classroom is essential. From the point of view of grammar, this means learning to understand the meanings carried by different forms and the smaller tones and nuances that can have a great effect on the conveyed message as a whole.

In CLT, all four skills that are traditionally identified, i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking,

are worked on (Shastri 2010: 111, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 125). While many other methods focus on specific skills separately, in CLT they are all, in many ways, related. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 125) describe it, a writer writes with the potential reader in mind, while the reader tries to interpret the writer's intentions. This, as they argue, can clearly be seen as a sort of negotiation and communication between the author and the receiver. So, for example, if we design an activity where students first read a text – e.g. a blog post about a current topic – and then discuss certain aspects of it with a pair or a small group – e.g. *How does the blogger feel about the topic? What might affect their opinion?* etc. –, we have a two-phased task in which both of them are communicative and the different skills are tied together. Lastly, as a potential third phase, the class as a whole could discuss the text and the questions, or different pairs or groups could each take turns to present their ideas to others. A focus on form can be brought to this task by asking students questions such as “How does the writer express that something is their *opinion*?” or “What kind of elements makes this a blog post (instead of, for example, a piece of news)?”. What I want to show with this example is that using a communicative task such as this one can help bring together the different language skills that are practiced in the language classroom. Such a task can also rather easily be modified and developed – for example, the students could then proceed to write a response to the blog post, or a debate could be held about the topic of the text. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 220), “[t]he predominant view is that language learning is best served when students are interacting – completing a task or learning content or resolving real-life issues – where linguistic structures are not taught one by one, but where attention to linguistic form is given as necessary”.

Hinkel and Fotos (2002: 132) state that English grammar cannot be fully understood at the sentence level; study at the discourse level is necessary to learn all the different functions and contextual implications. They state that by making this change at the level of teaching “we are in a position to teach grammar both as a resource for creating discourse in context and as a resource for using language to communicate – both receptively and productively” (Hinkel and Fotos 2002: 132). This means that while it certainly can be effective at times to teach grammar at the sentence level by focusing on certain forms and, for example, drilling them, it is important to eventually shift to the discourse level to give a comprehensive picture of how the grammar points actually function. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 124-125) add to this view by stating that when students work at the discourse – or suprasentential – level, they also learn how cohesion and coherence work. An example of this is the use of expressions such as “I would like to begin with”, “in addition” and “lastly”, all of which give structure to texts, organize their parts etc. By adding a communicative perspective to

grammar teaching, the teacher ensures that in addition to understanding different forms on paper, students have a chance to learn what kind of effects their grammatical decisions have on the discourse level and real communication.

The last point I would like to discuss is one presented by Cook (2016: 277): communicative activities usually imitate real-world events instead of being specifically tailored for the language classroom. A large portion of traditional teaching material has been designed particularly from the point of view of language learning and teaching, meant to be used in a language classroom. While this kind of material can be beneficial in many situations, it can be hard for students to transfer this information to the real world and into spontaneous communication. By using communicative tasks and activities that are based on real-life experiences and/or take advantage of authentic materials, the teacher can make a statement: language is learned for reasons outside the classroom, to be used in the everyday life to express oneself as an individual and to have meaningful conversations in the target language. I myself have, as a student, many times posed the question: *Why do we need to learn this?* Already in 1937, Neuvonen (1937: 231) stated that it is important to “build bridges” from the abstract grammar points to the actual lives of our students, and communicative activities are one way to do this.

I have now discussed some of the key arguments for implementing communicative activities into language – and more specifically grammar – teaching. A central theme has been their connection to real language use and discourse knowledge, which is important in today’s world where different languages and people with very differing language skills meet every day. In the following part of this chapter I will discuss CLT from a more critical point of view, but based on the evidence presented above it could be argued that there certainly are good reasons for implementing communicative activities beside other language classroom practices. The present material package aims at providing teachers with ideas and resources for doing just that.

3.4 Challenges of CLT

Even though the present teaching material is based on the idea of learning through communication, it should be noted that this does not mean the rejection of form-focused instruction. When the trend of communicative teaching emerged, it brought with it approaches that saw explicit grammar teaching as unnecessary. This view has since been largely questioned. As stated by Nassaji and Fotos (2011: 8), there is empirical evidence that it is not sufficient to focus solely on meaning with no regard for form. Hinkel and Fotos (2002: 137), too, argue that some explicit instruction is needed in order to

reach higher levels of accuracy. The importance of grammar instruction is thus widely acknowledged (Nassaji and Fotos 2011: 14), which is why in the present material I try to bring CLT and a focus on form together. As Savignon (2005: 645) argues, “the CLT does not exclude a focus on metalinguistic awareness or knowledge of rules of syntax”.

According to Klapper (2003, as quoted by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 115), CLT is flexible due to it not having any strictly outlined teaching techniques, which is why it has lasted for several decades as a relevant approach. However, I argue that this slightly blurry image of what CLT truly is can also lead into it being hard for teachers to implement, especially in contexts such as grammar teaching. What is important, then, is to truly grasp the idea of a communicative goal. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 123) explain, in true communication there is always a purpose and a freedom to choose what to say and how. Tasks, exercises and other classroom activities should thus be designed so that these aspects of true communication are enabled. However, as stated above, putting this kind of an underlying mindset into actual use in language or especially grammar teaching can seem tricky as opposed to utilizing a precisely formulated teaching method or technique, and can also take more time in terms of preparations. It is for this reason, too, that there is a need for practical tools for teachers on how to approach grammar communicatively.

Hall (2011: 95) states that some have criticized the idea of communicative activities being more authentic or genuine than those that have emerged from other methods, since those activities, too, have been taken out of their original contexts and placed into a classroom, making them artificial. From this point of view, it seems that the only truly authentic material is found in the real world and in real communication. However, while I agree with the fact that a guided classroom activity will rarely perfectly simulate a real-world scenario, I still argue that it is useful to gather ideas and material for teaching from genuine experiences and texts, such as the news. In terms of grammar teaching, I think that the use of communicative activities and tasks can help teachers make grammar more relevant to their students, as grammar points are presented in relation to real-world situations and contexts instead of occurring in a so-called vacuum. In other words, I think it is helpful to show students grammar in action and to do this inductively, so that they can discover it through real communicative needs.

Cook (2016: 276), too, takes a rather critical look at CLT. One concern he expresses is that CLT may not be suitable for all cultures or all kinds of students. He states that in cultures where silence and respect is the norm, approaches such as CLT might not be the most suitable option. In addition, he

claims that CLT is more appropriate for students who are field-independent, extroverts and less academic (Cook 2016: 278). While it might be true that communicative activities feel more natural to some students than they do to others, I still see it as beneficial to include them beside other classroom practices. In my view, using different kinds of methods and practices and changing things up every now and then is beneficial for the students, because this way different kinds of learners can find something that they like and that works well for them in terms of language learning. Communicative activities also encourage students to practice spontaneous conversations, which is arguably a useful skill for any language user. It is for these reasons that through the present teaching material I want to encourage language teachers to experiment with communicative activities in their grammar teaching, even when it differs greatly from their usual practices. I agree with Cook's (2016: 283) statement that CLT needs to be balanced with other teaching methods, which is why my material package is designed to work as a resource for ideas rather than a strict set of instructions on how to teach grammar.

Some of the other concerns Cook (2016: 277-280) brings up are that CLT has a *laissez-faire* attitude, that it does not include so-called pump-priming and that its materials tend to rely on "holiday communication". He states that a *laissez-faire* attitude – which in this case means that learning is something that is uncontrolled by the teacher and happens inside students' heads, giving them more responsibility of their own learning – can lead to the idea that anything goes as long as the students are using the target language. By the lack of pump-priming, then, he means that in CLT there is not a preceding phase of basic teaching before actual language use, and that necessary resources are assumed to pre-exist so that communicative activities can be performed. Lastly, he argues that many communicative teaching materials focus on communication that revolves around tourist activities and generally depicts life or language use as "jolly", thus possibly trivializing human existence itself. As with all teaching methods, it is possible to go overboard with the ideas and principles of CLT, and in my view, this is the case in situations like the ones described above. Even though communication as such is at the center of CLT, tasks and activities should always be meaningful and useful and have clear aims that teachers can explain and justify both to themselves and their students. In addition, as I have stated above, I think that the use of authentic materials and real-life experiences is an important part of CLT, which is why I try to promote such aspects in the present material, instead of "holiday communication". It is, of course, good to make language learning fun for the students, but this does not need to result in the omitting of everything but happy and cheerful topics.

In this part of the chapter, I have taken a look at some of the central challenges of CLT. As is the case

with all teaching methods, there are aspects that need to be taken into consideration before and during the implementation of communicative activities. It is always important to prepare well and to think about the reasons for doing a certain task or activity in a certain way. By trying out different methods and ideas teachers can reach different kinds of students and perhaps even learn something new about teaching themselves. It is for this reason that I have designed the present material package to work as a pool of resources, hopefully encouraging teachers to try out communicative activities in their grammar teaching – not as a substitute for their current practices, but as a complement or as an added spice to them. Many of the problems discussed above can be avoided by mixing and matching different methods and practices, which can be made easier by designing tools and materials that are easy to use and adjust.

4 FRAMEWORK OF THE MATERIAL PACKAGE

In this part of the text I will discuss the framework of the teaching material, shedding light on its aims, task types, how and where it is meant to be used and how assessment is viewed and can be carried out within its boundaries. The aim is to give a clearer picture of the actual material by linking the more abstract ideas and goals with the concrete exercises and elements in it. I will begin by discussing the aims of my material package and the ways in which it can be used by language teachers.

4.1 Aims

The primary aim of the present material package is to give ideas and inspiration to language teachers for their grammar teaching. As stated in the chapters above, the traditional way of teaching grammar is still quite prominent and while it surely has its place in language classes, it is generally good to incorporate different ways of teaching and to give context to what is being taught. This may sometimes feel challenging with grammar, as it is very often presented as a list of rules and gap-filling exercises in English textbooks – sometimes even as a separate section at the end of the book. The present teaching material aims to work as a kind of bridge between these real-life contexts and grammar rules while maintaining a communicative mindset. It has also been designed so that teachers can quickly browse through it and pick exercises and ideas without having to commit to CLT on a larger scale. Hopefully this encourages potential users and makes it easier to experiment with the material.

The package and its themes are based on the contents of the second compulsory A-level English course (ENA2) as described in the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools (2016: 117-118). It focuses on interaction and its many different forms and channels, covering themes such as interpersonal relationships, well-being, technology, digitalization and how all of these are intertwined. The present material aims to work as a teaching tool for this course, but it can also be used on other courses and levels either as it is or by adjusting it to fit each situation, theme, group etc. Ideally this material package works as a well of ideas from which language teachers can pick activities for different needs: to warm up for a grammar session, to fill in gaps during a lesson, to spice things up or to engage in a larger project.

Lastly, one of the aims of this teaching material is to help see grammar in a new or different way. It

is quite easy to get stuck in a certain way of teaching, especially if it is the way you yourself have been taught in school. Often it seems that grammar teaching is unpleasant both to teachers and to students, which is why in this material I strive to show that it can and should be a natural part of *all* language teaching, emerging from real conversations and communication. By looking at this material, teachers can hopefully see how potential “grammar lessons” are present in all kinds of activities and how the need for different forms, tenses etc. emerges from real-life situations. Even when a more traditional way of teaching grammar is preferred, the present material can help build bridges between grammar rules and the real-life contexts in which they are being put into use.

4.2 Target group

As already stated above, this material package is designed to be used in upper secondary school on the second compulsory A-level English course *ENA2: People and their networks*. Below is the course description from the National Core Curriculum.

2. People and their networks (ENA2)

This course includes practice of linguistically and culturally varying interaction in different interactive situations, including the international context, using different communication channels. The students enhance their ability to act as active interlocutors and language users who listen to what others have to say. They develop their skills in forming opinions and negotiating meaning. They diversify the selection of strategies needed in different interactive situations. Themes related to interpersonal relationships and, in this context, mental, physical, and social well-being are dealt with in the course. The students also reflect on the significance of technology and digitalization to interaction and well-being. (Finnish National Board of Education 2016: 117-118)

The intended target group is thus students taking this particular course and/or students studying English at this level. The material package can, however, be used on other courses and levels as well either as it is or by picking and modifying the ideas as needed. The course emphasizes interaction in its many different forms, which is why the activities and tasks in the present material largely revolve around it. It is perhaps exactly courses like this in which grammar teaching may feel tricky, as the focus should be on good communication and strict grammar teaching can seem a bit secondary. This is one of the main reasons for choosing this particular target course, as I think teachers would truly benefit from having a tool such as the present material at their disposal when teaching it. Grammar is thus taught and learned in the context of interaction and through topics mentioned in the course description above, e.g. interpersonal relationships, well-being and technology.

In short, the present teaching material supports the contents and goals of the aforementioned English course and aims to work as a supplementary resource alongside the principal teaching materials, such

as textbooks. To use it on other courses or levels might require some rethinking or modifying, but many of the exercises are nevertheless very applicable or ready to use as such. It is thus worth browsing through the material when looking for grammar teaching ideas, even if the target group is different than what is intended here.

4.3 Task types

The material is divided into eight sets and each set contains three different types of exercises: a quick communicative activity that can easily be picked and implemented during a lesson, a communicative task that requires a bit more time and possibly some preparations, and lastly, a communicative project that usually takes a whole 45 minutes or more and might also require some preparations and materials. The sets are also divided into two different sections: the four sets in the first section focus on different areas of grammar (i.e. formal subjects, pronouns, passive voice and prepositions) and the four sets in the second section focus on the central themes of the course (i.e. wellbeing, school, social life and active listening and good communication). In other words, in the first half of the teaching material, one can look for exercises based on the grammar aspect they want to focus on, while the second half is sorted according to relevant themes and grammar needs and elements then emerge from them.

This way of constructing the material was chosen for two main reasons: First, it seemed important to create exercises that vary in terms of their length and also the amount of preparation they require, as teaching needs can be anything from wanting to fill a small gap in a lesson plan to searching for a project that students can really immerse themselves in. It is for this reason that each set contains the three different types of activities. The second reason is that by having two different sections – first one sorted by grammar elements and the other one thematically – it is easier for users of the material to find what they are looking for at any given moment. If they want to find ideas for teaching a certain grammar point, they can take a look at the first section, whereas if they are wondering how to incorporate grammar teaching into a certain theme, they can browse through the second one.

The different exercises and tasks include, among other things, problem solving (e.g. communicative task on page 23), writing (e.g. communicative project on pages 15-16), discussions (e.g. communicative project on pages 12-13), creativity (e.g. communicative project on pages 26-27) and information retrieval (e.g. communicative task on page 9). The goal was to incorporate many different kinds of activities so that everyone could find something that fits each group and situation in question. It is also worth trying out some of the activities that might feel slightly out of one's comfort zone, as

those can sometimes be the kind of situations that really stick with students and help them learn. The material package has been designed in line with the themes and goals of the aforementioned course description for ENA2, including varying interactive situations (e.g. quick communicative activity on pages 27-29), active listening and communication (e.g. pages 31-34) and themes such as social life and technology (e.g. pages 27-31 and communicative project on pages 23-24).

It is also worth mentioning that while the material strives to give tools for teaching grammar communicatively, it still leaves room for more explicit grammar teaching and indeed encourages it from time to time (e.g. communicative task on pages 32-33). As I have discussed in earlier chapters, a more direct focus on grammar and its rules can be useful alongside communicative and context-based activities. By combining these different ways of approaching grammar, teachers can cater to various kinds of learners and help them develop both their practical and theoretical thinking. This means that there is no reason to systematically avoid the use of, for example, grammatical terminology, but that it is often beneficial to first take a look at real language and communication before beginning to cut it into smaller pieces and examining them.

4.4 Assessment

As has been discussed in earlier chapters, communicative ways of teaching often promote a focus on fluency when assessing language learners. This means that language use is assessed in terms of how well it conveys intended ideas, meanings, feelings, tones and other such aspects. An error in grammar is perhaps not too serious a problem if the utterance is otherwise fully sensible and expresses satisfyingly what the speaker truly wants to say. This is how assessment is seen in the present teaching material as well and many of the exercises invite learners to think about how the different grammar elements at hand affect language. Teachers can assist and guide this process by drawing students' attention to these elements and possible mistakes and evoke discussion on their effects. Hopefully this develops learners' internal knowledge on how even slight changes in structures can result in vast changes in meanings.

Another important idea promoted in the present material is that of assessment as a continuum, which has been discussed above in chapter 3. While exams, papers and other such tests can give valuable information on certain language skills and knowledge, it is beneficial for students to receive feedback in as many learning situations as possible. By paying close attention to students' individual strengths and weaknesses it is easier to guide them towards their next learning goal and help them find their

own best ways of acquiring a new language. This, of course, is not always easy and takes up resources that can already be scarce, but I have made an effort to design activities during which teachers can take the time to go around and observe students' ways of working and using language. In many exercises, there are encouragements to do so and tips on how it can be done (e.g. quick communicative activity on pages 31-32). The important thing is to try to make a habit of giving feedback even on the smaller things – especially when it is positive, as it can truly boost students' motivation.

Some of the exercises result in written texts and other such concrete materials that can then be assessed if the teacher wishes to do so. It is recommended that these written materials, too, are assessed with a communicative mindset – i.e., when mistakes or errors are corrected, they are looked at from a communicative point of view, thinking about how they affect meanings and legibility. This means that written and/or oral feedback in addition to or instead of simple “red-pen correction” is highly encouraged to fully benefit from these written exercises. This is, of course, slightly more time-consuming, but I argue here that doing so at least every now and then helps students better examine their own writing and see the ways their linguistic decisions affect their intended message. The assessment of these written exercises should, thus, focus on the so-called big picture: how easy or pleasant it is to read, how well it achieves its goals, is the language use effective and appropriate and so on.

In conclusion, for the present material package it is important to have this communicative mindset also in feedback and assessment. It should work as the motivation for all the work that is done by both the teacher and the students, developing both communication as a skill and communication between teachers and their students. I hope that with my ideas, exercises and tasks I can encourage teachers to think about grammar in different and perhaps new ways, promoting a fluency-based approach to assessment and leaving behind traditional ideas of strict error correction.

5 DISCUSSION

The present material package is designed to be used on the second A-level English course in upper secondary school, but most of the activities and concepts can easily be adapted to other courses, levels and themes. It works as a pool of ideas from which teachers can pick and choose exercises to their liking without the need to change their teaching methods on a larger scale. The status of English as a global language of communication and the fact that language learners come across English on a daily basis often also affect the ways it is taught in schools. Grammar teaching has a long history and many of its traditions are still alive and well, but meeting the new communicative needs in grammar lessons can feel a bit hard, as most of these traditional teaching methods are not overly communicative. This material package seeks to invite teachers to try out communicative grammar teaching methods and also to work as an additional selection of resources for doing so, as such materials often seem to be scarce. Hopefully it provides its users with new ways of looking at and teaching grammar.

One of the main benefits of the present material package is its adaptability. As already stated above, many of the ideas can be used on other courses and levels as well, in addition to which they can be reused with the same group by simply changing the theme or target text or grammar aspect. They can also easily be used by any language teacher even if they otherwise do not adhere to communicative language teaching as a method. Indeed, this material package can work both as an easy starting point for someone who wants to try out something new and more communicative, but also as a tool for changing one's way of looking at and understanding grammar in a broader sense. It offers a point of view on grammar that has its emphasis on effective and meaningful language use and fluency, which does not require impeccable grammar but is also not completely disconnected from it. It seeks to guide both teachers and students towards the finer meanings and nuances that different grammar elements carry and to elaborate on how they can affect communication. The material package can, however, also be used as a simple booklet of fun activities without having to think too much about this communicative mindset or "ideology" behind it. The different task types make it even easier to find something suitable, as there are many quick activities that can be picked and used quite effortlessly to fill gaps in lesson plans, but also longer projects for more in-depth working. In addition, the two different sections in the material package offer two different viewpoints to grammar lessons and exercises: the first section contains ideas for teaching certain grammar points through communicative contexts, while the second section focuses on central themes and seeks to find the grammar points that emerge from them. This, too, caters for the different needs of language teachers

and learners.

There are, of course, improvements that could be made to the present teaching material package and some potential problems regarding its use. First, as the tasks and exercises are based on communication, they require active participation, oral performance and pair or group working skills. These are things that should be practiced in all language classrooms, but which also tend to create challenges in schools, as group dynamics can have a major effect on how willing students are to participate in such activities or to put proper effort into their working. Motivating a group that has a tendency of being timid or otherwise quiet can be a hard task, especially when doing something new or different. In such cases, I would recommend trying out some of the simple quick activities in the material package first and leaving the ones that require more contribution or performance for later. It is also always good to explain to students why a certain activity or way of teaching has been chosen to further clarify the reasoning and goals behind one's teaching methods and perhaps also to motivate students by doing so. A second point that should be taken into consideration is that the present material package has not been tested yet in actual language classrooms and hence there is no empirical data on, for example, the reception of the activities among students or the possible problems that could occur during the use of them. By testing the material and making improvements to it accordingly, it could meet both teachers' and students' needs even more efficiently. Lastly, this teaching material covers only a somewhat narrow area of grammar and themes and even though the ideas can be used on other courses and levels and with other themes as well, it would be beneficial to create more material packages similar to the present one to further increase the amount of communicative grammar teaching resources and to cover broader areas in terms of grammar, themes and learners' linguistic skills.

Despite these suggested improvements, as such the present material package is a good starting point for anyone who wants to try out communicative grammar teaching, or for anyone who is simply looking for additional ideas and resources for their language classes. I argue that it is easy to pick up and browse through the material and that doing so can also give inspiration for further ideas on how to teach grammar communicatively. This means that even though it is limited to only one course in upper secondary school, the teaching material gives the framework and tools for creating many other communicative activities as well. It helps to see how grammar teaching and learning are present in all language use in language classrooms and that there are different ways of directing learners' attention towards language forms. The greatest challenge is thus perhaps encouraging both teachers and learners to try out these ideas and be open to this way of looking at and dealing with grammar.

The inspiration to create the present grammar teaching material rose from the constantly changing communicative needs of language learners due to the spread of English as a global language and also from the lack of such materials in Finnish schools. Many language teachers struggle with grammar teaching, as it can feel dull or outdated, especially in a world where English is “everywhere” and focusing on small matters of form can seem redundant. In my present work I have strived to show how grammar and good communication are in many ways inseparable and how looking at grammar as a skill rather than as just rules and patterns that have to be memorized can help inspire new grammar teaching ideas. An important goal has been to give teachers more tools to teach grammar and encourage them to try new things in their grammar lessons. The material package has been designed so that it is easy to look for suitable activities in it and implement them without the need to make drastic changes to one’s ways of teaching otherwise. Hopefully this makes it more approachable even to those who may possess a slightly skeptical stance towards communicative grammar teaching or CLT as a whole. All in all, the present material package can work as a kind of prototype for the development of other similar materials in the future, as it gives quite a wide range of examples of communicative grammar activities and how they can be categorized. Hopefully, it will also inspire teachers to develop the ideas further and help them find their best ways of adding communicative dimensions to their grammar lessons.

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Say what you mean

A material package for communicative
grammar teaching in upper secondary school



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Master's Thesis

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To you, the reader

Hello and welcome! This little material package is all about grammar and communication and their sometimes complex relationship. In a globalized world where English is often a prominent part of people's everyday lives, the meaning of good communication skills seems more and more important, whereas the traditional emphasis on "good grammar" can feel outdated. Indeed, in the field of language teaching, grammar has always been under scrutiny and the methods for teaching it have varied a great deal. In discussions with other language teachers it often comes up that grammar teaching feels boring or disconnected and that it is something you simply must power through.

The aim of this material package is to inspire teachers and to give ideas on how to teach grammar through communication and real language use. I believe that by doing so it is easier for language learners to see the ways in which grammar and communication are constantly intertwined; that grammar is not a tedious language rulebook that has to be fully internalized before being allowed to speak or write, but that it is actually a skill that everyone trains and develops as they communicate with other people. The theoretical basis of this teaching material is largely rooted in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), but it also leaves room for more traditional grammar teaching methods and even encourages them from time to time. The idea is that anyone can pick up this booklet and look for a suitable exercise in it without having to commit to a whole new way of teaching on a larger scale.

The contents of this teaching material have been divided so that in the first part the exercises are sorted according to the different grammar rules they focus on and in the second part the sorting is thematic. Both parts consist of four sets and each set contains a **quick communicative activity**, a slightly more demanding **communicative exercise** and, lastly, a longer **communicative project** that usually takes a whole 45-minute lesson or more. To help you navigate through the material, these different task types are marked with the following symbols:



QUICK



EXERCISE



PROJECT

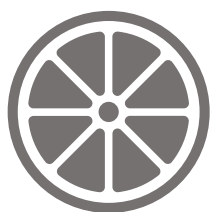
In terms of assessment, I encourage teachers to give continuous feedback to their students as a natural part of all language lessons. Even though this is a teaching material for teaching grammar, the underlying communicative idea throughout is that communicating fluently and meaningfully is the ultimate language learning goal – not being grammatically impeccable at all times. This means that when grammar errors or mistakes occur, it is not always necessary to correct them, and when it is, it is a good idea to stop and take some time to discuss how and why this error changes the meaning of the utterance or makes it harder to understand. It helps to look at grammar as a skill that students develop little by little as they get opportunities to use language in real and meaningful communication. Some of the exercises that you will find between these covers produce written content that you can collect for further review if you wish to do so.

This material package is designed to be used in upper secondary school on the second compulsory A-level English course **ENA2: People and their networks**, but it can easily be adapted for other levels and courses as well. So, whether you teach small children, bigger children, teenagers or adults, I highly recommend browsing through this booklet and seeing if there is something you could try out with your students.

If grammar lessons are the lemons of language teaching, then this material package is the lemonade that I have made from them.

Thank you and enjoy!

Sincerely,
Suvi Ulfves





SECTION 1: The RULES

- ❖ Formal subjects (it & there)
- ❖ Pronouns
- ❖ Passive voice
- ❖ Prepositions (time & place)





FORMAL SUBJECTS (IT & THERE)

“There’s someone on the wing... some... thing!”
– Ace Ventura



This exercise works well as a warm-up activity when learning about the use of formal subjects.

In pairs, students take turns in **describing a scenery**. The one listening can close their eyes and try to imagine this place. The scenery can be completely imaginary or a real one. Students can describe the weather, nature, buildings, people – even emotions related to the place. The one listening can then ask questions about the scenery as they are painting a mental picture of it. When all pairs are done, students are asked to give examples of the ways they described their chosen scenery, e.g. what kind of expressions did they use when talking about the weather/nature/people? You can write down their examples on the board and then ask students to find structures that are repeated in them (there is/are, it is...).



In pairs or small groups, students choose a town or a city they are interested in and would like to visit. They then go online and **find the following information, answering in full sentences:**



- How many inhabitants are there?
- What is the weather usually like during summers and winters?
- Are there any known tourist attractions?
- What kind of accommodation possibilities are there (hotels, hostels, camping sites...)?

When they are done, each pair/group gives a short presentation of their selected city based on their findings. You should make notes of instances where students use formal subjects: do they use them actively or avoid them, are they used fluently and/or in a grammatically correct way and so on. After the presentations, you can write some key examples on the board and discuss them with the students: What kind of structures are repeated in them? Could they be expressed in another way? In what kind of situations are these structures used? Are there any other instances where these formal subjects are needed?



In class (or for homework), students find a picture of their dream bedroom. They then **write a detailed description** of it, describing the furniture and decoration, doors and windows, where everything is placed, what is the atmosphere and style of the room like and so on. The goal is to paint as clear a picture as possible of the room for someone who has not seen it with their own eyes.



These texts are then read out loud to a partner, who tries to draw a floor plan of the room based on what they hear. The one who draws can also ask additional questions to get a better picture of the space. After the sketch is done, the one giving the description assesses it: Is something out of place or missing? Or is it a perfect copy of the described room? Should something be added or taken away?

Lastly, the pairs switch their texts and are asked to underline all formal subjects they can find. They then reread each other's texts out loud, but without using these formal subjects (e.g. "There is a large window on the back wall." -> "A large window is on the back wall."). You can then discuss this process with the whole class: In what kind of situations are formal subjects used? What do they replace? What was it like to speak without using them?

PRONOUNS

"When I was a kid, my English teacher looked my way and said, 'Name two pronouns.' I said, 'Who, me?'"

– Unknown

In pairs or groups of three, each student **shares a short anecdote** with the others – it can be a funny event from their childhood, something that happened last weekend, a story from a trip abroad or whatever they want to share. The others listen carefully and try to memorize the



details as well as possible. After they are done, each pair or group joins with another one. Taking turns, each student tells their pair's or group member's anecdote in their own words, trying to remember as many details as possible. You should walk around the classroom and listen to these stories, paying attention to and making notes on how students use pronouns. Write down possible problems, but also things that they already know well.

After each group is done, discuss this activity and your notes with the whole class: How does a story change when the point of view is different? Did it feel easy to change the pronouns when necessary? If you point out errors or problems, give students a chance to correct them themselves first.



“My friend is looking for a workout buddy. She is 165 cm tall, her eyes are green...”

In pairs, students **write a short profile** of each other for an online dating site. The profiles should be anonymous, i.e. real names should not be used. They can write details about appearance (hair color and length, height, eyes etc.), hobbies, interests and so on. Everyone should come up with at least 8-10 things about their friend. After the profiles are finished, they are collected, shuffled and handed out again. Students then try to find the person described in the profile by walking around and asking questions based on the text (e.g. What are your hobbies? Do you like rap music? How tall are you? Do you know who likes video games?). Try to listen to students' use of pronouns during this task and see if there are any problems that should be addressed afterwards. When everyone has found their match, you can collect the written profiles and read them through to see if there are any additional points or issues that should be discussed. If you have time, you can write each student feedback on their text, focusing both on its fluency and the use of pronouns.



Students go online and **search for an interesting job advertisement**. Each student then comes up with and writes down five questions that could be asked during a job interview from someone applying for this particular job. When this is done, students pair up and switch their job advertisements and interview questions. They then come up with three to five additional questions for their partners' jobs. Looking at these questions, each pair should discuss the following points:

- What kind of a person is this company looking for? What is their dream applicant like?
- How should an applicant prepare for this interview?
- Which qualities are the most important ones when choosing an employee for these jobs? Which ones are not so crucial?

Each pair then acts out these interviews based on their findings. The interviewees can answer as themselves, as a dream applicant or, for example, as the worst possible applicant.

Now that the job advertisement has been looked at from many angles, each student writes a profile of a dream applicant for the job they found, i.e., a description of a person that would likely get the job. This writing process can be started in class and continued at home or left completely as homework.

Finally, in pairs, these profiles are again switched and the last task is to underline all pronouns in them. Taking turns, they then list out loud all the different pronouns they found in the texts as you write them down on the board. You can also ask them to list other pronouns they know that are still missing from the board. After this is done, have a



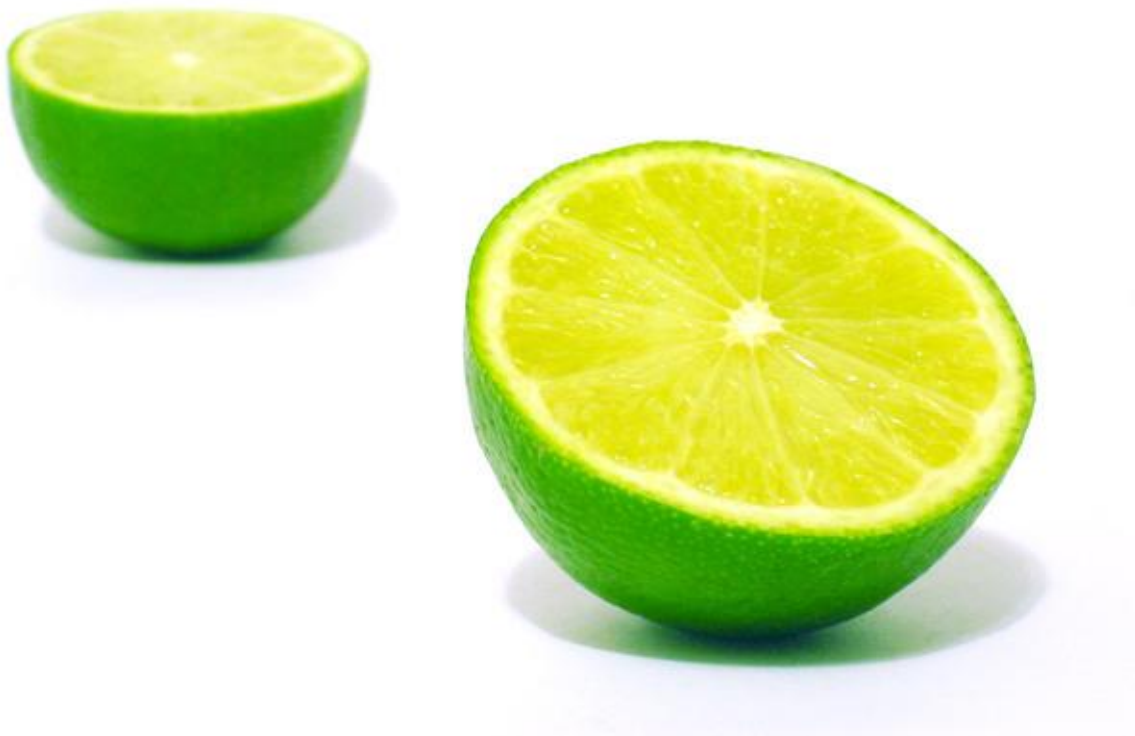
A dream applicant for this job is someone who...

They are/have...

discussion with the whole class about this project and about the use of pronouns during it, for example:

- Did they come across any problems while using these words during the process?
- Were there any situations where they did not know which pronoun to use?
- Which pronoun did they use when talking about *a company*?
- What kind of expressions or pronouns can be used when you do not know the gender of a person you are talking about (e.g. when writing about a dream applicant)?

You can then collect the texts to review how different pronouns are used, whether some pronouns have not been underlined (and thus maybe not recognized as pronouns) etc. Try to look for possible recurring problems or other such errors that should be addressed during following lessons.



PASSIVE VOICE

“Mistakes were made.”



Students are asked to **react to different scenarios or situations** – what would they say, if, for example:

- they had to tell the police that someone stole their bike
- someone wanted to know their favorite book and who wrote it
- someone wanted to know the year of construction of the Finnish Parliament House
- etc.

Write the example sentences that the students give on the board. Try to fish for sentences that use the passive voice. When there are enough examples on the board, mark all the sentences where the passive voice is used. Students are then asked to observe these examples: What do they have in common? How are they different from the other sentences? When is this form (passive voice) used? What kind of an effect does it have in a sentence? Can they come up with other examples of the passive voice?



In small groups, students go online and **search for known buildings, statues or other such attractions** in their own hometown (or a town nearby). They then choose one on which they will give a short presentation. They should look for the following information:



- year of construction
- who designed it
- a short description of it
- any special details related to it or its history
- other interesting facts about it

Each group will then give their presentation to the rest of the class. Your job is to observe their use of the passive voice: Is it fluent? Do students employ it actively or avoid it? Are there any errors that should be corrected? You can write down examples to discuss with the class after the presentations.



Find a current piece of news in which the passive voice is used regularly (or use the one on page 36) and distribute copies of it to students. They should first read through the text and then discuss the following aspects in pairs or small groups:

- What makes this a piece of news, how do you recognize it as one?
- What is special in terms of the language of news articles? How does it differ from, for example, the language of blog posts? Underline examples.

When they are done, discuss the above questions with the whole class. If the use of a passive voice does not come up in the discussion by itself, you can direct the students' attention towards it by highlighting examples of it: What kind of similarities are there between these

examples? What is left out when this form is used? What kind of an effect does it have on the reader?

In pairs or groups of three, students then choose one of the following topics and write a short news article of their own based on the news characteristics found before:

- the opening of a new movie theater
- an upcoming eSports tournament
- a new fashion line of a known fashion designer
- a groundbreaking study that shows that X is actually healthy
- an invention made by a young student
- an interesting rescue operation of an exotic animal
- a scandal related to a politician
- smoke-free Finland 2030
- national Rabbit Agility Championship
- a world-famous band coming to Finland

They can first plan their article on a separate piece of paper (headline, details, possible dates/people etc.) and then begin making a finished news article in the form of a poster. The texts can be written either by hand or with a computer, and students can also draw pictures related to their piece of news. The result should be a poster that has the characteristics of a real news article. During this task, you should go around the classroom and monitor the groups as they are working, providing help when needed. Pay special attention to the use of passive forms.

When all groups have finished their posters, each group presents their article to the rest of the class, reading it out loud. They can then be put on the classroom wall or otherwise laid out for other groups to see. During the presentations, make notes of possible problems that should be addressed with the whole group. Remember to also give positive feedback!





PREPOSITIONS (TIME & PLACE)

“Ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with which I will not put.”

– Most likely not Churchill, even though the legend says so

For 30 seconds, students get to **examine the following picture** (a larger version can be found on page 37). They should pay attention to all kinds of details in it and try to memorize them. When the time is up, the picture is hidden and students then try to answer the following questions (either by taking turns or by shouting out the correct answers – your choice):



- When was the picture taken (date, time)?
- What was the little toddler doing?
- What was the person in a dark T-shirt holding?
- Where was the bouncing castle?
- Where was the person in a light pink T-shirt?
- What else do you remember seeing (and where)?

If mistakes or errors occur in the use of prepositions, you can either address them during the activity or come back to them afterwards. When all questions have been answered, you can put the picture on display again and go through it with the students, emphasizing the prepositions.

June 15th, 2015

2.35 p.m.



The students are divided into groups of 4-5. One person is chosen as the “group leader” from each group to stay in the classroom and the rest go outside and wait. The leaders then **come up with a story** that they will tell to the next member of their group (in a Chinese whispers/Telephone manner). The story should be an event from last week (it can be fictional) and include the following details:

- What day?
- What time?
- Where?
- What happened?
- What happened afterwards?

When the storytellers are ready, one member of each group is asked to come inside. They then listen to the story of their group leader and try to memorize it as carefully as possible. The next member is then summoned and so on, until the last member of each group has heard the story. These last members then take turns to tell the story to the whole class, after which each group leader tells the original story. Did the story change a lot?

During this task, you should pay attention to the use of prepositions. Walk around the classroom as the groups are playing and make notes when needed. You can then present your observations to the whole class and discuss them together. Discuss both the prepositions that were easy for the majority of the group and the ones that seemed to pose problems.



In pairs or small groups, students **make an advertisement** for an event: a movie premiere, a concert, a yard sale – whatever they can think of. In addition to being visually interesting and inviting, the advertisements should contain at least the following information:



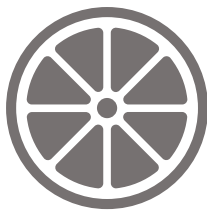
- What is the event (what does it include)?
- When is it?
- Where is it?
- Is there an entrance fee or other costs?
- Where can you buy tickets (if needed)?
- Is there an age limit?

You can show students some examples of such advertisements on paper or online to help them get inspired. As they are working on their texts, you should go around and pay attention to their use of prepositions. If and when questions emerge about the correct use of

them, try to get the students to figure out the correct answer instead of simply telling them which preposition to use.

When all groups are done, the advertisements are placed on walls or desks and students go around and take a look at each. They should make mental or written notes about them: Which ones are the most interesting and why? Do all of them have the necessary information or is something missing? If you could attend one of the events, which one would you choose and why? When this is done, everyone can share their opinions and views with the rest of the class in a joint discussion.

Throughout this project, you should pay attention to any common mistakes or errors in the use of prepositions, which can then be addressed or revised afterwards. One way to do this is to write down example sentences that you see in the students' posters and then, after the project, write them down on the board, replacing all prepositions with a blank. You can then go through them step by step with the whole class, letting them figure out the correct prepositions for each example.





SECTION 2: The THEMES

- ❖ Wellbeing
- ❖ School
- ❖ Social life
- ❖ Active listening &
good communication





WELLBEING

“There’s nothing like deep breaths after laughing that hard. Nothing in the world like a sore stomach for the right reasons.”

– Stephen Chbosky



In pairs or groups of three, students **think of creative ways** to increase the amount of physical exercise in their everyday lives (e.g. taking the stairs instead of the elevator). They should try to come up with as fun and innovative ideas as they can. Each group then chooses their favourite idea and writes it on the board for everyone to see. These are then discussed with the whole class: Which ones could they try out in their everyday lives? Have they already tried some of the tips? In terms of grammar, pay attention to recurring forms (e.g. imperatives, conditionals, pronouns), expressions and other such elements that could be discussed with the students: What kind of functions do they have? When are they used? Are there any problems with them?



Students are asked to **come up with a common problem** related to health and/or everyday wellbeing (e.g. being tired in the mornings, neck pain, skin problems, lack of motivation etc.). They then grab their pens and notebooks and begin walking around the classroom, asking other students for advice to solve their problem and writing everything down. Everyone should write down at least 5 pieces of advice in the form of complete sentences.



In pairs or groups of three, students then tell each other what their problem was and what kind of advice they got. Together they then choose the best piece of advice for each problem. Lastly, each student writes their chosen piece of advice up on the board for everyone to see. When they are done, you can go through the examples with the whole class and discuss them first in general and then from a grammatical point of view: Are there any errors that need to be corrected? What kind of forms and expressions are used when giving advice? Are there any other ways of giving advice?



In small groups, students **invent a device** that makes everyday life better or improves people's wellbeing in some way. It can be a realistic idea or a completely made-up one – the laws of physics don't apply during this exercise! Their job is to write a user manual for their device, telling the user briefly what the device does and then giving step-by-step instructions on how to use it. **Taking a look at real user manuals can be helpful** – they can be found online for most products nowadays. You can write some example sentences on the board, e.g. "place the device on a flat surface" or "always unplug the device before cleaning". It is important that students familiarize themselves with manuals as a text

type before starting to write so that they get the style right. Each manual should contain at least 10 different steps in addition to the short introduction to the device in the beginning. Some space should be left on the paper for a picture of the invention.

When students are done, the manuals are shuffled between all groups. They then read them and draw an illustration of the device based on the information they get from each text. When this is done, each group gets their own manual back and they can then be presented to the whole class one group at a time.

This project encourages students to employ forms such as imperatives and a passive voice. During and after this task you should discuss these elements with the students:

- What kind of forms are common in user manuals?
- What kind of an effect do these forms have on the reader?
- How are these elements formed?
- What kind of reasons could there be for writing manuals this way?



SCHOOL

“She’s the smartest of all the Tribbiani children.
Yeah, you know the SATs? She took ‘em.”

– Joey Tribbiani

Gathering statistics: In groups of 3-4, students discuss where they usually do their homework. They then write down all the different places that come up, both the more general locations (at home/school/a café) and the specifics (in my room on the bed/in the classroom/at a table). These locations are then gathered on the board as shown below. Which locations are the most common ones? Could students try new locations to make their studying more interesting? Can they come up with completely new locations that could work well? During this activity, pay attention especially to the use of prepositions: write the locations on the board as you hear them and if mistakes or errors occur, come back to them at the end of the activity. What kind of logic can be seen in the use of these prepositions? What other prepositions are there?



| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| AT HOME | IN THE LIVING ROOM: | IN MY BEDROOM: | AT THE KITCHEN TABLE: |
| AT SCHOOL | IN THE CLASSROOM: | DURING BREAKS: | [...] |
| IN THE LIBRARY | ON THE COMPUTER: | [...] | [...] |



In pairs or groups of three, students **pick a school subject** that they find hard and then discuss the following questions:

1. In what situations is the subject needed in (everyday) life?
2. How could they practice it outside school?

When this is done, they should make a 5-point plan (in written form) on how to practice their skills on the subject in the near future (e.g. "I will watch movies with English subtitles."). These written plans can then be presented to the rest of the class and discussed or you can simply collect them for review (or both). You should pay special attention to the use of the future tense and passive voice during the whole task, as it encourages to employ them. Discuss your findings with the whole group: When did they use passive forms? Which forms did they use to talk about the future? Did you notice any recurring errors or mistakes?



Motivating others! In pairs or small groups, students **plan and make a poster** that aims to motivate other students to study either in general or for a specific school subject. This can be done either on paper or with a computer. They should come up with a catchy slogan and make the poster visually interesting and attractive. They can draw, paint, cut, glue, use recycled materials – make use of whatever resources are at hand. You can show students examples of commercial slogans to inspire them (e.g. "Nokia – Connecting People") and help them form their own as needed. Many slogans use imperatives or the so-called





-ing forms, so it might be a good idea to pay attention to them and discuss them with the whole class if necessary.

When the posters are done, they can be placed on the classroom walls or in the hallway if that is an option. Each group then takes a look at the other groups' posters and choose their favourite three. They give their favourite one 3 points, the second one 2 points and the third one 1 point. The scoring should not be based solely on how the posters *look*, but also on how well they accomplish their goal of motivating students. These points are then added together to see which posters got the best scores. After the winners have been declared, have a discussion with the whole class: Why did these posters win? What made them stand out? Do they motivate and inspire? At the end of the project you should then draw attention to the grammar of these posters: imperatives, -ing forms and so on. What kind of an effect do they have? Why and how are they used?

SOCIAL LIFE

“The better I get to know men, the more
I find myself loving dogs.”

– A Gallic take on humanity



Improvise! In pairs, students come to the front of the class and **improvise a short dialogue** based on a scenario that you give them (listed below). If strict improvisation feels too hard, you can give each pair a couple of minutes to plan their dialogue (but keep it short). Below are some examples of possible scenarios, but you can of

course come up with new ones. After each scenario in brackets there are some grammatical structures and forms that are likely to occur in the dialogue, so you can make notes of them and other grammar points as necessary.

1. Two friends meet on the street on a Wednesday afternoon and ask about each other's plans for the weekend. **(future tenses)**
2. A married couple is sitting on a sofa and talking about what they would do if they won the lottery. **(conditional tenses)**
3. A person is walking their dog when a stranger asks for directions to the library and for a restaurant recommendation. **(imperatives, prepositions, word order)**
4. Two older people are having coffee and begin to reminisce a particularly eventful wedding that they both attended when they were younger. **(past tenses)**
5. Two news anchors give a quick recap of the top news stories of the day. **(passive voice, formal subjects, past and future tenses)**
6. A parent and a child are looking at an old photo album and the child asks questions about the people in the photos. **(pronouns, prepositions)**
7. Two children discuss what they want to be when they grow up (and why). **(future tenses, conditional tenses)**
8. A grandparent is teaching their grandchild to cook with a secret family recipe. The child cooks while the grandparent gives instructions. **(imperatives, prepositions)**
9. Two people tell a short story in a library to a group of children. They tell the story one sentence at a time, switching turns in between. **(pronouns, past tenses, passive voice, formal subjects)**



10. Person A is at home, when person B calls them from work and asks person A to find something that they left at home, giving necessary directions. **(prepositions, imperatives)**

Make notes during the dialogues and discuss them afterwards with the class. What kind of forms came up? How did students make use of them, was it easy?



Students **write an email** to a restaurant to make a reservation for a group of people that are celebrating something. It should contain a title, the message itself and the sender's signature and contact information. The message should be formal and polite and the following information should be included:



- What is the desired date and time?
- How many people are coming?
- What is the occasion?
- Are there any special services they would like to have (e.g. a bottle of champagne ready on the table)?

When everyone has written a message, they are shuffled between the whole class. Each student then writes a short response to the message they got, pretending to be working at the restaurant. They can accept or decline the request, propose another time or date and so on. The tone should continue to be formal and appropriate to the context. Everyone then gets their own paper back and reads the response they got.

After this task, you should discuss this process of writing a formal email with the whole class:

- What kind of things make an email formal and/or polite? Are there some specific words or forms?
- How does writing a message like this differ from writing a message to your friends or family?

Ask for examples from the students' texts and try to pinpoint and discuss grammatical elements that are likely to occur in such messages (e.g. conditionals, future tense, passive voice). Did everyone know how to use them? Note that you can collect and review these texts yourself to take a closer look at students' individual writing and grammar skills.



As homework, students **interview their parents, grandparents or some other adult** about their social life when they were teenagers. They should find the answers for at least the following questions:

- How much free time did they have when they were young? Did they have a lot of responsibilities apart from school?
- What did they do on their free time?
- When they spent time with their friends, what did they do and where did they go?
- How did they keep in touch with their friends?

If possible, students can record the interviews so that they can focus solely on listening. They should then write a summary (in English) of the answers they got and bring it to the next lesson.

In pairs or small groups, students then go through their findings question by question and think about how they differ from or are similar to their own free time and social life now. They should also think about *why* some things have changed and others have not.

Lastly, every student writes a short text that summarizes both the interview and their own thoughts on how their social life differs from that of their interviewee's. The texts should include examples of answers they got and their own thoughts about them and how they compare to their own lives now. Collect the finished texts and go through them, paying attention to the central grammar elements (e.g. pronouns, past tenses, formal subjects, conditionals etc.). You can write down examples and discuss them later with the whole group: Do students switch between verb tenses fluently? What kind of expressions do they use to tell what they have been told? Are there any errors in the use of pronouns? Does the grammar of the texts affect their intelligibility?

ACTIVE LISTENING & GOOD COMMUNICATION

I know you *hear* me, but are you *listening*?

In pairs, students take turns in **describing their living room** (or some other room of their choice). The other person listens carefully and then repeats in their own words what their pair just said. They should not make notes, as the idea is to listen carefully and try to memorize



everything. After the repetition, students can make necessary corrections (e.g. "The TV is on the *left* side of the room from the door, not right.").

This simple activity encourages the use of prepositions and pronouns, so pay special attention to them. You can walk around the classroom and listen as students are talking – do they use different prepositions fluently? Are they able to understand and repeat each other's descriptions? At the end of the exercise, you can ask students to come up to the board and write down all the different prepositions that they used or otherwise remember. Did everyone find them easy to use? Were there any misunderstandings?



Dear passengers, the train has been delayed! A group of people is stuck at a train station waiting for a delayed train and begin to talk to each other. First, every student **writes a short profile** of an imaginary person on a piece of paper. It should include their full name, age, profession, where they are coming from, where they are headed to and also a random fact about them. These profiles are shuffled between students and they then act according to them. They walk around the full train station and begin making conversation with other people there. Students can add their own ideas and details to their characters – the written profiles are just general frames for them. Everyone should talk to at least two or three people.

Students then return to their seats and one at a time they stand up and others tell what they learned about their character: who are they, how old are they etc. Is it easy to remember what they said? Did everyone

listen carefully and actively? Did all the details come up or was something left out?

Pay attention to the use of pronouns and different verb tenses – talking about who someone is, where they come from and where they are going to encourages the use of different kinds of grammatical forms and tenses. You can write down some examples you hear as students are talking and discuss them with the class at the end of this task: What kind of central grammar elements came up? Were there any problems with them? How were they formed and/or used?



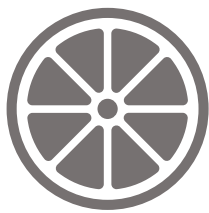
Seeing and using “bad” language is an everyday phenomenon on social media. It is not actually *bad* as long as it conveys what is meant to be said, but it would nevertheless look very different if it were grammatically accurate. The purpose of this project is both to train students’ grammar skills and to find out what kind of grammar aspects and rules usually begin to “give in” when we move from standard language to colloquial language.



The first step is to **find examples** of typical colloquial social media English. In pairs or groups of three, students can look for examples on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or any other currently active or popular social media platform. The texts should be at least a few sentences long. When students find examples, you should check them to see that they are fitting for the task. These texts are then gathered e.g. on the board or on a text document that you can print for each group. They can then begin to rewrite each example in a more grammatically accurate way. Remember to emphasize that the *meaning* of each text should remain the same.

When all groups are done, you can go through the texts one at a time with the whole class. You can do this by writing each example on the board and making changes to them according to the groups' suggestions **or** you can ask each group to read out their suggestion and then decide together with the class which variation works the best. Remember to pay attention to meaning and that it does not change too much in the process.

After this exercise, you should discuss these differences between colloquial and standard written language with your students: How do they differ from each other in a more general sense and in terms of grammar? What kind of grammar elements and rules are most commonly changed in colloquial language? Are both ways of writing equally easy to comprehend for the reader? What reasons might there be for simplifying or ignoring grammar in colloquial language? How does grammatical accuracy affect intelligibility?





APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1: News article

News 1.11.2017 15:22 | updated 1.11.2017 15:31

Baby pram prank: Helsinki fire chief angry after major rescue operation

Several Helsinki rescue squads - including a search helicopter, rescue divers, police units and Finland's Border Guard - were called to action after two youths were reported tossing a pram into a canal Tuesday afternoon. But after the all-inclusive rescue operation wound down, the rescuers realised the pram was actually empty, and that a child had not been in it when it was tossed in the canal.

Several rescue units were summoned to Helsinki's Ruoholahti neighbourhood on Tuesday, after an early evening emergency call came in about a baby's pram which was thrown into a canal by two young men.

Helsinki Fire Chief Markku Holopainen said first responders from several agencies arrived to the scene to assist in the search; including two Border Guard boats and a search helicopter, an ambulance, four fire department units and at least two police units.

"According to an eyewitness, two young men pushed a pram into the Ruoholahti canal in Helsinki," Holopainen said. "But we took every precaution because we didn't know whether there had been a child in the stroller or not."

Holopainen was angered, however, after realising the entire rescue effort had been a waste of time.

"For more than an hour all [of the area's public safety] official resources were concentrated on that job," Holopainen said. "Divers searched the bottom of the canal and the pram was lifted to the surface. No one was found at the bottom. The pram was empty," Holopainen said.

Annoyed fire chief

"Intentionally set-up, unnecessary emergency calls annoy me," Holopainen said.

Holopainen said that it is not often that rescue teams carry out unneeded, major rescue operations, but they do occur.

"Sometimes in the winter a piece of children's clothing is found by the edge of a frozen lake or near sledging tracks and no one knows what has happened. In these cases rescue resources are directed to investigate. But pushing a baby pram into the sea is extremely rare, and I can't remember anything like it in the past," Holopainen said.

Helsinki police said that no criminal complaint will be issued in the matter and that the young men who pushed the pram into the canal are not suspected of committing a crime.

Ilta-lehti first reported on this story.

Sources: Yle, Ilta-lehti

APPENDIX 2: Photograph



June 15th, 2015
2.35 p.m.

