

**Learning Materials and Methods in  
Early Language Learning Classroom:  
Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences**

Master's Thesis

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Viimeistään kevätlukukaudesta 2020 alkaen jokainen suomalainen ensimmäisen luokan oppilas on aloittanut ensimmäisen vieraan kielen opiskelun ensimmäisellä vuosiluokalla. Hallitus teki päätöksen kieltenopetuksen varhentamisesta vuonna 2018 jolloin vieraan kielen opiskelu päätettiin alkavaksi ensimmäisellä vuosiluokalla aikaisemman kolmannen luokan sijaan. Päätöksen myötä perusopetuksen A1-kielen vuosiviikkotuntimäärää lisättiin kahdella vuosiviikkotunnilla. Koska varhennettu kieltenopetus on ottamassa nyt ensiaskeleitaan valtakunnallisella tasolla, tutkimusta varhaisesta kieltenopetuksesta Suomen kontekstissa tarvitaan opetuksen kehittämiseksi.</p> <p>Varhennettu kieltenopetus asettaa opettajat uudenlaisen haasteen eteen aikaisempaa nuoremman kielenoppijan ja toiminnallisten, suullista kielitaitoa painottavien menetelmien kanssa. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää, miten varhennettua kieltenopetusta toteutetaan Suomessa oppimateriaalien ja menetelmien näkökulmasta opettajien kertomana. Tämä pro gradu työ pohjautuu tutkimustietoon varhaisen kielenoppimisen eduista ja edellytyksistä, sekä varhaiseen kielenoppimiseen soveltuvista opetusmenetelmistä. Kysely- ja haastatteluaineisto kerättiin vuoden 2019 ja alkuvuoden 2020 aikana. Kyselyyn vastasi 40 opettajaa, joista kolmea lisäksi haastateltiin.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoitti, että opettajat tiedostavat varhaisen kielenoppimisen periaatteet hyödyntämällä opetuksessaan toiminnallisuutta ja korostamalla suullista kielitaitoa. Opettajien näkemykset kirjoitetun kielen roolista vaihtelivat, minkä vuoksi eroja opettajien kuvaamissa opetuskäytänteissä esiintyi. Opettajat kokivat, että oppikirjat perinteisessä muodossaan eivät palvele varhennettua kieltenopetusta. Lisäksi opetuksen suunnittelu ja valmistelu koettiin työlääksi, sillä sopivaa valmista oppimateriaalia oli tarjolla heikosti.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Children are said to learn languages quickly and with little effort compared to adults. Especially when it comes to fluency including pronunciation and intonation, children are known to defeat older learners. (Mezzi 2012: 13) These expectations, the desire to develop language knowledge and studies supporting early language learning (ELL) have led to the growth of the phenomenon of early language teaching (ELT) in school education over the recent years. (Enever 2011) Finland is not an exception as from the academic year 2019-2020 onwards, children in Finland have started learning an additional language in the first grade at the age of 7 or 8. Everyone involved in ELT including teachers, principals, parents and pupils, are now facing a challenge of a whole new area of language teaching pedagogy. And as Enever (2015:18) states, “At present, we are still in the early stages of building this expertise – a process that may well take more than one generation to establish and consolidate.”

In 2018, the Finnish government prepared a new amendment considering an earlier start of language studies starting nationally in the academic year 2019-2020. This meant that all primary schools in Finland were required to provide A1 language education from the first grade onwards beginning in the spring term 2020 at the latest. (Ministry of Culture and Education 2018c) A1 language is the advanced syllabus of an additional language in the Finnish curriculum and the language studied can be either a foreign language, the second national language Swedish or Finnish in the Swedish-medium schools. Until the new amendment, the mandatory A1 language studies usually began in the 3rd grade. (Government Decree 422/2012) The amendment is historical since instead of reforming the distribution of lesson hours, it adds two weekly lessons to the core curriculum of basic education.

The reformed national core curriculum of the early A1 language was published in May 2019. It includes the goals, aims and contents of the early A1 language. In addition, it provides tools for differentiation and assessment. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019) The main goals of the A1 language in grades 1-2 are to emphasize positive attitude towards foreign languages, to arouse children’s curiosity towards studying languages, to strengthen children’s self-confidence in language learning and to encourage children to use the languages even with limited proficiency from the very beginning. In practice, this means versatile teaching methods and tasks that emphasize active learning and communication skills. (POPS 2019) From a

broader national perspective, the early A1 language aims to integrate ELL into the Finnish education with a much wider scope than before, to provide pupils with a wider language repertoire, and to create a welcoming and encouraging attitude towards language learning. Ultimately, the amendment aims to create a language path that begins in early childhood education and continues all throughout a person's life. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2017)

Since there is not yet wide experience of implementing ELT in Finland, it is crucial to provide information to everyone involved in the new amendment. With this research, I pursue to answer questions concerning teachers' perceptions and views on ELT and their experiences on the learning materials and methods suggested for ELT. More precisely, this study investigates how ELT, at its early stage, is being executed in Finnish primary schools based on teachers' descriptions, and how teachers have experienced this new area of teaching. Additionally, the aim is to examine how the materials and methods used in ELT meet the general principles of ELL. This information is necessary in order to help to understand teachers' experiences, and to develop both teachers' practices and teacher education.

I decided to choose learning materials and methods as the focus for the study since I wanted to have a pragmatic approach to the topic of early A1 language. To address the pragmatic orientation, I decided to examine some of the concrete actions and methods used for early A1 language teaching as reported by teachers. By doing research on learning materials and methods chosen for ELL lessons, I aim at providing wider understanding of the Finnish ELT context. Additionally, this study will provide information of the reality of the implementations of the early A1 language in ordinary circumstances that, as Johnstone (2009: 31) states, may be far from ideal. By 'ideal', Johnstone (2009: 31) refers to favorable environments with expert teachers, which is rarely the reality.

Another reason for choosing learning material as the focus for the study is that I have experience both from working in a nursery school with very young children aged 1 to 6 and teaching older children and teenagers in a school environment during my teacher training studies. After seeing the differences between young children and older learners and getting to know the principles of ELT, I assume that transferring from upper grades to teaching first graders through creative and active methods such as music, play and drama can be something teachers have never done before. Teachers might feel that ELT is out of their education and expertise and thus it can be

an unpleasant and uncomfortable experience. On the other hand, it can be an invigorating new experience for teachers, a chance to implement language teaching differently and to challenge themselves with the new subject.

The study consists of seven main chapters. First in chapter 2, the background of ELL in a school environment and the Finnish context including the amendment concerning ELT in Finland and the Government's Key Project for languages are being discussed. Chapter 3 focuses on the possible advantages and disadvantages of a young language learner and ELL. Chapter 4 examines learning materials and methods often related to ELT and the Finnish context regarding ELT materials. The present study is introduced in chapter 5 including research questions, the methodology and the participants of the study. Finally, in chapter 6, the research findings are presented and analyzed. The final chapter 7 contains the discussion including the validity and reliability of the study, the conclusions as well as suggestions for future research.



## **2 BACKGROUND**

Early foreign language education has been under discussion and debate globally for the past decades. Much of the debate has focused on age as the key factor in foreign language learning (FLL) and the general opinion and belief of decision makers and parents has been “the earlier the better”. (Muñoz 2010: 40-41) One evidence supporting this belief is the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), a theory suggesting that in order to reach native-like proficiency in a language, one should begin to learn it as early as possible (Pallier 2007: 155-156). However, much of the support advocating early foreign language learning (EFLL) in a school environment is provided by research on second language acquisition (SLA) in naturalistic setting. The results from SLA studies constantly show the advantages of an early exposure to second language (L2). (Muñoz 2010: 39)

Nevertheless, studies conducted in a school setting comparing those who start FLL earlier to those who start later are not showing as consistent results and they even indicate that the advantages of an earlier start tend to disappear by the age of 16 (Pinter 2017). This chapter first discusses some of the reasons for widespread success of ELL in a school setting such as the Critical Period Hypothesis. Then the focus shifts to the Finnish context and the arrival of ELL into the Finnish language education including the Government Key Project and the Amendment concerning ELT in Finland.

### **2.1 ELL in a school setting**

This section discusses ELL from a general perspective including for example the factors that separate ELL in a school setting from naturalistic ELL settings. Chapter 3 also discusses ELL, but the focus is more on the young language learner. Before discussing ELL in a school context, clarifying the ambiguity of the term ELL is essential. ELL is a strongly context-related term and thus, providing a definition to fit all ELL contexts is not achievable. ELL in each context depends on the onset of education and language teaching. However, ELL is commonly understood to cover learner’s age period from early childhood to the first years of schooling (Skinnari & Halvari 2018: 2) The Finnish context and the definition of the term is discussed in depth in chapter 3. Next, ELL in a school setting is examined.

The general opinion and belief of language learning 'the earlier the better', is an assumption not fully supported by research. It has been repeatedly perceived that young children arriving to a new country can acquire both the grammatical structures and pronunciation from the rich input around them seemingly effortlessly (Pinter 2017). However, as mentioned, the results on ELL in a school environment have not been as consistent. The idea of an earlier start to language studies in a school environment seems to be highly influenced by positive research findings accomplished in naturalistic language learning settings (e.g. a bilingual family or the case of immigration). (Muñoz 2010: 40-41) For instance Jaekel et al (2017: 631) in their longitudinal study concerning reading and listening comprehension of early English found out that in a short-run, earlier starters of language studies outperformed the late starters, but in the long-run, those advantages had disappeared as late starters defeated the early starters.

The positive findings on learning a L2 in a naturalistic setting has led to generalizations believing that the same results can be achieved with a foreign language (FL) in a school environment. (Muñoz 2010: 40-41) Enever (2015: 17) agrees by stating that the predominant rhetoric of ELL comes partly from the general talk among politicians regarding global interconnectivity and its dependency on fluency in languages especially in English, and how earlier start would ensure fluency in adulthood. As such, parents have been influenced by this rhetoric and now agree that ELL is always and automatically advantageous. (Enever 2015: 17)

One of the main arguments supporting ELL in a school environment has been the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) theory. The theory suggests that the age of language acquisition is a crucial predictor of native-like proficiency and that the earlier one starts to learn a language, the better. The view is based on an age-related decline in neural plasticity of the brain and how the neural modifications become irreversible after childhood. (Pallier 2007: 155-156) However, like in many theories supporting ELL, the focus of the studies on the theory has been on first and second language acquisition in a naturalistic setting (Celaya 2012: 2-3) and thus the results cannot be fully generalized to fit the context of FLL in a classroom.

Compared to naturalistic L2 acquisition, learning languages in a classroom is very different and the major issue with the generalization is that it tends to ignore the crucial differences between the two. (Enever 2015: 16) Firstly, in a school environment, the amount of input is limited. (Muñoz 2008) Now that the new amendment in Finland has come into effect, A1 language lessons are provided two hours per week during the first two grades (Government decree

793/2018). Huotilainen (2018), who has made studies concerning the brain in terms of learning, suggests that the amount of exposure to the target language (TL) in order to get results should be at least three times 45 minutes per week. In addition to the weekly limitations in the amount of input, exposure to the TL during the lessons is also limited (Muñoz 2008). This includes both the source of input which usually is the teacher and quantity of the TL in general. The third difference is that communication in the classroom between peers is not in the TL and in addition, the TL is not usually spoken outside classroom. (Muñoz 2008)

A similar list is provided by Mezzi (2012: 12-13) who argues that there are both quality and quantity related differences in the linguistic and cultural inputs of a naturalistic L2 learning setting and an instructed, formal one. Where the amount of input in a naturalistic setting is continuous, it is very limited in a school environment. Moreover, in a school environment, there is only one setting and one interlocutor meaning the classroom and the teacher. Additionally, the teacher may be lacking oral fluency since foreign language teachers are usually not native speaker of the TL. (Mezzi 2012: 12-13) It is advisable that the person teaching EFL should be a native speaker if possible in order to succeed in EFL teaching. (Huotilainen 2018) Johnstone (2002: 19) agrees by stating that successful ELL requires teachers with excellent accent and intonation.

In the Finnish context not only language teachers, but also class teachers, who are usually classroom generalists, are allowed teach languages in primary schools. This might cause issues especially when it comes to pronunciation and phonetics since no studies of the foreign language (FL) are required from a class teacher in order to teach early A1 language. Arguments on the native-like proficiency advocate for language teachers as the better option for early language teachers. On the other hand, the importance of excellent accent can be questioned in the case of the lingua franca, English. English is the most studied A1 language in Finland (Official Statistics of Finland 2018a & b) and it no longer has only one accepted accent or variation since it is so widely spoken around the world. Nonetheless, with rarer foreign languages, the case is different, and it is obvious that in order to provide quality ELT, teacher should have knowledge of the TL and the ability to speak it fluently.

As mentioned, there is a strong need for research on ELL in a school environment where both time and TL accessibility related limitations are present. A longitudinal study ELLiE (Early Language Learning in Europe) was conducted to do exactly that as the aim of the study was to

“investigate what could realistically be achieved in ordinary classrooms where only a limited amount of curriculum time was available for ELL”. (Enever 2011: 145) The study included seven European countries and approximately 1400 children aged 7-8 during the years 2007-2010. Countries and schools involved in the study reflected a variety of contexts. (Enever 2011: 11-12)

The study provided support for successful ELL in a school environment. It was found out that successful teachers of ELL were fond of the FL they taught, and they were highly skilled at keeping the students focused and on-task. From the language learning point of view, the study showed that average learners achieved level A1 (the CEFR Levels, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) in their oral and aural skills during the study and many learners showed significant increase in vocabulary and FL complexity in the first years of FL instruction. Accordingly, the study provided evidence that foreign language learning (FLL) can be successfully achieved in a school environment in many ways and in various conditions. (Enever 2011: 5-6)

Many of the advantages of ELL are related to children’s innate characteristics and instincts. In order to make the most of them and to succeed in ELT, other conditions for learning including the material and teacher education resources must be in place (Rixon 2015a: 47). The teacher must master both the language and proper teaching methods for early childhood pedagogy and ELL (Enever 2011: 38). Knowledge of ELL is also needed when choosing methods that go in line with the ELT pedagogy including for instance children’s instinct to play and interaction and their ability to process information implicitly (Halliwel 1992: 3-6). Without being aware of the proper execution, the results might be opposite to the original aim of an earlier start. The advantages and challenges of ELL are discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

## **2.2 ELL in Finnish language education**

As mentioned, ELL in Finnish language education took a leap in September 2018. The government decided that the mandatory A1 language will begin already in the first grade of primary school. Children in Finland start their first grade at the age of 7 or 8. Before the new amendment, the A1 language studies had usually begun in the 3rd grade. The decision was justified by positive research findings supporting ELL such studies in neuroscience including the plasticity of the brain and the sensitivity periods for language learning. Moreover, a set of

innate characteristics of a child supported the decision of an earlier start to language studies. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2017)

As mentioned in the first chapter, the amendment required every primary school in Finland to offer foreign or second language studies to all first graders from the beginning of spring term 2020 at the latest. The amendment adds two weekly lessons to the syllabus of the first two grades. Accordingly, the lessons are not taken from the existing hours of other school subjects. This makes the amendment historical in the Finnish basic education. Instead of the earlier 16 weekly A1 language lessons in primary school, children in Finland will, from the academic year 2019-2020 onwards, have 18 weekly lessons of the A1 language during primary school. (Ministry of Education and Culture)

The amendment aims to decrease inequality in FLL in the Finnish education system. This inequality evolves from socio-economical and regional differences that contain for instance the language repertoire available. Another aim of the amendment is to increase the amount of different languages studied as the A1 language. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2018a) The amendment also includes the aims of providing equal possibilities to every child in Finland to study languages and to provide pupils with learning tools from early on to respond to future needs of school environment. (Ministry of Education and Culture n.d.)

In 2017, Pyykkö made a report of the status and levels of language competences in Finland. As a one solution for enriching the language repertoire in basic education, she suggested an earlier start to language studies. The report was published by the Ministry of Culture and Education and it became another supporting argument for the amendment regarding ELT in Finland. In addition to suggesting earlier start to language studies, Pyykkö (2017) made suggestions related to language choices. It was emphasized that language studies in Finland have become unilateral and in order to enrich the language repertoire in basic education, the A1 language should be other than English since it is already the most widely spoken foreign language in Finland. Additionally, around 90 % of students each year choose to study English as their A1 language. (Pyykkö 2017: 9, 24, 34)

In March 2017, before the amendment came into effect, the government executed 'the Government Key Project for Languages'. The project included regional experiments in altogether 105 municipalities and over 30 000 children took part in the project. (Ministry of

Education and Culture 2018b) Most of the experiments concerned the earlier start to A1 language studies at schools, but additionally, some experiments were executed in early childhood education and pre-primary education as well. The experiments aimed to find and develop operating models suitable for ELT that support children's commitment to study languages. Language teaching was executed either as separate language lessons or as a part of another subject. Integrating languages with subjects such as music, visual arts and physical education was popular. A year later in March 2018, more subsidies were granted to schools to help them either continue their work on providing early language education or to begin providing it. (Inha 2018: 1-3)

Based on a publication concerning the outcomes of the project, the regional experiments of the Key Project were successful. The experiments generally created a motivating and encouraging atmosphere for ELL. In over 80% of the experiments, English was the target language. In addition to English, popular languages were German, Swedish and French. An example of a successful experiment is the project 'Kieliä kehiin' which was executed in the Pirkanmaa region. The project included both language showering in pre-schools and specific 'Kikatus' language lessons in the first two grades of primary school. During the experiment, language teachers taught different A1 languages for one hour per week. Every pupil got to familiarize themselves with four different languages during one academic year before making the decision of what language they would like to study as their A1 language. The project managed to diversify the language choices of second graders in the area: in spring 2018 approximately 28% wanted to choose other language than English as their A1 language. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2018b)

In addition to the national core curriculum, municipalities and basic education providers in Finland are required to make their own local curricula. Where the national core curriculum provides the general guidelines, the local curricula offer flexibility since they are made to meet the needs and possibilities of each municipality. Additionally, they are intended to give more concrete tools and guidance for teachers. As mentioned earlier, the reformed national core curriculum regarding the A1 language was published in May 2019. It emphasizes the role of diverse teaching and learning methods and the importance of communication skills and active learning. (POPS 2019) The local curricula for early A1 language needed to be completed and ready to put to use in 1.1.2020. Accordingly, teachers must follow the local curricula which is

based on the national core curriculum, but they still have freedom in terms of deciding the specific contents and methods for their ELT.

Since ELT is a new phenomenon in the Finnish basic education, leaving the teaching practices up to the teachers without specific guidelines has both benefits and drawbacks in it. Johnstone (2009: 32-33) discusses the importance of national level policy development in ELT. ELT cannot be successfully generalized if the implementation is completely left to the initiative of individual schools and teachers. By 'generalized success' he means the success made by ordinary teachers in ordinary circumstances instead of the ideal environment. Some of the benefits of precise policy planning in ELT are for instance additional resources, professional development of teachers and the high status that ELT receives due to policy planning. (Johnstone 2009: 31) In Finland there was an allowance of 7,5 million euros funded to ELT in 2020 and 12-million-euro allowance from 2021 onwards. Altogether 2 million euros have been invested into teachers' in-service training to ensure that all municipalities will have the possibility to execute early A1 language teaching fully from 2020 onwards. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2018)

However, having precise policy developments can have drawbacks as well. It was emphasized in the ELLiE study (2011: 35) that due to the rather quick widespread of ELL in Europe, the curricula work has been made a short timescale in many European countries and that might have effects on the quality of the documents. Additionally, it is possible that ELT policy can be based on one-sided and uncertain assumptions. Well descriptive example of language learning is the idea of 'the earlier the better' mentioned in chapter 1. Another possible drawback to mention is the fact that national policies can often be estranged from the reality of teachers and their existing approach and thus become even unavailing. Also, a strict policy has a risk of providing over-standardized model of teaching that can be harmful for teachers' creativity and innovativeness. (Johnstone 2009: 32-33) The local curricula provide a possible solution to avoid these issues. As mentioned, they offer more flexibility compared to the national core curriculum since they are made specifically to meet the needs and possibilities of each municipality. Another aspect possibly ensuring better results in ELT is that teachers are often involved in the process of making the local curricula.

As ELT is still a new phenomenon in Finland, the guidelines made by Finnish National Agency for Education (POPS 2019), the local curricula and a good-quality in-service training for

teachers are crucial in order to succeed in the historical renewal. This study aims to, in some level, answer the question whether the policy developments and guidelines have been enough to provide teachers with the security and support they need in order to succeed in ELT. The next, in chapter 3, the possible advantages (see section 3.2) and disadvantages (see section 3.2) of ELL and young children as language learners are being examined.



### **3 ELL AND YOUNG CHILDREN AS LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

This chapter examines young children as language learners and ELL in general. More precisely, both the possible advantages and disadvantages of having a young learner in a language classroom are examined. The term ELL is strongly context related as the meaning varies from one country to another. (Johnstone 2002: 6) Skinnari and Halvari (2018) argue that the meaning of ELL depends on the onset of language teaching in any specific context. In general, ELL can be understood as a learner's age period from early childhood to the first two grades of basic education (Skinnari & Halvari 2018: 2) and even certain important conditions that might go across national and cultural contexts are possible to recognize (Johnstone 2009: 32).

Since context is key in defining ELL, it is crucial to clarify the Finnish context. The current phenomenon of changing previous ways of organizing language teaching is called "varhennettu kielenopetus" in comparison to "varhainen kielenopetus" which means ELT. (Skinnari and Halvari 2018: 2) In Finland, the first additional language (A1) can be the second national language Swedish, Finnish in the Swedish-medium schools or a foreign language such as English, Spanish, German etc. depending on the language repertoire of each municipality and school. Skinnari and Halvari (2018:14) define the term 'second language' as a language that is used also outside education whereas the term 'foreign language' refers to a language mainly learnt in a school setting. Therefore, in this study, the term ELL covers languages other than first language, meaning both the two second languages as well as foreign languages.

As discussed earlier, ELL has generally been understood and accepted as a positive phenomenon among politicians, parents and in general talk. However, it is important to keep in mind that it has, like any approach to education, possible drawbacks as well. ELL is a complex and sensitive area of learning that needs to be understood as a whole. Early learning of languages and especially young learners have a lot of advantages and when those characteristics are utilized properly, ELL can be a success. According to Enever (2015: 18), the priority aspect of contemporary research in ELL pedagogy is to understand the advantages that young children bring to the foreign language classroom and that the teachers are well equipped with tools and skills to capitalize on them. The British Council survey examining early start to English studies and including 64 countries showed that unless appropriate conditions such as for learning the material and teacher education are in place, ELL in a school environment can become

problematic. The results indicated that in many contexts, the conditions needed for successful ELL were inadequate due to, for instance, the lack of resources. (Rixon 2015b: 2, 47)

Thus, having the right circumstances is crucial in successful ELL and ELT. Enever (2015: 22) argues that successful ELL consists of the following five main principles: teacher expertise, the role of motivation, establishing continuity of learning, setting realistic aims and the role of out-of-school learning. However, Johnstone (2009: 34) summarizes ELL by stating that at least young language learners will have the opportunity to exploit the advantages of both sides: benefits of a young learner as well as an older one. This chapter examines both the advantages and possibilities of a young language learner as well as the possible drawbacks and challenges related to ELL in a school environment. The advantages of ELL and young language learners are being discussed in the next section 3.1, then followed by the challenges and possible drawbacks of ELL in a school environment in section 3.2.

### **3.1 Advantages of young language learners and ELL**

The advantages of a young language learner are mainly associated with innate characteristics and instincts related to the young age. Halliwell (1992) gives a comprehensive list of six advantageous qualities young children have as language learners (see Figure 1.). Young children do not come to a foreign language classroom empty-handed, rather with a set of skills and instincts that should not be ignored. To succeed in ELT, teachers need to recognize these abilities and know how to make the most of them. (Halliwell 1992: 3)

- (1) Children's ability to grasp meaning
- (2) Children's creative use of limited language resources
- (3) Children's capacity for indirect learning
- (4) Children's instinct for play and fun
- (5) The role of imagination
- (6) Children's instinct for interaction and talk

Figure 1. Halliwell's list of six characteristics of young children as language learners.

First, she mentions 1) children's holistic approach to language learning. This means children's ability to grasp meaning without understanding individual words. Pinter (2017) also discusses children's "intuitive grasp to language". Children use the signs of nonverbal communication such as intonation, facial expressions, gesture and action to understand the general message. They might use it even to their mother tongue since it can be hard for a young child to follow purely verbal instructions. (Halliwell 1992: 3) To benefit from this skill, teachers need to pay attention to their use of nonverbal communication and even exaggerate it in ELL classroom.

In addition to understanding language without really knowing it, children are also creative when it comes to using language themselves. Therefore, the second ability on the list is 2) children's creative use of limited language resources. This can be seen in every child acquiring their mother tongue and in an adult speaking in a foreign language and not knowing the right word or the right grammatical structure. If we do not have the knowledge needed, we make up new words or try to say the same thing in a different way with the language resources we have. Halliwell (1992: 4) provides an example of a four-year-old who wanted the light to put on by saying "Switch off the dark. I don't like the dark shining". To make the most of this instinct, children should get opportunities to communicate and construct language themselves and not just repeat given language. (Halliwell 1992: 4)

When learning a new language both direct and indirect methods are needed, but with young children, the focus should be on indirect learning for various reasons. Therefore, the third instinct on the list is 3) children's capacity for indirect learning. Indirect activities include repeating and learning without the child really noticing it. The focus of the task might be on guessing right or winning a game but simultaneously the child is repeating words and therefore learning them and often the pronunciation as well. Another advantage of unconscious indirect learning is that it encourages to spontaneous use of the TL that again often leads to fluency. (Halliwell 1992: 5) Games are a good example of this both from the point of view of indirect learning and also because they create a desire to communicate even with the limited resources. That is why games should be understood as real work in a language classroom. (Halliwell 1992: 6)

Games are related to the fourth category as well since it is 4) children's instinct for play and fun. No matter what the activity is, children tend to add their own element of drama to it and express their personality through it. By doing so, they truly live the language and make it their

own. This leads to the fifth category which is 5) the role of imagination. Teachers should keep in mind that children's reality consists of imagination and fantasy and not just real life. By understanding this, teachers are receiving another powerful tool to their language teaching. Halliwell (1992: 7) provides a simple example on how to combine children's imagination and learning of familiar words: children are asked to draw a monster and then describe its characteristics for example how many heads does it have, what colour is it and how old is it. This kind of exercise makes them want to share their ideas and thus use the TL.

Children's eagerness to share ideas leads to the last and most obvious category: 6) children's instinct for interaction and talk. Halliwell (1992: 8) highlights this as the most important characteristics of a young child in a language classroom. The aims and principles of the A1 language in the reformed core curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019b) go well together with Halliwell's as they emphasize active learning through for instance music, play and games, communication skills by encouraging TL use from the very beginning. In addition, it is suggested that both themes from children's daily life as well as from their imaginary world should be present in the classroom. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019a)

More advantages are listed by Johnstone (2009: 34) who mentions children's ease to adopt the sound system of a new language. The argument is supported by neuroscience and the research on the phoneme map of the brain. Research has shown that it would be beneficial for young children's brain to learn languages with a sound system and prosody as different as possible from the mother tongue. It would be advisable for Finnish children to start learning languages such as French or Portuguese as their A1 language in order to make the most of this advantage. (Huotilainen 2018)

Another characteristic is listed by Pinter (2017) who argues that young children are more sensitive to the phonological system (including the sounds and rhythm) of a language. Huotilainen (2018) discusses the phoneme map of the brain and the effects it has on language learning. Older learners (over 12-year olds) already have a more developed and dominant phoneme map of their mother tongue which makes it harder to learn a sound system that differs a lot from their mother tongue and a language with too similar sound system does not cause the desirable effect in the brain. If the mother tongue is Finnish, languages such as English and Swedish are too similar. (Huotilainen 2018) From this point of view it is unfortunate that the

most studied language as the early A1 language in Finland is English. In 2018, 74,1% of the girls and 73,9% of the boys in the Finnish comprehensive school studied English as their A1 language. (Official Statistics of Finland 2018a & b)

Johnstone (2009:34) and Pinter (2017) also mention children's probability to be less 'language anxious' compared to adults. This is beneficial in language learning since young children enjoy copying sounds and patterns of intonation without worrying as much about mistakes as older learners. (Pinter 2017) Additionally, a rather obvious advantage is the fact that earlier start allows more time overall for learning the language. Learning languages as a child and later as an adolescent also allow a wider range of acquisitional processes as young children capitalize intuitive processes whereas older learners are more analytical. This gives potential for the language to be embedded more deeply. (Johnstone 2002:12)

### **3.2 Challenges and possible drawbacks of ELL**

Many of the challenges in ELL are related either to neglecting the capacity and skills of young language learners or the abilities and skills that young learners do not yet have. There are also challenges in ELL concerning the implementation of early language teaching at the national level. Some of the challenges have already been mentioned in the previous section 3.1 such as the best languages to learn from the perspective of neuroscience and the ambivalent situation concerning language choices for A1 language in Finland. It has also been argued earlier that ignoring the potential of young children and their exquisite characteristics that benefit them in ELL, can make ELL a missed opportunity (Halliwell 1992: 3). Next some possible drawbacks and challenges of ELL crucial when planning ELT are examined.

The importance of normal development of the mother tongue before starting to learn an additional language is crucial. The normal development of vocabulary and prosody of the mother tongue is noticed at the age of three at the latest. If some issues are noticed, it should be up to the parents to decide whether the child is ready to be introduced with a foreign language. In addition, there is not much research conducted on ELL with children who have not developed at a normal pace with their mother tongue. (Huotilainen 2018) Thus, since many first and second graders are not yet literate even in their first language especially in the first grade, it can be questioned whether the possible outcomes can be known for sure at the beginning of primary

school. On the other hand, if a child is exempted from studying early A1 language from the beginning, issues concerning equality, the ultimate goal of the amendment, will come into play.

Some of the challenges of a young language learner can be understood by comparing a young learner to an older one. For example Johnstone (2002) and Pinter (2017) discuss the characteristics of a young child that might be disadvantageous in language learning. It is obvious that young children do not have all the skills and they are not as developed as older learners. A young learner does not have the same understanding of the world compared to an older learner. In the case of language learning, this can mean that acquiring a new word in a foreign language might require learning the concept of the word as well. Older learners know the concepts already which makes it easier for them to just add the new word to a familiar concept. The understanding of the world also includes the reasons behind learning a foreign language. An older learner has a clearer vision why it is important to learn additional languages, whereas a younger learner might not yet understand fully why. (Johnstone 2002:13)

Another aspect that younger learners do not yet master is the process of learning. A first grader is only beginning to learn what it is like to be at school studying and thus he/she needs a lot of advice and support from the teacher. They do not know how to learn, what can help them in that and what they could themselves do to learn things. This includes techniques for understanding and memorising such as note-taking and revising. (Johnstone 2002: 13) However, this should not be a significant issue in the Finnish early A1 language classroom since the aim of it is to make it playful, fun and motivating thus the focus being on implicit learning. (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019b)

In addition, young learners do not have the analytical approach to language. This means that they do not know how language, grammar and discourse work. (Johnstone 2002:13) Pinter (2017) agrees by stating that older learners might take an interest in language as a system whereas younger learners do not yet have the ability to analyze language. This can also be a good thing since young children learn intuitively and indirectly and as argued before, that is their strength in language learning. Accordingly, both direct and indirect ways of learning benefit in language learning and there are times and places for both in a language classroom. Halliwell (1992: 5) makes a rough distinction by arguing that unconscious indirect learning encourages for fluency and conscious direct learning for accuracy.

Due to children's lack of analytical approach to language, teachers do not have metalanguage as their tool for teaching. Metalanguage refers to the language to talk about the language and it is often used in upper grades as a tool to explain grammar and discourse. (Cameron 2001: 1) This differs considerably from older learners who have access to metalanguage and the benefits of it. Another aspect to consider when planning ELT is that children are less able to keep themselves motivated and they tend to lose interest more quickly compared to older learners (Cameron 2001: 1).

However, as Johnstone (2002:13) puts it, the skills that young learners do not yet have, will of course become available for them later in their school journey. Instead of focusing too much on what the young learner does not have but will achieve later, the focus should be on what is available already at a young age and make the most of it. Another example of this is the fact that children have no, or limited, ability to read and write even in their first language. (Pinter 2017) For this reason, written language should have a limited role in early A1 language classroom. The core curriculum for the early A1 language (POPS 2019) says the following about written language:

Literacy skills are not required from a student at the beginning of the education. The student's interest towards spoken and written language is aroused and increased. Interest towards reading and writing is aroused gradually. (POPS 2019, my translation)

After all, it is impossible to say when is the best time to start to learn a foreign language. Each starting age obviously has its advantages and disadvantages. Johnstone (2002: 13-14) summarizes the comparison by saying 'In principle it is never too early to begin, but equally it is never too late to begin.' There are advantages that only occur in younger age, but without careful execution, ELL can have negative impact on later language studies and thus become a missed opportunity.

## 4 LEARNING MATERIALS AND METHODS

ELL pedagogy affects comprehensively all aspects of ELT. So far, the perspective has mainly been on the characteristics of a young language learner, but now the special features of classroom practices, teaching methods and learning materials used in ELL classroom will be discussed. According to Bland (2015: 4), ELT requires teachers to extend their craft repertoire and even develop and search for suitable materials to meet the needs of a young language learner. Thus, this chapter first discusses the role of the teacher in ELT and possible classroom routines and teaching methods for enhancing the early language development. Then some of the suitable materials and methods for ELL classroom are examined. Last section of this chapter presents the Finnish context in terms of published learning materials for the early A1 language.

As this chapter discusses the classroom practices and tasks of ELL, the role of the teacher cannot be disregarded. Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2011: 106) acknowledge teachers as the key players of ELL. Enever (2011: 72) agrees by emphasising the teacher as one of the most important factors contributing to learners' achievements in the FL. Teachers are responsible for what happens in the ELL classroom and thus, how it is being taught and learned. They are also considered as the main sources of the TL input and motivation (Nikolov and Mihaljevic Djigunovic 2011: 106). In order to reach the goal of interactive approach to teaching, the teacher needs to be confident of his/her own proficiency and more than basic skills are required. If the teacher is able to provide the optimal conditions for ELL, learners will more likely benefit from their advantages as young language learners. (Rixon 2015a: 42)

However, teachers' language proficiency and its impact on children's FL development is often seen as a delicate issue. (Nikolov 2011: 107) It was emphasized in the ELLiE study that teachers of EFL need to have a high level of fluency in the TL, but the findings showed that qualification requirements did not always reflect this. (Enever 2011: 5) This would be an important aspect to study in the Finnish context as well since the issue of who should teach early languages in primary school is relevant and as mentioned, at this stage, class teachers, language teachers and special education teachers are entitled to execute ELT (Teaching Qualification Decree 986/1998).



Some of the suitable teaching methods for young language learners have been mentioned in the earlier chapters and obviously the principles of ELL pedagogy are directly linked to the suggested classroom practices. For example Rixon (2015a) emphasizes speaking, listening, repetition and everyday routines as the foundations of teaching methods and materials in ELT and proposes the use of visuality, play, songs etc as suitable teaching methods. However, it is important to mention that implementing and trying different and new ways of teaching can be a challenge for teachers. Bland (2015) reminds that teachers tend to shy away from activities suggested for ELL such as drama and storytelling and instead prefer to stay on safer, familiar activities. This can be disadvantageous for succeeding in ELL as according to Bland (2015: 184), the use of explicit language teaching methods in an already limited exposure to the TL in a formal school environment, will remove all the advantages young children have as language learners.

Before shifting the focus on some of the possible teaching and learning materials, it is worth mentioning the opportunities for language development during language lesson in addition to the primary tasks. Cameron (2001:10) discusses everyday classroom routines as opportunities for meaningful language development. For instance, classroom management provides a wide range of routines suitable for the purpose, but the language used needs to suit the level of pupils' language proficiency. She (2001: 10) provides an example of one possible classroom routine: each time the teacher asks some pupils to give out supplies needed for a task, the question follows the same pattern 'George, please give out the scissors. Margaret, please give out the paper'. By repeating the request similarly each time, the context becomes familiar to the children thus making it easy for them to predict the meaning and intention. Over time, the teacher can incorporate more complex language to the same requests and children will understand with the support of the context and the routine. For example, 'Sam, please ask everybody if they want white paper or black paper'. (Cameron 2001: 11) In addition, routines regarding the beginning and end of the lesson provide opportunities to learn ways of greeting and saying goodbyes thus providing cultural knowledge of the TL culture as well.

#### **4.1 Learning Materials and methods suggested for ELT**

The general principles of ELL have been examined and it is now clear that young children as language learners benefit considerably from versatile implicit learning strategies, thus the use

of functional activities is highly suggested. This section discusses some of the methods often mentioned in the theories regarding ELL and ELT. In addition, task examples and research findings related to the methods are examined.

Cameron (2001:31) suggests five main principles that separate an event or activity done in class from a language learning task. First, a language learning task has coherence and unity for learners (1). The learner must also know the meaning and purpose of the task (2) and the teachers need to have a clear vision of the language learning goal of the task (3). A task needs to have a clear beginning and end (4) and it should always involve the learners actively (5). Thus, a task is a classroom activity that can be planned, implemented and evaluated. (Cameron 2001: 31) That being said, a successful ELT task requires a set of skills and knowledge from the teacher (Cameron 2001: 179) and just singing a song or reading a story does not become a language learning opportunity until the teacher makes it one and the learners recognize it. However, the necessity of the third principle can be questioned since the focus in ELL should be on implicit learning and children knowing the language learning goal does not seem to reflect that.

Repetition has an important role in ELL and thus for example, songs, rhymes and stories aimed for children often including a repetitive pattern provide a useful tool for ELT. From the point of view of language learning this means that repetition makes the new language and certain patterns salient making the story imperceptibly a meaningful drill. With the help of teacher's gestures and in some cases, pictures, children will get an understanding of the meaning. Later, the activity of listening and/or repeating can be developed into including for example speaking or acting. (Pinter 2017)

Cameron (2001: 163) also discusses repetition, or parallelism, often used in children's stories. An example from Little Red Riding Hood is provided where the dialogue between the Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf follows the pattern 'Grandmother, what big eyes you got!', 'All the better to see you with, my dear.' Another opportunity for language learning, more specifically letter sounds, comes from alliteration which means the use of words with initial consonants. Examples from the same story are 'red riding' and 'big bad'. (Cameron 2001: 163)

The use of narratives in an ELL lesson has many benefits that fit the nature of ELL. Narratives such as picture books and oral storytelling offer the rich high-quality input that is extremely

relevant in ELT. Narratives provide opportunities for children to hear the TL and practice their listening skills. The goal of listening is to make sense of what is being heard, which makes listening a meaning-focused rather than language-focused activity. Children are using resources they have to construct the meaning: the possible pictures of the book and both TL resources and first language resources. The mental process of listening to a foreign language picture book does not require the foreign language from the child. He or she might process it in their first language and with the help of the pictures, construct the outline plot and meaning. (Cameron 2001: 40)

An illustrated story-based framework of teaching English was conducted in Greece, concerning 24 first graders (7-year olds) who studied English as a foreign language. For the study, 8 short illustrated stories were carefully designed to meet the needs of language learning purposes and the level of language proficiency of the children. The project contained two stages, first reading of the stories by the teacher with the active participation of the children and secondly dramatization of them. In order to estimate the effectiveness of the project, an evaluation study was conducted including a pre-test and a post-test, a journal, interviews and observations. The experiment indicated positive effects on children's oral skills. The participants were interested in the stories and in dramatizing them which increased their motivation. The playful aspect of the different activities led to the development of children's imagination and creativity. (Georgopoulou & Griva 2011: 111- 114)

Games as a pedagogical tool in ELL classroom were examined earlier in section 3.1 where Halliwell's (1992: 6) arguments concerning some of the advantages of games in language learning were presented. Games offer an opportunity for implicit learning as they shift the focus from the language to succeeding in the game. Another benefit mentioned in section 3.1 is that games, like any implicit learning method, often encourage spontaneous use of the TL. Based on the advantages, Halliwell (1992: 6) states that games should be understood as real work and as an opportunity for language development.

Nursery rhymes are beneficial to language learners of all ages, but with young learners especially, among other advantages, they enhance early reading skills and phonemic awareness. (Sayakhan and Bradley 2019: 52) Nursery rhymes are defined as short poems or songs for children. (Sayakhan and Bradley 2019: 45) What is special about them is that even though the language can be a total nonsense, they nonetheless have value in language learning. They offer

a compact structure with short rhyming text that makes them easy to memorize. In addition to phonemic awareness, they also improve phonics which means working with sounds. (Sayakhan and Bradley 2019: 53) As stated earlier, ELL is supposed to be fun and playful and that is something nursery rhymes can offer. They are humorous and entertaining with silly situations and impossible characters. To make them more versatile, a physical movement or for instance acting can be added to the acts of saying or listening the rhyme. (Sayakhan and Bradley 2019: 48-52)

Songs in an ELL classroom offer high-quality input of the TL and language learning opportunities for oral language proficiency. Through songs, young language learners can practice for example intonation, rhythm and stress of the TL. They are also beneficial in learning the sound system of the TL and vocabulary. One example of learning a theme vocabulary would be the song Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes. Songs can also be used for learning sentence structures. The repetitive patterns that children's songs tend to contain are a good pedagogical tool for teaching and learning a certain linguistic form by heart. One example would be a song with repetitive pattern of WH-questions. (Millington 2011: 135-136) Huotilainen (2018) provides two reasons on behalf of songs in ELL. She (2018) argues that since linguistic features such as prosody, the concept of a syllable and slowness are often exaggerated in songs, they are easier to learn from songs than from speech. The second reason is that music in general develops the sense of hearing which is advantageous in language learning.

A study supporting the benefits of music in ELL classroom concerned four classrooms (altogether 80 children) and four teachers in one primary school in the period of 19 months. The participants, the children, were assessed both at the beginning of kindergarten in September and at the spring term of first grade in April. The study also included classroom observations and each class was observed altogether twice a month for 19 months. (Fisher 2001: 41) Two of the four teachers used a great deal of music in their classroom and the results showed that the children in the two classes with music as a tool for learning outperformed children in the other two classes that did not. In the two classrooms where music was incorporated, the day started with a morning song which was often chosen by one of the children (Fisher 2001: 44) and for example vocabularies were practiced with 'mystery words' from song titles. Songs were chosen based on the curriculum and language structures being taught. Additionally, in the two classes that had music as part of their language studies, children seemed to be more excited about

school and they were often observed humming along as they worked whereas in the other two classes children were more quiet and reserved. (Fisher 2001: 47)

Drama is often recognized as a beneficial method for ELL. (e.g. Rixon 2015a) Bland (2015b: 219) describes drama as a magical box of tools in a language classroom. Drama usually includes the need for suitable language choices and repetition, social interaction and negotiation with classmates and an opportunity to speak in different roles. Drama often requires movement and nonverbal communication as well. In practice, drama in language classroom can mean for instance finger puppets, role plays or dance. (Bland 2015b: 219-220) As such, drama provides another multisensory tool for ELL and a tool to help young learners to grasp meaning through a holistic approach to language learning. However, teachers need to ensure that children take various roles and not only the role of being questioned by the teacher (Bland 2015: 220).

Nonetheless, teachers must be careful when choosing material and deciding methods for ELL purposes. York (2011: 64) states some of the criticism related to songs specifically as a pedagogical language learning tool by arguing that songs are not always a realistic model of useful discourse. The reason is that the word order might be distorted for the sake of rhythm and even the intonation might be modified to fit the melody. The same criticism goes to all creative material used in an ELL classroom. Thus, teachers need to have the ability to notice the linguistic aspects and choose material based on their knowledge of both the language and the proficiency of the children. In addition, as mentioned before, an activity does not become a language learning task until it is carefully planned and chosen to suit the language learning goal set by the teacher.

Materials for ELT were examined also in the ELLiE (2011) study from a wider national perspective. The results indicated issues regarding the availability of suitable materials for young language learners. The materials used varied between countries depending on the funding traditions and for example workbooks, online material and homemade materials such as games and activities were used as teaching materials for ELT. At the time the study was conducted (2006-2010), not much material from publishers was available yet. Thus, teachers had to develop material themselves which was very time-consuming. Real life objects and toys were commonly used in ELT and at the time, publishers had started to offer supplementary material such as picture cards and puppets in addition to the workbook. Additionally, the results indicated variation in the use of a workbook in ELT since in 4 out of 7 countries workbooks were

widely used whereas in the remaining 3 countries workbooks were usually not part of ELT. However, the difference seemed to be related to the onset of ELT and workbook markets of each country. (Enever 2011: 28-30) Next section examines the situation in Finland in terms of learning materials published for early A1 language teaching.

#### **4.2 Learning materials for ELT in Finland**

Since ELT has started nationally very recently (in January 2020 at the latest), the amount of published material has increased significantly during this study and new materials are constantly being published. In addition to commercial education material publishers such as Otava and Sanomapro, locally produced materials have a major role in providing suitable material for teachers around Finland. At the time of the data collection in spring 2019, there was a lot less material published compared to spring 2020 when this study was completed. Next some of the materials made and published in Finland by the spring 2020 are examined.

As mentioned in section 2.2, one aim of the ELT experiments in the Key Project was to find and develop operating models for the future. This can be now seen from the amount of material available online as an outcome of different experiments. One example is the experiment in Pirkanmaa region called ‘kikatus’ which included multiple municipalities and a wide range of ELT material for different languages has been published on their website. (Kikatus – Pirkanmaa n.d.) One of the participating municipalities was Orivesi and their experiment was called ‘Oriveden kielipolku’. Their web site provides detailed guidance for preschool English and early A1 English for the first two grades including for instance detailed lesson plans for different themes, readymade games, picture cards and colouring pages. (Oriveden kielipolku n.d.) In addition to ‘kikatus’, many other experiments have produced online material available for everyone and a lot of ideas and material are shared for example on Facebook groups aimed for early A1 language teachers.

As mentioned, educational material publishers have also produced material for ELT, usually in a package that includes a workbook and digital material or only as a digital material package. Publishing company Sanoma Pro, specialized in educational materials, has published material packages for five early A1 languages: English, Swedish, Spanish, German and French. Based on their website, the materials include functional tools for EFL teaching such as songs, plays and games. Because the focus is on oral competency, short oral dialogues and pronunciation

are being practiced from the very beginning. Another series for early A1 English is called “Come with me!”. The series takes children on an adventure to a secret garden with bug friends Liam, Bob, Annie, Fiona and Samar. New language is being approached from a child’s perspective through realization and investigation. For example, English phonemes and sounds are being practiced through videos of a Finnish first grader introducing different English sounds and comparing them to the Finnish sound system. Phoneme tasks always include movement and a short rhyme. “Come with me”! includes both printed and digital material as well as supplementary material such as puppets, picture cards and stamps. (Sanoma Pro n.d.)

Another Finnish publishing company Otava has published material for early A1 English, German, French, Swedish, Spanish and Russian. Based on their website, the approach to language learning is functional and the focus is on oral competency. The emphasis is on learning through interactional and creative tasks including songs, movement and short rhymes. Teachers are provided with versatile digital material of tools and tips for using the material. Learning materials for German, French, Spanish, Swedish and Russian are completely digital. Only English material is available as a printed copy as well. (Otava oppimisen palvelut n.d.)

Research made on learning materials and methods on ELT in Finland has not been conducted yet. However, there are studies related to materials in the area of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Finland. For example, Bovellan (2014) in her dissertation studied teachers’ beliefs about learning and language from the viewpoint of learning materials in CLIL. The results indicated that a very few TL textbooks and other material were available for CLIL which resulted in teachers being materials designers. Teachers viewed that TL materials from abroad were incompatible with the national core curriculum. Additionally, if material from abroad was used, a lot of modification was needed for it to fit the Finnish CLIL context. However, since CLIL teachers knew well the core curriculum, they were able to design their materials themselves to match with the core curriculum. Nevertheless, making and adapting materials was very time-consuming for teachers. (Bovellan 2018)

The results also indicated that teacher personalities had an impact on the way they design material since some preferred more of an interactional and communicational approach whereas some wished to have something concrete to support both teaching and learning. Teachers’ personalities also affected in their attitude towards designing their own material. The amount of time spent on preparing material varied significantly among teachers. (Bovellan 2018: 179)

Rasinen (2006) studied the Finnish context of CLIL in a case study and as a part of the examination, learning materials were examined as well. The results indicated that especially during the first couple of years of CLIL in the school in question, the teachers designed, made and adapted a lot of material. At the beginning, materials were made in cooperation and later, all teachers had had to make material themselves for their CLIL teaching. Additionally, the school provided a significant amount of material such as resource literature, dictionaries and other material to support the teaching. (Rasinen 2006: 47).

Questions concerning published material for early A1 language teaching from commercial publishers will be discussed in chapter 6 where the main findings of the study are presented. The following chapter 5, however, introduces the present study in depth.



## **5 THE PRESENT STUDY**

This chapter presents the present study. First, in section 5.1, the aim of the study and the research questions are examined. Section 5.2 discussed the data collecting methods, the data and the research ethic regarding this study. The participants of the study are presented in section 5.3. The last section 5.4 discusses the process of the data analysis.

### **5.1 Aim of the study and the research questions**

The purpose of this study is to disclose some of the learning materials and methods used in ELL classrooms in ordinary Finnish primary schools in this early stage of ELT in Finland. Additionally, the aim is to give voice to teachers who are facing this new area of teaching pedagogy and a whole new subject by examining their perceptions and experiences regarding ELT from the point of view of teaching materials and methods.

To reach the aforementioned aims, the research questions of this study were formulated as follows:

1. What learning materials and methods early A1 language teachers exploit?
2. How is written language manifested in ELT materials and methods and in the teachers' descriptions?
3. What kind of experiences of struggles and successes do the teachers report in relation to learning materials and methods?

Teachers all over Finland are now facing a challenge of early language teaching pedagogy. For language teachers this relates to teaching young children, whereas for classroom teachers, teaching a language might be the challenge. However, the focus of this study is on learning materials and methods since the focus on ELT should be on rather different factors compared to other language teaching in basic education. Playfulness and implicit learning characteristic of early A1 language are emphasized to the same extent in later language studies. Additionally, many first and second graders are still learning to read and write in their mother tongue and thus, the role of written language in ELT is something the teachers need to consider. Thus,

teachers are required to be innovative in figuring out suitable methods for the combination of early childhood pedagogy and language learning.

## 5.2 Data collection methods and data

The data collection was conducted during both in the spring and in the autumn 2019 through an online questionnaire (see appendix 1), and via semi-structured interviews in January 2020 (see appendix 2). The questionnaire was on Google forms platform and it included 14 questions and depending on the answers, some additional questions as well. Next, I will first explain the reasons for choosing the two data collection methods for the study and the ethical questions concerning this study are examined.

To reach the aims of this study, I decided to use two different methods for collecting data. First, the questionnaire as a tool for reaching a bigger population and thus get a better overview of the topic. The questionnaire was the primary source of data for the first research question “*What learning materials and methods early AI language teachers exploit?*” Interviews were more focused on the latter two research questions “*How is written language manifested in ELL materials and methods and in the teachers’ descriptions?*” and “*What kind of experiences of struggles and successes do teachers report in relation to the learning materials and methods?*”. However, both methods provided findings to all three research questions. Additionally, since the participants of the interviews had answered the questionnaire as well, the interview offered an opportunity to deepen the topics of the questionnaire.

A questionnaire is one of the most traditional data collecting methods (Valli 2015: 84). It provides a tool for collecting data from for example different social phenomena, peoples’ actions, opinions, attitudes and values and it usually provides quantitative data. It is often said that quantitative methods aim to give an overview of the topic and qualitative methods are usually used for more detailed aspects. However, the distinction is not that unambiguous and quantitative methods may also provide detailed information. (Vehkalahti 2014: 11-13)

Questionnaire, like any data collection method, has its challenges. The questions need to be correctly formulated and the overall questionnaire carefully planned since it forms the base for the whole study and its success (Vehkalahti 2014: 20, Valli 2015: 85) and also because the questionnaire needs to work on its own without the help of the researcher (Vehkalahti 2014:

11). If there is a possibility to misinterpret the questions, the results might be distorted. That is why the questions need to be as unambiguous as possible and additionally, they should not be leading (Valli 2015: 85). To avoid these issues, piloting the questionnaire is crucial. To get most of the piloting, it should be done by a few people belonging to the target audience who are therefore familiar with the topic. (Vehkalahti 2014: 48) Before sharing the questionnaire used in this study, it was first analysed in an MA thesis seminar, where suggestions for improvements were made and the questions were edited to make them as unambiguous as possible. In addition, my MA thesis counsellor, being familiar with the topic, read through the questionnaire in case some editing was needed.

One of the differences between a questionnaire and an interview as research methods is that an interview provides flexibility. Contrary to a questionnaire, the questions can be repeated, and meanings can be clarified and thus, there is a better possibility to avoid misunderstandings. The key aim of a quantitative interview is to get as much information as possible and that is why it is justified to give the questions to the interviewee beforehand. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018) Each of the interviewees was informed about the opportunity to receive the questions beforehand and eventually, the interview outline was sent beforehand to one of the teachers.

The interview outlines used for this study were semi-structured. This means that the same questions are asked from each participant and they answer the questions with their own words, thus, readymade options are not used. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998) Since the interviewees were respondents of the questionnaire as well, I had a chance to modify the interview outline based on their questionnaire responses. However, the modifications made were minor and 1-2 additional questions were added to each interview outline regarding different topics that had stood out from the interviewee's questionnaire responses.

Ethical principles and rules of a research process need consideration whenever conducting a responsible study. Eskola and Suoranta (1998) state that in terms of methods, the research ethic concerns both the data collecting process as well as the use of the data. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) note that human rights form the base for research ethic whenever studying people. The researcher needs to clarify the aims, methods and the possible risks of the study to the participants. The participation needs to be voluntary and the participants need to have an opportunity, at any time during the study, to discontinue their participation. Additionally, they need to have the possibility to prevent the use of data concerning them. The researcher needs

to make sure that the participants know their rights as well as the basic information of the study. Additionally, the data cannot be used to any other purpose than promised and the participants need to stay anonymous. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018)

When the data for this study was collected, research ethic was taken into careful consideration. The data privacy note was made to ensure that the participants had all the knowledge needed in terms of research ethic. The document was attached each time when the link to the questionnaire was shared online on Facebook and via email. Similar document was signed by the interviewees before the interviews were conducted. The document included the basic information of the study, the participant's rights and the rules concerning the anonymity of the participants.

Additionally, the participants of the questionnaire had a chance to answer the survey anonymously since no name was required as a background information and they were not asked to tell the city or municipality they were working in. Answering the individual questions was also voluntary, since the participants were not required to provide an answer to each question in order to move forward in the questionnaire. No names or specific cities or municipalities were mentioned either of the interviewees and for example the Key Projects or in-service trainings that were mentioned in the interview data were not referred to with the real names. Lastly, the participation for this study was voluntary.

### **5.3 The participants**

The participants for this study consisted of 40 teachers from Finland who had some experience of early A1 language teaching. Since there were no limitations concerning teachers' educational background, the group included class teachers, language teachers and special education teachers. I did not want to limit the participants to any specific educational background since both language teachers and class teachers are allowed to teach foreign languages in the first two grades in Finland. In addition, as the discussion of who should be teaching early A1 language has been on display, I wanted to leave space for different results that might arise from the responses between teachers with diverse educational backgrounds.

The link to the questionnaire was first sent to possible respondents through email. As my MA thesis counsellor had connections to teachers around Finland who had attended in-service training concerning early A1 language teaching, she reached out to the educators who spread

the questionnaire to the participants of their in-service training. In addition, I shared the link to the questionnaire in a Facebook group called “Varhennettu kieltenopetus ja kielirikasteinen opetus”. Eventually, the questionnaire was filled in by 40 respondents. At the end of the questionnaire, a note was included asking for contact information in case the respondent was willing to participate in an interview in the autumn 2019. Ten out of the 40 respondents left their contact information and were willing to be interviewed for the study. Eventually, three people were chosen for the interview. First, I contacted two teachers (one from Central Finland and one from Southern Finland) who lived in areas that would make it easy for me to conduct the interviews face to face. After I noticed that there is a possibility to have one interviewee from northern Finland (based on the email address) and thus possibly have interviewees from Southern, Central and Northern Finland, I ended up contacting the third interviewee. I thought that the three interviews representing different parts of Finland would provide me data that would give a better overview of the topic than data including three interviewees representing the same geographical area.

All three interviews took place in January 2020, two of them via Skype and one as a face to face interview. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish and the data used for the study as well as the interview outline were translated into English. In the analysis, the interviewees are referred to as Teacher 1, Teacher 2 and Teacher 3, but the questionnaire respondents are not specified in any way. Table 1 below shows the background information of the three interviewees including their education, teaching experience and teaching experience in ELT. The education backgrounds of the interviewees varied as one was a class teacher, one was a language teacher and one a class teacher specialized in English. They were all rather experienced teachers since all of them had over 10 years of experience as a teacher. Additionally, when taking into account the Finnish context of ELT, all of the teachers can be considered as rather experienced in early language teaching as well. Two of them had over 3 years of experience from ELT and one had 1-3 years of experience.

Table 1. Background information of the interviewees.

	Educational background	Teaching experience	ELT experience
Teacher 1	Class teacher specialized in English	over 20 years	over 3 years
Teacher 2	Class teacher	over 10 years	over 3 years
Teacher 3	Language teacher	over 10 years	1-3 years

Tables 2 and 3 show the teaching experience and ELT experience of the questionnaire respondents. Altogether 27/40 teachers had more than 10 years of experience in teaching (table 2). However, as expected, the great majority of the teachers (36/40) had less than 3 years of experience in early language teaching (table 3). The respondents were also asked about their educational background. The question was a multiple-choice question and thus the teachers could choose more than one option based on their education. The data included 26 language teachers and 16 class teachers. Other educations mentioned were a home economics teacher, a special class teacher, a principal, a mother tongue teacher and a preschool teacher. Altogether 39 participants reported their education and there were 48 responses which means that some respondents had more than one qualification.

Table 2. Teaching experience of the questionnaire respondents.

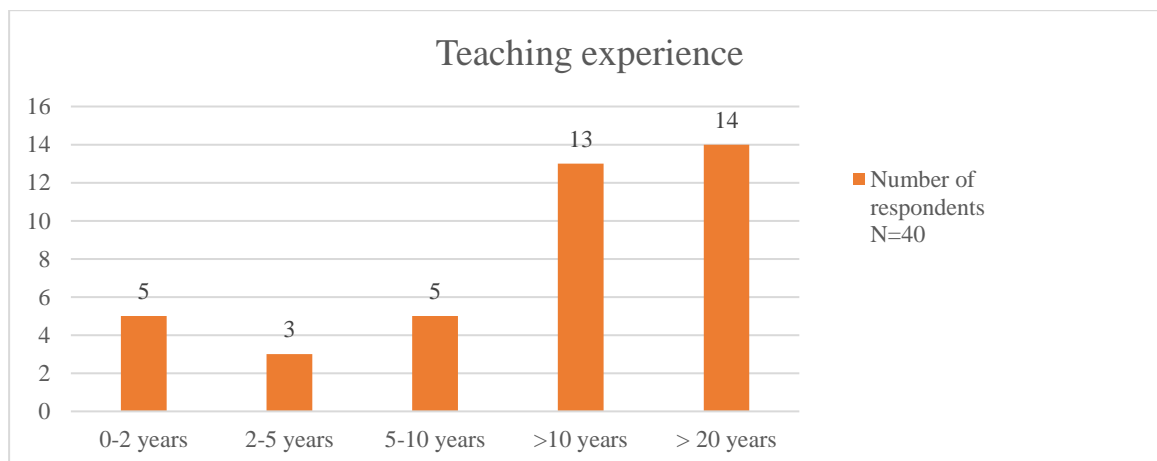
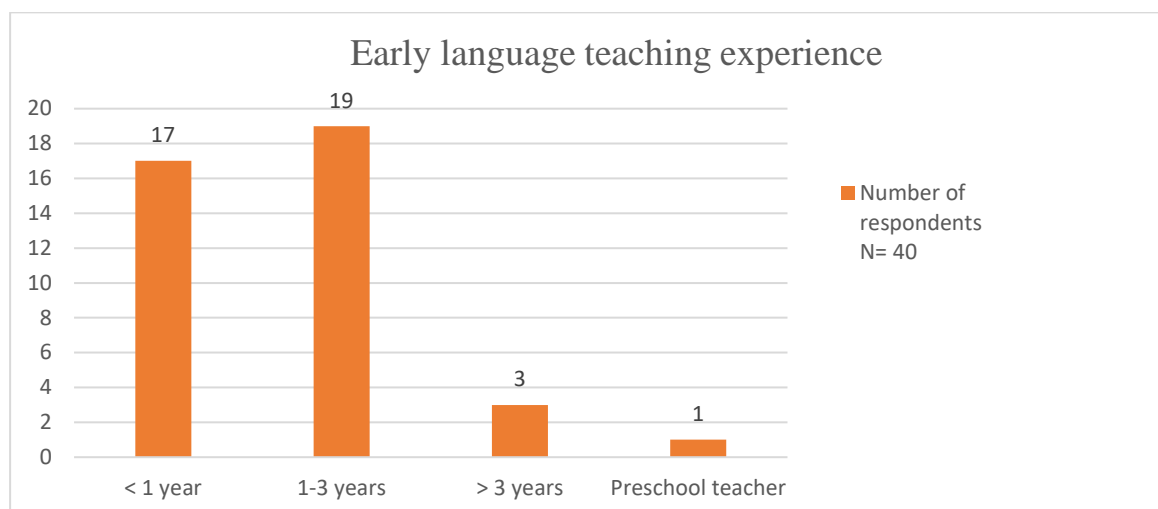


Table 3. ELT experience of the questionnaire respondents.



#### 5.4 Data analysis

For this qualitative study, tools of data-driven content analysis were used for the analysing process. Since the questionnaire included multiple choice questions in addition to the open-ended ones, some quantitative data was included as well. As mentioned, the questionnaire was an online questionnaire and for that reason gathering the results in terms of the quantitative data was rather simple. The program automatically composed the quantitative data thus making it easy for me to form charts needed such as the participants teaching background information. Additionally, the platform of the questionnaire summarized the responses to the open-ended questions as well, meaning that I was able to see all the 40 responses below each question as a combined document.

For the analysis, the whole interview data was transcribed in terms of meanings and speech. Other details such as pauses, and emotional expressions were not included in the transcription. This was not possible since two of the interviews were conducted via skype without video connection. Moreover, a detailed transcription was not seen necessary for the purposes of this study. The total length of the transcriptions was 22 pages. The interview outline had been categorized into themes to make it easier to start building the analysis. The themes of the interview and questionnaire outlines were roughly based on the research questions and additionally, new themes occurred as well. One example is the use of workbooks in ELT, which was not determined to have a major role in the analysis. However, as the theme stood out from the data, the use of workbooks in ELT was chosen as one subcategory for the analysis.

Content analysis is a suitable analysing method for all qualitative research. It aims to summarize and present the data distinctly without losing the information. However, content analysis is only a tool for organizing the data, not a tool for making conclusions of the data. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018) In data-driven analysis, the data provides the starting point for the analysis making it thus a suitable method when basic information of a phenomenon is needed. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998) As ELT in general is a new phenomenon in Finland, a data-driven content analysis was chosen as the base for the analysis. The analysing process of a qualitative data is not always simple but, in a data-driven content analysis, three main stages can be identified. First, the data is being reduced by leaving out unnecessary information and finding the expressions suitable for the aims of the study. What is considered necessary and unnecessary depends on the research questions which guide the condensing process. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018)

The interview and the questionnaire outline were similarly formed, including sections based on themes in the same order making it easier to find the meaningful and necessary parts. The expressions taken from the interviews were also highlighted in the original transcription. I decided not to delete the possible unnecessary parts in case they become important for some reason during the writing process. Secondly in the data-driven content analysis, the data is being clustered. This means that subcategories are being formed from the individual expressions. Eventually, the data is being abstracted which is a process where the selected information is formed into theoretical concepts and conclusions. It is important to maintain the connection to the original data throughout the analysis method. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018)

Thus, after separating the meaningful data, the individual quotes were categorized into subcategories by simplifying them and then, into categories that were used for the analysis. One example from the data for this study regarding active methods can be seen from Table 4. After the first stage of the analysis, I gathered expressions related to the use of *active methods*. Then I separated the expressions into the ones that indicated the advantages and to the ones indicating struggles. As the example shows, the quotes related to issues concerning active methods were put into a subcategory “*The challenges related to active methods*”. Other similar simplifications ended up being for instance challenges related to planning ELT. These simplifications were eventually put into a main category “*Challenges related to ELT materials and methods*” (see section 6.3).



Table 4. An example of the data analysis process.

Original quote	Simplification	The main category
<p>“...active plays make some pupils get boisterous”</p> <p>“...large group sizes is a very big [challenge] in active methods”</p> <p>“I cannot sing or play anything.”</p> <p>“In plays, the interactional use of the foreign language is easily left in the shadow of playing.”</p> <p>“Active methods in a cramped classroom are also challenging”</p>	<p>Challenges related to active methods</p>	<p>Challenges in ELT materials and method</p>

## 6 FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise and present the findings of both the three interviews and the forty questionnaire responses. The research data was separated into four sections based on the three research questions. The first section 6.1 presents the overview of questions related to the learning materials and methods used in early A1 language teaching and the acquisition of materials and ideas. Additionally, teachers' views related to future materials for successful ELT are presented. Section 6.2 examines the findings related to the role of written language in early A1 language teaching. Furthermore, since the topic of using a workbook as a tool for early A1 language teaching aroused a lot of discussion, it will be examined in section 6.2 as well. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 aim to answer the third research question concerning the struggles and successes related to learning materials and methods in early A1 language teaching. More extensive evaluation of the findings will be discussed in chapter 7.

All three interviewees had a positive attitude towards teaching early A1 language which can be interpreted from their answers throughout the interviews. They were keen on developing the new subject and they all had strong views related to different aspects of early A1 language learning and teaching. Examples 1 and 2 show how Teachers 1 and 2 described their views on teaching early A1 language.

- (1) Well briefly, it [ELT] is absolutely lovely. An interesting new aspect to children's phase of development that I have not orientated myself otherwise to in my teaching. (Teacher 1)
- (2) It [ELT] is the spice of my teaching because it is just what I want to do at the moment. (Teacher 2)

The questionnaire provided some variability as more negative approaches to the area of early language teaching occurred. However, the overall attitude of the teachers was positive also in the questionnaire responses. This might be because those who are keen on a topic, will more likely take part in a study concerning it. The overall positive approach is something to take into consideration when making conclusions of the study. The results could have been a lot different if, for instance, one or more of the interviewees had had a negative attitude towards ELT. Next, the findings on learning materials and methods used in early A1 language are examined.

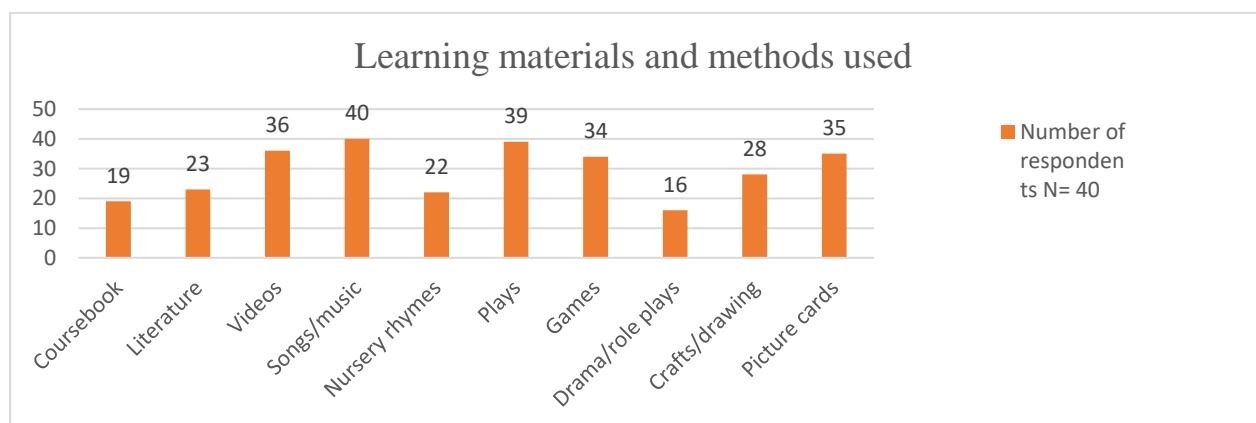
## 6.1 Learning materials and methods

This section aims to provide answers to the first research question *What learning materials and methods early A1 language teachers exploit?* The questionnaire included altogether 8 questions concerning different aspects of learning materials and methods. In this section, the results concerning the learning materials and methods used and the acquisition of materials will be examined. Additionally, in section 6.1.2, teachers' suggestions and views on ELT material in the future are presented.

### 6.1.1 Learning materials and methods used in early A1 language teaching

The questionnaire included both multiple choice questions and open-ended questions concerning different methods and materials used as well as the acquisition of materials in early A1 language teaching. The interviews were more profound, and the topics related to the learning materials and methods were discussed throughout the interviews. Table 5 shows what materials the 40 teachers had used in their early A1 language lessons. In addition to the ready-made options shown in table 5, an answer box *other* was included at the end of the list allowing the respondents to add other methods and materials.

Table 5. Learning materials and methods used for ELT.



As can be interpreted from the table 5, teachers use a variety of materials and methods in their A1 language teaching. The most popular ones were songs and music, plays, videos, picture cards and games. The least used materials and methods were drama/role play and a coursebook. In the analysis, the term *workbook* will be used instead of *coursebook* to make it more

descriptive and suitable for primary school environment. The role of workbooks was expanded in the interviews and the reasons for its unpopularity will be discussed in section 6.2.

In addition to the ready-made options, teachers mentioned for example coding, handouts and real life objects such as stuffed animals, children's own toys, food items and lego duplos. The variety of material and methods primarily show that teachers have a lot of freedom when it comes to executing the new subject. Additionally, it seems that teachers used their creativity and innovativeness in ELT and were not afraid of active methods for language learning. The results also indicate that ELT is rather versatile. The reasons behind the choices are discussed next.

Teachers were asked to explain the reasons behind their decisions on choosing their materials and methods. Versatility and functionality were repeatedly mentioned in the responses. Many teachers also highlighted the importance of having material that is suitable for small language learners and that does not require literacy skills. These can be seen from examples 3 and 4.

- (3) To make the teaching versatile, invigorating, fun, suitable for the age group and on the other hand, since most [of the children] do not read or write, active learning strategies are needed more.
- (4) As a teacher of the first two grades, I believe in active learning strategies, interaction and games as tools for learning. Plays that include repetition, pronunciation together, singing and moving, advance learning.

Many answers also emphasized the importance of routines and repetition in ELL. In example 5, the teacher argues that even though methods should be versatile, the importance of repetition and routines should be kept in mind.

- (5) In my opinion, methods can be versatile but not too scattered. Things and methods should recur.

At the time of the data collection when there was not much material available, easy access and availability were significant factors when choosing material for many of the respondents. As the examples 6 and 7 show, teachers choose the kind of material that they can easily find and use.

- (6) Easy to find and use.

(7) Easily available and that fit to the age group in question.

In addition to the accessibility and availability, many respondents mentioned that since not much material is available, they have had to just try different things and see what works. This indicates frustration and that some teachers find it stressful to search and gather material themselves. This is seen from examples 8 and 9. Other challenges related to the lack of readymade material are discussed in more depth in section 6.3.

(8) Since there is not any ready-made [material], one has had to apply all kinds of things.

(9) One needs to try something.

Additionally, since there was not much readymade material available for early A1 language during the data collection, a question related to the use of materials aimed for upper grades was included. Altogether 22 out of 40 respondents had used material from workbooks aimed for upper grades. The most popular one was the material aimed for third graders as seen from examples 10, 11, and 12.

(10) Help and support from the materials for third graders.

(11) There are suitable tasks, e.g. listening comprehensions in third grade workbooks.

(12) Action songs for third graders, picture cards.

The use of third grade material is not surprising since before the amendment, language studies began in the 3rd grade and thus those materials are for beginner language learners. Thus, teachers took the advantage of the third-grade material. However, the learning materials aimed for upper grades that were mentioned were mostly material that did not require literacy skills such as pictures and songs. It seems that teachers are careful when using material from upper grades and they are making sure that the materials are suitable for illiterate language learners. Additionally, the amount of material used from workbooks aimed for upper grades seems to be rather minor.

The interviews provided both similar and contrary views compared to the questionnaire responses. None of the interviewees used material mentioned for upper grades systematically, but they all had utilized small amounts of, for instance, pictures from 3rd grade workbooks. In

example 13, Teacher 1 discusses her use of material aimed for upper grades. She argued that since the vocabulary in the third and fourth grade workbooks is similar to what is needed in the first and second grade nowadays, taking advantage of those was useful. She also mentioned the usefulness of digital material from the workbooks that provide fun activities for young children in a language classroom.

(13) Maybe the material that I have used the most is the Yippee!-series for grades 3-6. So I take the pictures, I take the digital material because small children like it when they for example get to go and press and choose words and press what they like and also we have had conversations with the help of examples from the record. (Teacher 1)

In example 14, Teacher 2 explained a reason for not using and finding suitable material for early language learning from workbooks for upper grades. She discusses “a typical Finnish way of language teaching” and how it is not, in her opinion, suitable even for older language learners. Teacher 2 had many years of experience from teaching languages abroad and she based her views on language teaching on those experiences.

(14) There [in workbooks] is this very traditional Finnish language teaching material, which in my opinion it is not good even for older pupils, let alone to these little ones. (Teacher 2)

One repeatedly mentioned topic both in the questionnaire and in the interviews was the problem of workbooks with young language learners. Most of the respondents to the questionnaire and all of the interviewees did not favour workbooks in their early A1 language teaching. Since the topic was rather dominant in the research data, it will be discussed in a separate section 6.2 concerning questions related to workbooks and written language in early A1 language teaching.

In addition to examining what materials and methods are used, teachers were asked their sources for inspiration and ideas for ELT material and methods. The results are presented in figure 2. Again, teachers had the opportunity to add other options in addition to the readymade options which were *education material from commercial publishers, colleagues* and *online*. Thus, 6 teachers mentioned in-service training as one source for ideas, and 11 mentioned having used their own experience as teachers and their own imagination in coming up with suitable material and methods.

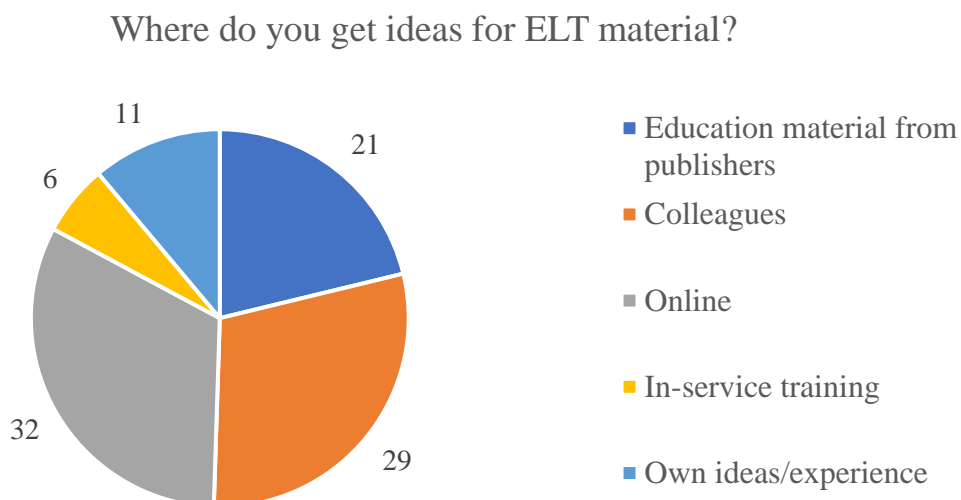


Figure 2. Teachers' sources of ELT ideas.

As can be seen from figure 1, 32 out of 40 teachers responded finding ideas for ELT materials and methods online. Since it was assumed that the use of online sources might be popular among teachers, teachers were asked to mention online sources they had used for finding ideas for their ELT. This question provided 34 individual answers instead of the previous 32. Thus, altogether 34 out of 40 responded having used the internet as their source for early A1 language teaching and over 30 different web sites were mentioned. The most frequently mentioned web sites were Youtube, which was mentioned by 15 respondents, Facebook (7), Super simple songs (9) and Pinterest (9). It seemed that the question was misleading to some respondents since it can be assumed that rather than getting ideas and inspiration, for example Youtube and Super simple songs are more likely used as an actual material for ELT. Teacher 2 described her use of the internet as a source for finding early A1 language material in more depth. She preferred British and American home-schooling pages and utilized them to gather suitable material for her lessons. This can be seen from the following example 15.

- (15) What I use the most is American and British home-schooling web sites. So I think I follow, if I count right during Christmas holiday, I follow 22 different home-schooling pages and from those I search for the good tasks, good games and then I cut, glue, craft, laminate and that becomes the package. (Teacher 2)

### 6.1.2 Teachers' views on ELT materials in the future

Teachers were asked to describe their wishes for ELT material in the future and a lot of ideas were presented. The results indicated that there was a need for development and teachers, as the professionals of ELT know what is needed in order to succeed in ELT. On the other hand, some teachers mentioned being completely pleased with the material they had and some even argued that there is already too much material available.

Many suggestions related to future materials were directed to commercial publishers. The suggestions made are closely related to the results concerning workbooks in ELT and teachers' rather negative views on them (see section 6.2.2). Teachers are in a need of more suitable material for young language learners. Teacher 1 discussed the usefulness of real life objects such as toys as the best material for ELT. She argued that bringing the most important vocabularies in a form of objects instead of workbooks would be suitable for ELT (see example 16).

- (16) I wish that publishers would think about what the most important everyday life vocabularies are. Just like they have done from the third grade up earlier. So that they would consider how to bring those to the third grade so that we would have a package of items that could be easily bought. We already have animal and pet and wild animal and Finnish animals and foreign animals and vehicles and sport equipment and all that as toys but like teaching toys and as a package that schools could buy. So these concrete items. (Teacher 1)

Teachers emphasized the importance of having audible material instead of written material for young language learners. Teacher 1 noted that publishers have not noticed the possibility of audible material. However, the situation might have changed from January 2020 when the interviews took place.

- (17) Audible material, that is something that the publishers in Finland do not seem to notice. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 3 provided a more detailed description of what the audible material could actually be like (see example 18). She suggested that the material could combine sound and action meaning that the instructions would be given in an audible form and the children would have to act based on the directions they hear. She emphasized the importance of not having much reading or writing required from the child.



- (18) So the task would give instructions out loud so that the child did not need to know how to read and then for example connect something or do something, you hear a colour and press that colour or put the colours in order or numbers or something. The kind where audio and action would be connected but so that there would be no writing or reading and if there was reading it would be a very minimal amount of it. (Teacher 3)

One teacher wished to have material that would form the base for the whole year (see example 19). The teacher mentioned that since everything needs to be gathered by oneself, the coherence that would connect themes together is missing. It was again mentioned that workbook is not the learning material preferred ELT.

- (19) It would be great, if teachers had readymade material (without a pupil's workbook) that would be based on oral practice and that would give the teacher a structure and tips for different tasks and plays. That material would give base for the work of the whole year and one would not have to make 'a puzzle' throughout the year. This 'puzzle' does not have coherence that would connect themes and words together.

As mentioned, some teachers were already pleased with the material they had in use and they even thought that there is material available more than needed. An interesting note is that in many responses, the teachers who felt that they had enough material already, mentioned being class teachers. This indicates that since class teachers usually teach all the subjects in primary school, they have a wider collection of material that can be transferred to ELT as well. Teacher 3 mentioned the same topic during the interviews as she described how a one class teacher had mentioned to her that a lot of material used for other subjects can be utilized for ELT as well. Examples 20 and 21 show two of the contrary views regarding the topic.

- (20) I think there is already too much material available. I find this [ELT] rather simple for class and subject teacher.

- (21) I am pleased with my material bank at the moment since I have educated myself a lot and gathered material suitable for my way of teaching for many years already. I use a lot of the same material, items for plays and games in teaching other subjects. There is an oversupply of material.

However, it was also reported that suitable material for languages other than English is more difficult to find and that the material found is more unilateral. Since the aim of ELT in Finland is to enrich the language repertoire in basic education, the possible inequality among languages in terms of learning materials available will not advance the aim. However, it is obvious that

the amount of material available for English online is significant compared to other languages. Another differing viewpoint to the topic was presented as one teacher noted that teachers' own competence is all that is needed for ELT. This can be seen from the following example 22.

(22) Teacher's own competence is enough: pictures, plays and videos/songs are the best.

Another teacher shared similar views regarding the role of the teacher's competence in ELT (see example 23). The response indicates that no matter how good the material and methods used for ELL, the most important factor is the teacher and his/her competence. The argument goes beyond the topic of this study, but as it provides views on materials in relation to the teacher, it was seen as an important aspect to include in the analysis. Additionally, as the role of the teacher in ELT was recognized and emphasized multiple times in the principles of successful ELT (see section 4), the teacher's role cannot be fully disregarded in the analysis either.

(23) I do not prefer the term "learning material", since more importantly what is needed in early A1 language is an adult who speaks authentic enough language in question and various equipment. Songs/videos are for sure "learning material", but they are not at the heart of early A1 language.

Additionally, the teacher had differing views on the meaning of the term 'learning material' and it seemed that a few teachers had as well interpreted the term differently, to mean only workbooks. However, the first question of the questionnaire included a list of 'learning materials' used for ELT including plays, songs, drama, workbook etc. and it was assumed that the list would clarify the meaning of the term in this study to all the participants. Probably the term 'methods' would have been more clarifying to some teachers. The terms material and methods are partly overlapping and that is why both of them are used in this study to cover all the possibilities that could be understood either as material or as method. However, only the term 'learning material' was used in the questionnaire. During the interviews, in turn, I had the opportunity to clarify the meaning if needed. In the following section 6.2, the role of written language in early A1 language teaching is examined first from a more general point of view presenting teachers' views on the use of written language and then from a more precise viewpoint examining workbooks as a tool for ELT.

## **6.2 The role of written language in early A1 language teaching**

The role of written language was a controversial topic in the research data. Teachers used written language in various ways in their teaching as some were strongly against having any written language on display and present in their early A1 language teaching and some thought that including written language right from the beginning of language learning is natural. As mentioned earlier in section 3.2, the national core curriculum (POPS 2019) emphasized that at the beginning of early A1 language studies, children are not required to be literate, but during the first two grades, children's curiosity towards written language, reading and writing should be aroused gradually.

Thus, it is left up to the teachers to decide when written language is introduced in their ELT and to what extent. Since young children vary significantly in terms of development, it is essential to have room for flexibility in the curricula. Teachers need to use their discretion and expertise and evaluate both individual children as well as groups as a whole when making decisions related to written language in ELT. This chapter will provide the results related to the role of written language in ELT first from a more general level as teachers' views on written language in ELT are examined in the next section 6.2.1. In section 6.2.2, the viewpoint is on workbooks as a tool for early A1 language learning and teaching.

### **6.2.1 Written language in ELT**

Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 had similar views on the role of written language. They did not include written language to their A1 language lessons especially during the first year of studies. Teacher 1 justified her choice based on the differences between the writing systems of, in her case, English and Finnish. She felt that it is important not to disturb the development of a child's literacy skills in their mother tongue. This can be seen from example 24. In section 3.2 it was mentioned that Huotilainen (2018) considers normal development of the mother tongue as a requirement for ELL. However, she discusses language development of very early childhood (around 3 years) which does not cover literacy skills and thus generalisations cannot be made. It was also mentioned that there is not much research made on early foreign language learning of children with issues in their mother tongue development.

- (24) So in the second grade they (written words) are okay since they (children) already know how to read and the Finnish writing system will not get mixed since writing in English is different. Now (in the second grade) they observe the words calmly as whole words but for the first grade I would not offer them (written words). (Teacher 1)

As mentioned, Teacher 3 had similar views on the topic as Teacher 1. Teacher 3 brought up another aspect to the topic as she mentioned the core curriculum and how the use of written language is not particularly recommended there. This shows the ambiguousness of the national core curriculum and how there is no one correct way to interpret the guidelines. Example 25 shows how Teacher 3 perceives the issue.

- (25) When the current first graders are in the second grade and next years' first graders are in the second grade, we will write at least something for sure but it is still not in line with the core curriculum to start writing at the first two grades, I mean in line with the core curriculum for early A1 language. (Teacher 3)

Contrarily, Teacher 2 strongly argued that written language is and should be part of language learning. She mentioned being aware of the fact that her way of teaching early A1 language differs from the general way of implementing ELT. She viewed that there should be more written language involved in early A1 language teaching and she stated that it is odd that children are not being taught how to read. In addition to just stating her opinion, she provided her precise ELT method which she had developed during her over 3 years as early language teacher (see example 26). Written language was included in her early language teaching via active methods with a lot of repetition.

- (26) So I base my (A1) English teaching on always having themes, I usually have one theme for two, three, four weeks. Maximum four weeks for one theme and the theme is always based on a story which children know or are familiar with, a character. For example, this week we started with a snowman, snow, and winter and all that. So there comes all the vocabulary, there is always a song, a book, a film, hmm a little vocabulary included. Then we start making games and then through those games even children who do not yet read fluently especially in English then learn the combination of a picture and word and recognize the word and in addition learn to use those phrases. And usually I start this so that we have a song and the lyrics without text. So they learn that this picture means for example a snowflake and they do not have to know how to read it. But then in the next time and time after that the word comes along, how does it look and then they learn to combine the picture and the sound to the word and then they know how to use it like okay, we have five snowflakes and then all that so that it recurs. (Teacher 2)

Additionally, Teacher 2 viewed that since young children are inquisitive and they want to continuously learn more, teachers should not prevent children from learning. She provided an example on how she gave her pupils opportunities to learn additional words. During each theme, children had an opportunity to go and ask for additional words they want to know, and the teacher would write down the words on post-it notes which children then put in their notebooks. She emphasized the importance of children being excited about school and learning instead of being bored if everything is too easy for them. Additionally, she viewed that the more children read and write, the more motivated they become. A part of her description can be seen the following example 27.

(27) Some might have for example 25 additional words, we recently had for instance animals so there was a post-it note sea in the notebook spread afterwards so if they want they will have and in my opinion, that is the idea of this whole system. So we must provide as many opportunities to learn new things that every day when the pupil gets home, he/she can say that I learnt this today, this was a new thing and this was nice and not like they go home and say that absolutely nothing happened today [at school]. So the more they read, the more they write, the more motivated they become. (Teacher 2)

Teacher 2 provided multiple examples during the interview on her use of written language in ELT and the positive results her pupils had gained in terms of language learning. She provided an example from the end of last school year. Her second grade early A1 language pupils had gathered all the words they knew under each alphabet on the floor based on the first letter. Eventually, her second graders had gathered altogether over 150 words starting with the letter 's'. Despite knowing her way of implementing early A1 language teaching if rather different, she was pleased and confident of her teaching.

Additionally, teacher 2 and Teacher 3 presented statements related to early A1 language compared to other school subjects. Teacher 2 argued that since school in general in the first two grades is so easy to many pupils who already know how to read and write, early A1 language offers something new and special to keep those pupils motivated. She had incorporated for example mathematics in her ELT lessons to make mathematics more interesting and exciting (see example 28). Teacher 3 stated that since reading and writing are included in other subjects during the first two grades, it is nice for pupils to have something more active and different in their early A1 language lessons. This can be seen from example 29. Both of the following statements indicate logic even though they represent rather differing views. This shows how essential is the role of the teacher in early A1 language teaching. The teacher must observe and

choose the best ways for his/her pupils and no way of implementing ELT is automatically more advantageous or better than another. As the findings in the ELLiE study (2011) showed, successful ELT can be achieved in many conditions and in various ways.

(28) Maths might be a bit boring, they are now practicing number 10 and they are not that motivated to keep on counting what is five plus four or something like that back and forth but now that we include English and active methods it becomes another thing. And it always motivates them, and they use the language very well.

(29) Some teachers have done so that numbers are being written or something else has been written in the notebooks so it has been like isn't it a bit boring since that it what is being done in other subjects so in that since it has been nice the [the local key project] lessons because it has been something different compared to other lessons.

As in the interviews, the questionnaire provided differing views on the topic as well. Teachers were asked to describe how written language is presented in the classroom and how it is utilized in their early A1 language lessons and materials. Even though significant variation occurred in the responses, the results can be roughly divided into two main views. Majority of the teachers mentioned including very little or not at all written language in their early A1 language teaching (see examples 30 and 31) and some stated having written language included in their ELT. The variability in the responses was significant. Those who were mainly against written language in ELT, mentioned for example having written language visible around the classroom for example in a form of posters and books, but not using it as a part of teaching. Teachers pointed out that even though written language might be inevitable for example in videos from online, they did not pay attention to it in their teaching.

(30) There is written language visible in my classroom, but it is not in active use in early A1 language lessons.

(31) I use very little written language. Pupils might see words, but I encourage oral expression.

One of the arguments against the use of written language was pronunciation. In example 32, one teacher explained how writing might disturb the learning of pronunciation. Another teacher, in example 33, argued that he/she does not want to confuse children who are learning to read in their first language with the differing phonology of English. It can be assumed that the first language in this case means Finnish.

(32) Writing easily disturbs the learning of good pronunciation, so that is why I avoid that [written language] in the teaching of the first two grades.

(33) Slighter, since I avoid confusing children who are learning to read [in their first language] with English where words are pronounced differently than how they are written [compared to Finnish].

One teacher provided a way of bringing written language into early A1 language teaching in a subtle, active way (see example 34). She responded that the role of written language is very small in her ELT and that words are being coloured. This is one possibility to include written language in ELT in an active way that seems to go in line with the suggestions of the core curriculum where it is advised that children's curiosity towards written language is being gradually aroused.

(34) Very small [role], words are being coloured.

Student-centred perspective to the topic was mentioned by two of the teachers who explained including writing whenever pupils had been curious to know how something is written (see examples 35 and 36). This is another indicator of the flexibility needed for ELT. The following examples are similar to the example 27, where Teacher 2 described her views on how teachers should not prevent children from learning for example written words if they wished to.

(35) For example, in word cards the written forms are visible, I sometimes write a word on the board if pupils ask how it is written. Oftentimes they do.

(36) I have written [words] when pupils have asked.

The other view to the topic was, as mentioned, more on behalf of written language. Some mentioned writing the main words of the lesson/topic for the children to see and some mentioned that children themselves practice writing the words. However, the second view was supported by a distinct minority of the respondents. The following examples 37 and 38 show two views supporting written language.

(37) We have practiced writing foreign language words already in the autumn [term]. And continued it in the spring [term].

(38) Always on display [written words] supporting what is spoken and heard.

The concept of a workbook related to written language occurred in a couple of the responses, but for rather opposite reasons. One teacher, in example 39, explained the need for writing since workbooks are not being used in ELL in his/her school (the reason was not mentioned). The teacher clarified that pupils write down the key words and phrases in their notebooks in order to have something concrete to return when practicing vocabulary. Contrarily, another teacher argued that written language is not present in her ELT and because workbooks include written language, the teacher did not want to use one (see example 40).

(39) Written English is learnt to recognise, we write down the key words and phrases into the notebook. Otherwise it is difficult to return to the vocabulary if we do not have anything concrete since there are no books.

(40) Posters on the wall. Otherwise we have not written with second grades, except with alphabet bottle tops that I have collected. Sure, there is written language visible in a workbook, but that is just the reason I am not going to use one.

It seemed that each teacher had their own way of including written language in their ELT and the reasons varied. In addition to teachers' personal opinions, the results indicate that teachers are not completely sure of the adequate implementation of ELT in terms of written language. However, even though the views on written language in general in ELL varied, the teachers were rather unanimous in terms of workbooks as a tool for ELL. The following section 6.2.2 presents the findings related to the topic.

### **6.2.2 Workbooks in early A1 language teaching**

Based on both the interviews and the questionnaire responses, workbooks in early A1 language were mostly seen unnecessary and even harmful. The great majority of the respondents were not pleased with the educational material published for early A1 language so far and multiple various reasons were mentioned. One of the issues was the general use of a workbook as a tool for language learning and its impact on motivation. This is seen from examples 41, 42, 43.

(41) The child's excitement towards the new lovely language can be easily killed if we only use the workbook. (Teacher 2)

(42) I do not want that in the first grade a workbook is being thrust in front of a child and in that way make the child passive when you can learn a language in so many other ways. (Teacher 3)



- (43) I do not want language learning to be that writing and reading right from the start and sit at a school desk and fill in no matter how much of an activity book because there are other things, Minna Huotilainen a neuroscientist has stated that how to kill motivation, how to kill motivation towards FLL, make a child sit at a school desk and give him/her a pen and a writing task and that is it. (Teacher 3)

As the examples show, teachers had strong opinions related to the use of a workbook in early A1 language lessons. The use of a workbook was strongly related to losing motivation and excitement towards the new language. As Teacher 3 mentioned, there are many more ways to learn a language than sitting down and filling a workbook despite how of an activity book the workbook is. She also referred to the Finnish professor of Educational Sciences and a neuroscientist Minna Huotilainen and her argument on how to kill a child's motivation towards language learning. Another issue repeatedly mentioned was that already published workbooks for A1 language require too much literacy skills from the small children who are hardly literate in their mother tongue. The results indicated that the teachers felt that workbooks published so far do not fit the nature of early A1 language principles.

Teachers 1 and 3 agreed that workbooks published so far did not serve the purpose of ELL. Teacher 2 did not use workbooks in her ELT either. Teacher 1 argued that workbooks, if well planned and constructed, give a good frame to language teaching and learning but now that the workbooks are made for literate children, they are not suitable for ELL and thus cannot be used (see example 44). Teacher 3, in example 45, also stated that she does not want to use a workbook since they require quite a lot of literacy skills. As mentioned earlier, she resisted the use of a workbook for motivational reasons as well.

- (44) Well the workbooks in a way give good framework if they are well planned but now that they are made mainly for fully literate children, they do not serve this purpose. (Teacher 1)

- (45) So I do not want because at this point the workbooks [published so far] require quite a lot of literacy skills so I do not want that already in the first grade we thrust a workbook in front of a child. (Teacher 3)

Teacher 3 also mentioned the effect workbooks might have on learning pronunciation. This can be seen from example 46. She noted that seeing written words can be harmful for learning pronunciation of foreign words and that younger learners who do not see the words are the most fluent in pronunciation. She also added that since third graders already know how to read and have the written forms of words included in their language studies, they tend to pronounce

words as they are written (as in Finnish). It is a commonly known fact that children defeat adults in learning pronunciation of languages and many of the advantages of a young language learner is related to the ease of adopting the pronunciation and phonemes of a new language (see section 3.1).

(46) But from my point of view, we should not require literacy as a starting point for language learning and if you look at the materials so far what we have, there is so much text included and I do not want to expose children to the written word because from the viewpoint of pronunciation those little ones who do not see the word learn to pronounce it the best. (Teacher 3)

An interesting note from the interviews is that even though there were only 1-2 questions (depending on the interviewees' questionnaire responses) directly related to workbooks in early A1 language, the amount of data related to the topic is rather significant. Teachers had a lot to say about the use of workbooks for ELL and their opinions and experiences of them so far were mostly negative. Similar opinions and views arose from the questionnaire responses as well when asked whether the teachers had a workbook available for early A1 language teaching in their school. Many respondents mentioned having a textbook but not either being fully pleased with it or not wanting to use it (see examples 47 and 48). However, later in the questionnaire a question was included asking what kind of material the teachers themselves like to use the most and a workbook or parts of a workbook such as games and songs were mentioned in five responses.

(47) We have had the Sanoma Pro Go! but I have not found it useful.

(48) I would not order a workbook anymore, I would rather do and gather material myself.

Another viewpoint for the use of a workbook was presented by Teacher 3 in example 49. She noted that from her experience, some teachers have chosen to use a workbook as it is not as laborious way of executing the new subject as working without a workbook might be. Similar themes arose in the study concerning CLIL materials in Finland. The results indicated significant variation in terms of time spent on preparing and planning material and teaching. (Bovellan 2018)

(49) I know that many have chosen to use a workbook because it is, in a way, easier since you can just take stuff from there and do those things. (Teacher 3)

Thus, the general view on workbooks in ELT was negative: the great majority of the teachers did not think workbooks as suitable in terms of ELL principles and the workbooks published at the time the data was collected, did not serve the purpose of illiterate children. Next, the findings concerning other struggles and challenges related to ELT materials and methods are examined.

### **6.3 Struggles and challenges in ELT**

The results to the third research question *What kind of struggles and successes related to learning materials and methods in early language teaching teachers have encountered?* have been divided into two sections. First, in this section 6.3, results concerning the struggles and challenges in ELT are being discussed, followed by section 6.4, which examines teachers' experiences related to successful ELT in terms of learning materials and methods.

A variety of challenges related to ELT materials and methods occurred in the data. Teachers had experienced difficulties for example in the acquisition of materials, in large group sizes with active methods and in teaching young children in general. Moreover, teachers brought up issues concerning the lack of support in ELT and the quality of in-service training in relation to learning materials and methods.

The implementation of active learning strategies was mentioned multiple times as a challenge in early A1 language teaching. One reason was large group sizes and especially how the combination of large groups, young children and active learning strategies often caused restlessness in the classroom. The interviewees were asked their opinion concerning the biggest challenge in ELT. Teacher 3, in example 50, mentioned big group sizes as her biggest challenge mainly due to classrooms aimed for smaller groups. Later in the interview she added that since she is a rather experienced teacher, she does not worry about the large group sizes that much anymore as she knows what can be done and where.

(50) Well large group sizes is a very big [challenge] in active methods, I had 31 pupils just now altogether in [a local key project] so it is not working in a classroom meant for 15 pupils, so big group size is the biggest challenge. (Teacher 3)

In general, it seemed that teachers recognised the importance of active learning in ELL since many had experienced issues related to implementing active methods rather than the actual

methods as a tool for language teaching and learning. Teachers seemed to have internalized active methods as a self-evident part of ELT. One of the questionnaire respondents brought up an issue concerning the incoherence of active teaching methods in ELT (see example 51). The teacher had had issues with active methods in her teaching but at the same time, after noticing the benefits of active methods in language learning, the teacher did not want to quit using them.

(51) All pupils do not want to sing, and active plays make some pupils get boisterous. Still I would not get rid of those [active methods], since they are in my opinion the best material of early A1 language. Pupils seem to learn the best through songs and plays.

Another view to the topic of implementing active methods was mentioned by one teacher who believed that the reason for restlessness was that pupils are not used to such activeness in other subjects (see example 52).

(52) What brings in the challenge is mainly the fact that the more playful and game-like methods from what the pupils are used to cause a lot of boisterousness in the classroom.

Quite surprisingly, only a few of the responses concerning challenges were related to teachers' own readiness to teach ELT in terms of materials and methods. This might be due to the limitations of the study since only 40 participants were involved and it can be assumed that teachers who are interested and passionate about the topic, will more likely participate in it. Nonetheless, some teachers in the questionnaire responses did mention active methods in ELT as a challenge for them as teachers. This goes in line with my own presumption (see chapter 1) that some teachers might feel uncomfortable using playful and active methods in their teaching.

In example 53, the teacher mentioned finding active methods challenging due to his/her own lack of ability to sing and play. The teacher's answer indicates that rather than ELT being unpleasant, the challenge is related to his/her own readiness and skills. In example 54, the teacher mentions that singing and playing is not natural to him/her. Thus, the challenge was rather in not feeling comfortable with the playfulness in ELT. The example 54 also indicates frustration in other areas of ELT since the teacher mentioned the difficulty of not coming up with suitable plays for young language learners.

(53) I cannot sing or play anything.

(54) When you have taught bigger [older pupils], you cannot really come up with plays suitable for small [pupils] and I am not particularly “a sing and play-lady” by nature.

In addition to being aware of the benefits of active learning in ELT, teachers also seem to recognize the language learning aspect. As Cameron (2001) stated, an activity does not become a language learning task until the teacher makes it one and as one of the principles of a language learning task, the importance of always having a language learning goal was emphasized. Therefore, the language in question should be in the centre of attention, even though the purpose of the early A1 language is to be fun and light.

As example 55 shows, one teacher had noticed how the action of playing often overpowers the TL use and that it is hard to find plays where communication is in the centre of the activity. In example 56, Teacher 1 recognised the same issue as she mentioned that every activity that is fun and works well, does not always strengthen the language proficiency. However, she continued by stating that it is sometimes enough to just see that the pupils are happy after a lesson and that they had fun. In general, Teacher 1 seemed to have a realistic and merciful approach to early A1 language teaching and the example 56 indicates that as well. Since ELT in Finland is, to some extent, a new area of teaching to everyone involved, it is important for teachers especially, not to expect perfection from the beginning.

(55) In plays, the interactional use of the foreign language is easily left in the shadow of playing. The kind of ready-made plays, where communication is in the centre, are weakly [existing].

(56) Everything that is fun and good does not, that works, does not always strengthen the knowledge. But after those kinds of lessons, one has to be pleased that at least they [pupils] were happy. (Teacher 1)

The young age of the learners was another topic that had caused challenges to the teachers. The descriptions varied from the challenges of a young language learner presented in section 3.2. In section 3.2, the challenges were mainly related to young children as learners, but the data provided descriptions more related to young children in general. The interviewees were asked which was more challenging to them: preparing or implementing ELT. Teachers 1 and 3 agreed by stating that implementing ELT is more challenging and they both argued that the reason is that with young children, one can never know what will happen in the classroom. These can be seen from examples 57 and 58.

(57) Well it probably is the implementation since there are so many variables in the classroom. A huge conflict might break out between some pupils that it like explodes so in that sense it is like that, that the implementation is more challenging. (Teacher 1)

(58) So you never know what there is, has someone peed in their pants or is someone missing mom or is someone vomiting on the floor or something else so in that sense I feel like encountering a small child for sure is always more challenging than an older child since usually those older ones know how to take care of themselves. (Teacher 3)

The role of written language in ELT was discussed earlier in chapter 6.2 and the focus was on teachers' views and experiences related to the use and role written language in ELL. Another aspect to the topic of written language emerged from the data since challenges related to teaching language without the support from written language were mentioned. Teacher 1, in example 59, explained that for example word cards cannot be used to enhance the learning and teaching and moreover, she has had to gather new material to support her teaching since written language is out of the question in the first grade language teaching.

(59) Well this that you cannot, like normally in language teaching, transfer a concept in a written form while you transfer it in a pictorial or spoken or as a form of a thought. Normally when I teach new vocabulary for example at the fourth grade, we always have some support from pictures and words in cards. Now from the first grade the written part is missing so you need to get new equipment, stuff, which usually needs to be concrete, so that is a challenge. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 3 had similar views as she mentioned that the lessons need to be constructed in a way that children do not see any written language and that affects her decisions on what kind of material and tasks can be used. In addition, she mentioned that with young pupils, the teacher must be fully present all the time since young learners are not yet as independent as older learners who are more capable of independent work. This can be seen from example 60.

(60) It [ELT] has brought new ideas and views definitely but of course challenges in a way that I need to construct those things in a way that children do not see any written language. So I have to choose , based on that, what things I decide to use, what kind of tasks, then if I have had a bad day, I have been able to say for older pupils for example that do that task from the workbook or do those and those tasks but not with the little ones, with them I have to be 110 percent present all the time and come up with things to do for them. (Teacher 3)

Challenges related to time occurred multiple times both in the questionnaire responses and in the interviews. Many of the teachers mentioned that ELT is very time-consuming as they spend

a lot of time both on gathering and finding material as well as planning the lessons (see example 61). Teacher 2, in example 62, described the preparation of ELT in more depth. Even though she mentioned spending a lot of time on planning and preparing her ELT, she preferred her way of implementing ELT.

(61) I spend hours on planning. I gather concrete items in my free time and buy things with my own money. A lot of work is required to make it [ELT] work.

(62) Planning is challenging since it takes so much time. It is for example if I say that this winter theme which is three weeks, so that means three lessons for one group. And to plan that one three-hour period, it takes probably forty hours. So you spend, sure I use it for four groups then, but the planning at the beginning, finding material online as such takes probably around twenty hours and the rest of the time goes to making PowerPoint shows, I make picture, I cut, glue, craft, laminate, then again cut the games and make the system out of them. I search the videos, I search the books, I search the songs so that takes a ridiculous amount of time. (Teacher 2)

Similar results were reported in the ELLiE study (2011). Some teachers had developed and made their own material since publishers had not yet published enough suitable material for ELT. At the time the data for this study was conducted, there was a similar situation in Finland since commercial publishers had not yet published much material for early A1 language teaching. However, as shown in section 6.2.2 concerning workbooks in ELT, teachers do not prefer the use of a workbook in ELL in general, at least not in its traditional form. The findings indicate that there is a strong need for learning material that would help teachers to implement ELT through active methods suitable for young learners and a workbook in its traditional form is not serving this purpose.

Challenges related to finding suitable material in terms of language proficiency of the learners occurred a couple of times in the questionnaire responses. It was emphasized that with young learners, the teacher must carefully choose what material is suitable for beginner language learners. It has been emphasized earlier that creative materials in ELT require careful consideration from the teacher both from the language point of view as well as the proficiency of the children. Additionally, it was mentioned that an activity does not become a language learning task until the teacher makes it one. This included for instance setting a language learning goal to each task. As example 63 shows, the teacher recognized the language learning aspect and had experienced uncertainty in choosing material.

(63) Sometimes it is difficult to choose for example from songs, which are suitable in terms of degree of difficulty for pupils in question. Without a workbook one needs to go through quite a lot of material in order to find suitable.

As mentioned in section 6.1.1, over 30 different web sites were mentioned when teachers were asked about the online sources they use in their ELT and in finding material and ideas. The result is not surprising since not much readymade material for ELT in the Finnish context is available. However, quite surprisingly, only two of the teachers mentioned copyright issues in regarding the use of many online materials. These can be seen from examples 64 and 65.

(64) You have to search the material by yourself and there are copyright issues.

(65) It would be great if there was more problem-free music and video material available in terms of copyright.

Teachers also reported struggles related to space when implementing active methods (see examples 66). One teacher mentioned that the limitations as well possibilities of the classroom in question need careful consideration in terms of possible activities. In this case, the early A1 language lessons were kept in each group's own classroom (see example 67) and that obviously requires more work from the teacher. One activity that works in one classroom might not be possible in another and thus, each lesson needs to be considered according to the space among other factors.

(66) Active methods in a cramped classroom are also challenging.

(67) Since there is a lot of movement and play involved in the teaching, a lot of consideration is needed in terms of the possibilities/constrictions of the space, since the lessons are always kept in pupils' own classrooms.

Another viewpoint to the topic was presented by Teacher 1, in example 62, who stated that even though there was a lot of space available for ELT (such the school yard, the gymnasium etc.), the presence of the smartboard is rather essential and that is why the lessons need to be kept mainly in the classroom.

(68) There is space available once I only could utilize everything, but the presence of the smartboard is rather important in order to have all the sounds and animations and songs and all that. (Teacher 1)



Issues concerning in-service training occurred in the interview data. Altogether 31/40 respondents including all three interviewees had participated in in-service training(s) concerning early A1 language learning and teaching. The interviewees were asked about the ways in which learning materials and methods were examined in those. Two of the interviewees were not fully pleased with the content of the trainings. Examples 69 and 70 show how Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 described their experiences.

(69) I have been listening to very declamatory lectures [in in-service trainings]. (Teacher 1)

(70) Our current one-day trainings here, we are given a very ambiguous [topic] and think yourself, consider yourself, execute yourself, and then there is some weird poster or mind map and that is about it. They are not giving any real practical benefit. There is a strong need for development. (Teacher 2)

For example Johnstone (2009) and Enever (2015) emphasized the professional development of teachers and teacher expertise as one of the keys to successful ELL (section 2.2). Teacher 1 pointed out how she felt that oftentimes the educators knew just as much about the topic as the teachers taking part of the training (example 71). This is unfortunate, but to some extent, understandable as well. Since ELT in Finland is rather new to everyone involved, perfection cannot be expected. However, this might also indicate something about the national level preparation work for bringing ELT in Finnish basic education.

(71) I have received good trainings as well but in many of them the educators have been just as unaware as us trainees of ELL and how to teach languages to young children. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 described how in one in-service training, tasks requiring literacy skills were presented and provided to the teachers as suitable for ELT. In her opinion, the tasks presented were not suitable even for third graders, let alone first-graders. Example 72 shows one of the example tasks. The role of written language in ELT is a crucial aspect that needs to be addressed nationally in order to have a convergent policy among teachers and schools around Finland. Based on the findings of this study, it can be assumed that there is a significant variation in the policies related to the use of written language at a national level as well.

(72) So there were for example picture cards at one end of the classroom and word cards at the other end, and a first-grader who does not necessarily know how to read at all. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 had another disappointing experience of an in-service training where the educator was an author of a workbook for A1 language. She felt that the training did not serve her as she did not want to use a workbook at all in her ELT. The objectivity of a training held by a workbook author can be questioned and as the example 19 shows, Teacher 2 was disappointed that not much else was suggested in addition to the one workbook series.

(73) There [in-service training] was a workbook author as the educator so of course he/she suggests it [the workbook], his/her own methods and the use of his/her own book and so on. (Teacher 2)

Teachers did also have positive experiences from in-service trainings. Especially Teacher 3 described positive and useful experiences such as making materials and modules together with both class teachers and language teachers in in-service trainings as a part of the local key project. Teacher 1 specified that training has provided her useful tools regarding ELT methods (see example 74).

(74) Methods, then, there has been a lot of okay stuff, as to how you learn these small phrases through active learning strategies playing, singing, talking, rhyming and so on. Those, the teachings of active learning methods have been okay. (Teacher 1)

Teachers' descriptions show that there is variability in both the quality and the executions of in-service trainings. The fact that there were no common guidelines on the execution of ELT in a national level until May 2019 when the core curriculum for early A1 language was published, might have affected this. However, as Johnstone (2009: 32-33) argued, in order to succeed in ELL, there needs to be careful national level policy planning that includes for instance in-service training for teachers and warned that the implementation of ELT cannot be left to the initiative of individual teachers and schools.

Teachers were asked about the amount of support they had received regarding the acquisition and preparation of ELT materials in their work community. Altogether 31 out of the 40 teachers responded either having received "not at all" or "a little" support. This can be seen from figure

3. This indicates that many of the teachers feel left alone with the new subject of ELT in terms of the implementation.

Do you feel like you have received support in your work community in terms of planning and preparing early A1 language teaching?

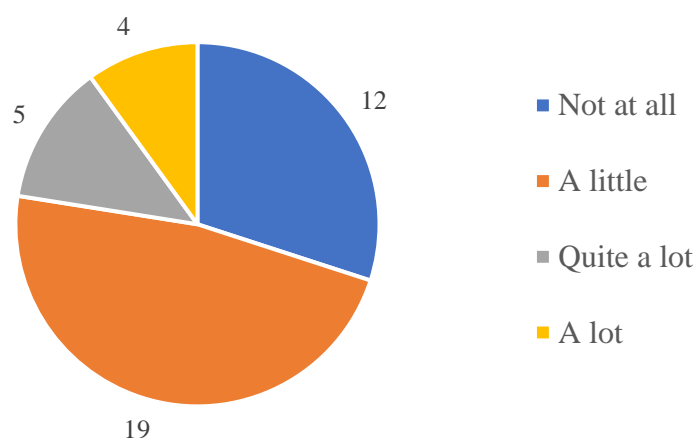


Figure 3. The amount of support reported by the teachers.

The interviewees were asked to consider the possible reason for not receiving support since all of them had chosen the option “not at all”. Teachers mentioned various reasons. The lack of support on behalf of the school and municipality in terms of getting material was mentioned. One interviewee stated that how ELT is being implemented depends a lot on the teacher’s own willingness to be active in finding material. Additionally, the lack of support related to time on preparing was mentioned. Planning ELT required a lot of time, but no support was addressed to the teachers. The teacher added that even though she understood that no privileges cannot be given to early language teachers in terms of time, she knew that more time for planning was made possible in some municipalities. She provided another view to the topic as well by stating the fact that ELT can be implemented in various ways that require various amounts of planning and preparation. Additionally, the teacher continued that thus, it is easy for the decision makers to question why some teachers need more time when others can teach early A1 language without spending much time on planning and preparing for instance material. This is similar to the findings of Bovellan’s (2018) study where the results indicated a lot of variability in terms of time spent on preparing material.

Next, the discussion proceeds towards the last section of the analysis and the second part of the last research question. Thus, the following chapter 6.4 examines the teachers' positive experiences related to learning materials and methods in ELT. The section presents example tasks that teachers had found useful and good as well as classroom routines and examples of interdisciplinary learning described by the interviewees.

## **6.4 Successful ELT**

Since the aim of the study was to examine some of the concrete actions in Finnish A1 language teaching, both the questionnaire and the interview included questions concerning teachers' views on successful ELT in terms of materials and methods. Teachers were asked to describe a successful teaching method, a positive experience from early A1 language teaching. Thus, this section presents how Finnish early A1 language teachers view successful ELT based on their experiences and perceptions.

In general, teachers often found simplicity as the key to success. Many described simple games and plays as the most successful activities. Teachers provided examples of plays that can be used for many purposes and activities, thus offering opportunities to learn language as a whole instead of only individual words. In addition, the plays described often included a repetitive pattern of the TL (see example 75).

(75) A hiding play where there are pictures of food items on display. Others close their eyes and one of the pupils hides one picture under the carpet. The pupil who is guessing says for example "Cheese please", the one who had hidden the picture gets the cheese out and says "Here you are"... "Thank you". These kinds of small plays usually work the best.

The play described in the example 75 shows how a single activity can include many goals as in this case, the learning of food items as well as politeness in the foreign language. The play activates children and offers them opportunities for various roles. In addition, a repetitive pattern essential for ELL is included. (see section 4.1) Teacher 1 provided a similar example of a play that had two language learning goals since both colours and polite manners were practiced. She had used the activity (see example 76) in the first lesson of the early A1 language. She described having a special teacher with her during the lesson which enabled them to have two counters where children came to buy their favourite colours. The kind of activity presented

in example 76 encourages children to use the TL themselves and it also utilizes the second beneficial characteristics of a young language learner from Halliwell's list; children's creative use of limited language resources.

(76) ...we sang colours, we spoke colours and headed straight to shopping. And they [pupils] came to buy their favourite colour from my counter and I have now had a special teacher with me to help so she/he was with me we had two counters where one could buy colours and one could buy three favourite colours..... then at the same time we practiced polite manners. (Teacher 1)

Teachers recognized the importance of repetition in ELL since many stated repetition as an important feature in ELT activities such as plays and songs. It was mentioned that children like to sing songs multiple times and how that enables them to learn both the lyrics as well as the language by heart. One teacher argued that children learn phrases from songs easily because of the melody that stays in one's mind.

The benefits of songs in language learning were discussed in 4.1. For example, Huotilainen (2018) suggested songs for ELL classroom for two reasons. The linguistic features of a language in songs are usually exaggerated which makes it easier for a child to notice and learn them. Moreover, songs and music in general are beneficial in the development of the sense of hearing which again benefits in language learning. In section 4.1, one example of a repetitive linguistic form in songs was the WH-questions. This kind of example occurred in the questionnaire data as one teacher mentioned an action song called "Who took the cookie?" as a successful activity for ELT. The song is constructed around the question "Who?". The teacher provided this example as an activity which his/her pupils especially enjoy.

The results indicate that teachers use and have found a variety of plays that they find suitable and successful. They had put thought and effort in finding material that is both suitable for young learners as well as meaningful in terms of the TL learning. Examples 77 and 78 present two more plays mentioned by the teachers where children are offered opportunities to use the TL themselves.

(77) A fishing play, where in a fish tank, which was a blue plastic box, were fish toys. One pupil left the classroom and then others chose a "bad fish". The pupils came back to the classroom and started picking up fishes. At the same time, we counted together one, two, three etc. When

the pupil took the chosen fish, we said: “bad fish” and the fish dropped back to the tank. And then we took turns.

(78) To practice names, the “My name is Mickey Mouse”-play. First, with the help of the workbook, we studied “What’s your name?”. Then we played. (spinning in a circle and repeating What’s your name x3 and stop. The circle stops. In the middle of the circle, one pupil is blindfolded or lying on the floor, then points at someone from the circle without peeking. The one who is being pointed at says in English My name is Mickey Mouse and changes his/her voice. If guessed correctly [who was speaking], the two change roles.

Real life objects such as toys were mentioned already in section 6.1.1. Teachers mentioned having used for instance children’s own toys, lego duplos and stuffed animals in their ELT. Teacher 1 also emphasized the usefulness of concrete, real life items in ELT multiple times during the interview. Example 78 provides some of her description.

(79) These toys are the best and now that I got animals for us since we ordered animals, different vehicles before Christmas so they can be held, they can be hidden, we can have quizzes, they can be bought and so on so that is probably how we are going to spend our spring. (Teacher 1)

Even though drama was one of the least used methods for ELT, hand puppets were mentioned a few times as a useful tool for ELT. Hand puppets in ELT seemed to be something that both teachers and pupils enjoy. Teachers reported the advantages of hand puppets especially in terms of interaction. In example 80, the teacher describes how children find it easier to have a conversation with a hand puppet and how that somehow leads to fluent pronunciation as well.

(80) Hand puppet stuff always work. With the puppet everyone has the courage to speak and pronunciation flows by itself.

One teacher reported hand puppets as a part of an online material (see example 81). The response did not clarify, whether the hand puppets, the main characters of the material, are part of the online material for example in videos or does the teacher have real life hand puppets that are being used in the classroom. Nonetheless, it was emphasized that the pupils enjoy the hand puppets a lot.

(81) Additionally, the already mentioned Goethe Institut’s Felix and Franzi, because the material package is free and the lovely hand puppet characters that children love.

For Teacher 3, hand puppets were an essential part of her early A1 language lessons (see example 82). She described that each lesson the pupils greet and say goodbyes to a hand puppet. Additionally, she had a habit of sometimes asking the pupils to give “a password” before leaving, which meant that every child got to whisper a new word they had learnt to the hand puppet.

(82) When coming into the classroom, the hand puppet is being greeted... then there is this same ending so we go say goodbyes to the hand puppet and sometimes it might be so that I have the password at the door so that they need to whisper a word they have learnt to the hand puppet.  
(Teacher 3)

Teachers provided multiple examples of simple games they had used in their early A1 language teaching. In addition to active games that required movement, a homemade board game was mentioned. Games as a tool for ELL was discussed both in section 3.1 as well as in section 4. It was discussed that games offer a beneficial tool for implicit learning essential for ELL since children are focused on winning or for instance giving the correct answer instead of learning the language (Halliwell 1992). The focus in a game, described in example 83, was on being fast at knowing the right colour. The game required both movement and the use of the TL, but the rules were kept simple. Another advantage of the game is that it can be easily modified to fit different language learning purposes since all that is needed is picture cards.

(83) With colours: the pupils have cards with a “colour smudge”. They go play with friends. 1-2-3 and the cards are shown to each other. The one that says faster [the colour in the other card], gets the card. The one who loses his/her card goes to get a new one from the teacher.

Another example of a play or game where the focus is on guessing right, but the TL is in the centre of the activity was described by Teacher 1 (see example 84). She described that pupils are always excited to play the game and especially when she herself participates; it makes the game even funnier. This indicates an essential feature of an early language teacher, a willingness to put oneself out there. Additionally, by being a player herself, she enabled her pupils to have various roles in the activity as well. This was a factor of ELL emphasized in chapter 4.

(84) Well then of course these number quizzes when you can guess or colour plays when you can guess what is missing, there are numbers on the board and then when they can all together think what is missing now and then everyone can guess at the same time what is missing or when

teacher tries to guess what number he/she is showing without seeing the number so that is fun that do I need to make the number smaller or bigger, so they are shouting with excitement and maybe all these are also strengthening the language proficiency. (Teacher 1)

Various forms of crafts and for example colouring pages were suitable methods for ELT in the teachers' descriptions. The following examples 85 and 86 show how crafts were used in early A1 language lessons. The example 85 combines crafts with interaction in the TL. This activity offered children to construct the TL themselves and not just repeat the given language, thus taking the advantage of children's creative use of limited language resources, which was one of the beneficial characteristics of a young language learner (see section 3.1). Example 86, in turn, provides an example on how to include the TL culture into early A1 language teaching in a way suitable for ELL.

(85) We had been practicing colours for several lessons. Children gathered their favourite ice creams from ice cream cones and balls of ice cream I had made (from clipart-pictures) and then they told their favourite ice creams to each other in small groups in English. Then we had an ice cream handout I had made, and children coloured the ice cream balls with correct colours.

(86) During a food period we studied a bit of food stuff, food culture then they made a breakfast plate which had a cup of hot chocolate and a croissant made of felt. (Teacher 3)

Literature was also used in various ways for ELT. Picture books were seen as a beneficial method for calming down the lesson. In addition to the reading, other activities were included in order to enhance the language learning and to increase the pupils' role in the activity. The benefits of literature in ELL classroom were discussed in chapter 4. It was mentioned that narratives offer a rich, high-quality input and they enable children to practice their listening skills (Cameron 2001: 40). The following examples 87 and 88 show how literature was used for ELT.

(87) By reading picture books, even the most restless children have calmed down and listened. They have had spontaneous reactions in English (no/yes/repeating words) and they have been excited when they have understood something. They have even asked me to read the same book again right away.

(88) Reading a story with the help of a document camera, questions after reading the text, pupils' answers and a conversation in the TL. Maybe in addition, a colouring page related to the story.

Storybooks and games were the base of early A1 language teaching philosophy for Teacher 2. Her way of implementing ELT was introduced in example 26. She used themes and each theme



started with a storybook often familiar to the children in Finnish or otherwise a traditional children's story. In addition to the book, a suitable song, a film and multiple games as well as other subjects such as crafts were included to a theme and the tasks and activities became more difficult each week. The storybook gave the base for the language learnt during the theme. She gave an example of the storybook *A very hungry caterpillar* and described how the theme and the following lessons were built around the story and what were the language learning goals. This can be seen from the following example 89.

(89) So for example how we started in the autumn, a traditional English children's book "a very hungry caterpillar", we begin by reading it. Children recognize that okay, this is hmm, we usually watch a film, so okay a worm and that becomes a butterfly and it eats this and that. First, we begin to take for example numbers. We practice numbers from one to seven or from one to five and then we play with those numbers. Then in the next week the same theme continues because one day it eats for example five, four strawberries or something so then we have strawberries or apples and oranges and plums. So, we include fruits and now we know numbers and fruits. In the next week we include the days of the week and then we have numbers. So, we always have the same theme and games related to it and then we add a new game to the last week's game. So, we add for instance cards or the degree of difficulty. (Teacher 2)

The question related to positive experiences of learning materials and methods also provided an example from a workbook (see example 90). One teacher mentioned an activity type from a workbook that pupils had been excited about. However, the teacher him/herself was surprised that the pupils had liked the tasks. The fact that only one teacher mentioned a workbook in the question related to successful materials and methods yet confirms the findings of this study regarding the use of workbooks in ELT.

(90) There were sound agent activities in the Jump in workbook. I was surprised that children were very excited about those.

Classroom routines as a part of language development were discussed in chapter 4. It was examined that for instance routines regarding the beginnings and endings of lessons can provide great opportunities for language learning. The interviewees were asked about classroom routines they had used in their early A1 language teaching. The following example 91 shows what routines Teacher 1 had in her ELT.

(91) First everyone goes to their own seat, everyone has their own seat with their name on them and then the teacher greets the other teacher and then greets the whole class, so we practice these greetings there. After that, as a choir, this what is the weather like that day so I show that

magnetic symbols I have made and laminated, so is it raining today, it is windy today, is it minus 30 degrees Celsius or is it minus 10 degrees Celsius... so the weather map is permanent. (Teacher 1)

Teacher 2 described that each lesson begins with a specific song and a song related to the theme in question always ends the lesson. Additionally, she reported the importance of repetitive methods in ELT (see example 92). Even though different themes and vocabularies occur, games with similar structure are used to make it easier for the pupils to understand. The teacher does not have to spend time on explaining what is being done since children are somewhat familiar with the rules. In her ELT, storybooks were another important routine that recurred in each theme. For teacher 3, playing was a recurring method in her ELT. This can be seen from example 93.

(92) Quite a lot especially at the beginning of the first grade, the structure of the games is rather similar so there are very similar games so that the pupils do not always have to learn new rules and we get straight to playing. No need to explain, no need to speak, we can just start doing so that is very important. And also that each story, each theme is one or more storybooks included so the book is important, so a concrete book is always part of the teaching. (Teacher 2)

(93) Then we always have, we have the particular plays, so I mean not the same plays but we always have a playing part included in the lessons. (Teacher 3)

The interviewees were asked whether they executed interdisciplinary learning in their early A1 language teaching. Teachers 2 and 3 had combined early A1 language extensively with other subjects. Teacher 2 described having used especially mathematics in early A1 language teaching, but also crafts, visual arts, environment and nature studies, music and sometimes physical education were included. When asked the biggest advantage of early A1 language, she mentioned the possibility to use English to study other subjects as well. This can be seen from the following example 94.

(94) So quite many first graders especially during spring or second graders in the autumn say that school is boring and there is nothing new if the traditional way is used meaning that the workbooks determine what is being studied and when and there is nothing, nothing except those what is one plus one and all that. So that is when we can expand English to other subjects as well. And that is a huge advantage and it motivates children a lot because then you can differentiate everything. (Teacher 2)

As can be seen from the example 94 above, Teacher 2 mentioned that many first and second graders find school too easy and sometimes boring since for instance mathematics can be very

easy to some pupils. Thus, using English to study other subjects motivated children and made school more exciting to them. One example of how she had combined English with environmental studies can be seen from example 95.

(95) We might have for example some science topic, for example now this winter theme continues so we begin to do Finnish English science things, we examine water, ice and out of those we make a project together. (Teacher 2)

Teacher 3 had participated in one of the government's key projects. She explained the basics of the project. The project was an interdisciplinary learning module and early A1 language was combined with other school subjects. She added that now that the early A1 language became national, the key project now longer operates in primary school, only in pre-schools. However, she had continued using similar methods she had used during the project. She argued that language studies cannot be isolated from things such as geography and culture and that makes ELT automatically interdisciplinary. The example 96 shows her description on how she had executed the interdisciplinary learning both individually and with class teachers.

(96) We have done so that they [class teachers] have prepared something in visual arts or crafts or somewhere or they have continued something we have made in [the local key project] so we cooperate quite a lot. (Teacher 3)

The variety of suitable and successful materials and methods for ELT indicate that teachers have put a lot of effort in finding suitable ways of implementing ELT. Teachers seemed to be open-minded in terms of trying new ways of teaching languages and the methods mentioned were in line with ELL principles. However, methods such as nursery rhymes and drama were not as popular among teachers as for example songs and plays were. As was mentioned in chapter 3, teachers often find it easier to stay on safer activities, and thus, for example drama is something teachers tend to avoid using (Bland 2015). However, teachers' perceptions on successful ELT were related to active and playful methods without disregarding the role of the TL. However, due to the small-scale sample including only 40 teachers, the result cannot be generalised.

## 7 DISCUSSION

This chapter concludes the present study. The main findings in terms of the research questions and conclusions drawn from the results are discussed. Additionally, the validity and reliability are examined including the strengths and limitations of the present study. Moreover, suggestions for future research on ELT in Finland are presented.

### **The main findings**

The present study set out to examine the implementation of ELT in Finland at its early stage. More precisely, the focus was on learning materials and methods used for early A1 language teaching described by the teachers. The overall attitude towards ELT was rather positive both in the questionnaire data and especially in the interview data. This is something to take into consideration since the results might have been a lot different if one or more of the interviewees had had a negative approach towards ELT. Thus, it can be said that the results of this study represent teachers who, in general, have a positive approach towards ELT. It can be said that the interviewees were enthusiastic about the topic since they all suggested ideas for future development of ELT, and they stated strong views regarding ELT. Their participation to this study is therefore not surprising. It can be assumed that teachers who are excited about ELT and who are confident in terms of their own teaching, are willing to share their experiences more openly.

Since the area of ELL in a school environment has not been studied much in any context, it is difficult to compare the findings of this study to other similar studies. Additionally, as ELL in general is strongly context-related (Skinnari & Halvari 2018), comparing studies conducted in different contexts might not provide completely accurate conclusions. However, similar studies in terms of foreign language learning materials have been conducted in the area of CLIL (see section 4.2). Rasinen (2006) found out that especially at the beginning of CLIL in the school that was examined, teachers made a lot of material themselves since there was no published material yet. Teachers were the material designers for CLIL also in another study, where the results indicated that teachers' personalities had an impact on their way of doing material. Additionally, there was a significant variability in the amount of time spent on making and gathering material. (Bovellan 2018)

To meet the research aims, the following research questions were answered: 1) *What learning materials and methods early A1 language teachers exploit?* 2) *How is written language manifested in ELT materials and methods and in the teachers' descriptions?* and 3) *What kind of experiences of struggles and successes do the teachers report in relation to learning materials and methods?* Teachers knew well the principles of ELL especially as introduced in the core curriculum since a variety of active and playful materials and methods were used to ensure proper implementation of early A1 language teaching. Teachers reported having put a lot of time and effort in both finding and making material for their ELT lessons and there was a need for readymade, easily available material. However, workbooks were something teachers did not prefer as many reported that workbooks both the workbooks published at the time the data was collected, as well as workbooks in general as a tool for ELL did not serve the purpose of ELT. Teachers proposed various options for readymade published material where written language is not included and that is suitable for young language learners in terms of other factors as well.

The variety of materials and methods used indicated teachers' creativity. In general, simple and active methods were found the most useful for ELT. Teachers also recognized the effect active methods had on language learnings as many example activities were in line with the suggested ELT methods presented in chapter 4 and with the advantages of young language learners such as children's instinct for play and fun (Halliwell 1992). The most popular materials for ELT were songs/music, plays, videos, picture cards and games. Teachers provided, for example, multiple examples of plays they had found useful. Interdisciplinary learning was also utilized in ELT, as teachers described different ways of combining other subjects to early A1 language.

As mentioned, teachers were mainly against the use of a workbook in ELL. Many found the workbooks published at the time the data was collected useless and even harmful due to the amount of written language. Additionally, workbooks were not preferred since teachers wanted to use more active methods in their teaching. Teacher 3, in example 42, stated that workbooks, no matter how activity books they can be, are not advisable for ELL. The fact that the participants of the study had a positive approach to ELT in general, might have affected these results. Teachers who took part in the study, may have been more interested in ELT, thus be more aware of the principles of ELL and probably more willing to put effort in making materials themselves.

The lack of suitable, readymade material made ELT time-consuming for the teachers. Nevertheless, teachers had put time and effort on finding and making suitable material and they recognized the possibility ELT has to offer in terms of implementing language teaching differently compared to the traditional language teaching methods in Finland. As Teacher 2, in example 15, argued, workbooks are the typical Finnish way of teaching languages. Now that many teachers are struggling with finding and making suitable material, and at the same time publishers are increasingly providing workbooks for ELT, it will be interesting to see what the future of ELT material will be like. Will the popularity of workbooks in ELT increase if more suitable material is not being published? On the other hand, if material more suitable for young language learners is being published in the future, teachers' burden is diminished and they will be able to implement ELT based on their wishes with less effort.

The question regarding published materials in the future is crucial. Even though individual teachers are willing to put effort on their ELT in terms of gathering material themselves, the situation probably will not continue this way permanently. As Johnstone (2009) stated, the implementation of ELT cannot be a success if the implementation is left to the initiative of individual teachers (see section 2.2) and this can be interpreted to cover materials as well. Teachers need more support in terms of ELT materials and workbooks are not providing the desired support for teachers who prefer other ways of implementing ELT.

Teachers made suggestions regarding material for ELT in the future and they had clear views on what the material should be like in order to fit the nature of ELL. It was clear that a workbook in its traditional form was not something teachers want to utilize in their ELT in the future. Teachers suggested material that would be audible instead of written and different material packages including for example readymade games, plays and other supplementary material such as real life objects to support teaching. As in example 20 one teacher stated, a material that would set the base for a whole school year is needed so that the teachers would not have to make a puzzle with no coherence throughout the year. This is something commercial publishers should take into consideration.

The role of written language generated significantly differing views in the data. Even the interviews indicated this, since among only three interviews, opposite views occurred. Some viewed written language as a part of all language learning and for example that recognition and

formation of words is suitable from the first grade onward. Others, in turn, were strongly against having any written language included in early A1 language teaching at least in the first grade. These results indicate both that teachers use their discretion when deciding what is best for their pupils and also that there is no specific national guideline regarding *when* and *how* in terms of written language in early A1 language teaching. Again, this is something only the future will show and where research is needed in order to provide information about the effects (both positive and negative) of the different variations in the use of written language in early A1 language teaching.

### **Reliability and validity of the study**

The ethical questions regarding the study were examined in section 5.2, but other aspects regarding the reliability and validity of a study need to be evaluated as well. In qualitative research, reliability emphasises the systematic analysis and the trustworthiness of the interpretations rather than evaluation on whether the research procedure can be repeated such is the case in quantitative research. Evaluation of the validity, in turn, refers to the legitimacy of the data and the drawn interpretations. (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010) Even though replicating a qualitative study is difficult and even impossible, the research procedure of this study is possible to repeat in terms of the questionnaire and interview outlines (see appendixes 1 & 2).

Generalisation and transparency of a qualitative data refer more to a possible logic than the possibility to generalise the results to fit a larger context. This refers to an assumption that the discourse of the participants is always, to some extent, culture-related and not fully individualised. (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010) This study provided a small-scale sample of the implementation of ELT in Finland. However, since the topic was limited to learning materials and methods and two data collecting methods were used, the data provided rather detailed information. As the aim was to bring forth teachers' perceptions and experiences instead of only providing quantitative data on what learning materials and methods are used, it was essential to have interviews as another research method in order to have a chance to deepen the topic. Thus, even though the results cannot be generalised to fit the Finnish context, the results provided information of a topic not studied in Finland before. Therefore, this study offers a basis for future discussion and development of ELT in Finland.

One aspect affecting the reliability of a qualitative study is that the participants might answer in a socially acceptable way instead of telling their true perceptions. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006) Additionally, in a qualitative research, there is always a possibility for misinterpretation (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018) It was mentioned earlier that it was not self-evident to all the participants what the term ‘learning materials’ in this study entail as some seemed to have understood it to only cover the workbook. Other material such as songs, plays etc. where in those cases, understood as methods. This was something I did not realize until the questionnaire data was collected. However, in the interviews I had the opportunity to clarify the meaning if needed.

One aspect adding the truthfulness of the study is the differences among the participants in various ways. The participants were not limited to any specific education background and thus all teachers who had experience in ELT no matter the educational background, could participate in the study. Additionally, all the interviewees had different educational backgrounds. The study was not limited to any specific language either, thus enabling a wider approach of the topic. As mentioned, the cities or municipalities where the participants lived and worked, were not asked. However, the interviewees locations were revealed during the interviewing process and geographical variation occurred. This adds the truthfulness of the study, since the interview data represented perspectives from Southern, Central and Northern Finland.

### **Future directions**

Since the area of ELT in Finnish language education is still new, research of the Finnish context is needed in order to succeed in ELT. When it comes to learning materials and methods, it would be beneficial to examine what kind of material commercial publishers have published so far now that the amendment has begun nationally in every primary school in Finland. Research regarding analysis of ELL workbooks would provide insights to the reality of whether material in a form of workbook can serve the purposes of ELT in terms of active learning and what is the role of written language.

Additionally, the questions concerning the role of written language could be further developed since even though written language was only one part of this study, it quite surprisingly ended up being one the most significant factors in the findings. As Huotilainen (2018) mentioned (see section 3.2), there is not much research made on ELL with children who have had issues in



their mother tongue development. Another aspect to this would be children with other learning disabilities that might not be visible yet in the early years of schooling.

Since this study examined ELT based on teachers' descriptions, a study examining classroom observations would provide another approach to the topic. Teachers' own views and descriptions are one way of examining how ELT is implemented and as mentioned, allowing teachers' voices to be heard is essential in terms of future ELT development. That is why a questionnaire and an interview were chosen as research methods. However, observing classroom practices would provide another view to the topic of how early A1 language teaching is implemented in Finland.

After all, learning materials and methods are only one part of early A1 language teaching among many other factors. Without having proper conditions for learning such as adequate exposure to the TL, teacher education resources and the material, ELT cannot become a success. (Rixon 2015: 29, 47) As the teacher in example 23 stated, a teacher is the heart of ELT and in order to succeed in ELT, not much material other than the teacher with the knowledge of both the TL and ELL in general is needed. Thus, it can be stated that no matter how high quality and favorable the materials used in ELT are, they will never replace the teacher, the most essential individual factor of successful ELT.

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## Appendix 1 The questionnaire outline

### Background

- Name
- Education
  - Language teacher
  - Class teacher
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Work experience as a teacher
  - 0-2 years
  - 2-5 years
  - 5-10 years
  - over 10 years
  - over 20 years
- Work experience as early A1 language teacher
  - less than a year
  - 1-3 years
  - over 3 years
  - other: \_\_\_\_\_
- How did you end up teaching early A1 language?
- Have you participated in an in-service training concerning early A1 language teaching?
  - yes
  - no

### Learning materials

- **1. What learning materials have you utilized in your early A1 language lessons?**
  - Workbook
  - Stories/literature
  - Videos
  - Songs/music
  - Nursery rhymes
  - Plays
  - Games
  - Plays/drama
  - Crafts and drawing materials
  - Picture cards
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- **2. Why have you chosen to use those materials?**
- **3. Where do you get your ideas for learning materials?**
  - Materials from publishers
  - Colleagues
  - Online
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
    - If you use the internet as a source for material, mention some of the web sites you use.
- **4. Do you feel like you have received support in your work community in terms of planning and preparing early A1 language teaching?**
  - Not at all
  - A little
  - Quite a lot

- A lot
- **5. If you are using a workbook, what workbook it is and why did you choose the particular workbook?**
- **6. Have you utilized learning material aimed for upper grades in your early A1 language teaching?**
  - If yes, give an example.
- **7. Do you find some materials used for early A1 language teaching challenging? (E.g. songs, plays)**
  - Yes
  - No
  - If yes, explain why.
- **8. What kind of materials would you like to use in the future in early A1 language teaching? What does it require from you or others?**

### **Written language**

- **9. What is the role of written language in your early A1 language lessons? (E.g. how written language is present in the classroom, how it is used in action and in the materials?)**
- **10. How do you take into account the pupils' different levels of literacy skills in learning material planning and in use?**

### **Experiences**

- **11. What are the learning materials you yourself like to utilize in early A1 language teaching? Why?**
- **12. What learning materials the pupils have liked?**
- **13. Based on your experiences, what special features are related to planning early A1 language teaching?**
- **14. Describe a successful teaching situation, where the learning material has worked well.**
  - If you would like to participate in an interview during autumn 2019 regarding the topic, please leave your contact information below.



## **Appendix 2. The interview outline**

### **Background**

1. What is it like to teach the early A1 language?
2. In your opinion, what is the biggest advantage of early A1 language teaching? How about the biggest challenge?
3. Do you feel that your education corresponds to early A1 language teaching? Why? Why not? What kind of training would you potentially like to have?

### **Learning materials and methods**

4. How were learning materials and methods for early A1 language teaching considered in the in-service training you have participated in?
5. What kind of learning materials your school provides for early A1 language teaching?
6. What kind of spaces and environments have you utilized in early A1 language teaching? How have those affected your choices related to learning materials?
7. In your mind, what learning materials are especially suitable for early A1 language teaching? Give examples and explain why.
8. What kind of learning materials do you wish there was more available?
9. How do you utilize learning materials aimed for upper grades in your early A1 language teaching?

### **Written language**

10. What is your approach to the minor role of written language? How about children's and parents' approaches?
11. How the minor role of written language has changed your teaching? Has it brought challenges or on the other hand, new views and ideas?

### **Experiences**

12. Describe your experiences related to support in planning and preparing learning materials for early A1 language teaching? (What kind of support you wished you had received? What are the possible reasons for not receiving much or any support?)
13. Which one is more challenging to you: planning or implementing early A1 language teaching? Explain why.
14. Describe some activities, methods or larger entities you have executed, and which have ended up being successful in your ELT. (What, why, when)
15. Have you used interdisciplinary learning methods in your early A1 language teaching? If yes, describe.

### **Other**

16. What kind of classroom policies, repetitive routines do you have in use as tools for language teaching and learning in addition to the actual tasks and action? (For example, starting and ending the lesson, greetings, a calendar) If yes, describe.
17. Anything else you would like to add regarding the topic?

### Appendix 3 The teachers' quotes in Finnish

- (1) No lyhyesti, se [varhentaminen] on aivan ihanaa. Mielenkiintoinen uusi puoli siihen, öö lasten kasvuvaiheeseen mihin juuri nyt en oo muuten opetuksessa perehtynyt. (Teacher 1)
- (2) Se [varhennettu kielenopetus] on semmonen minun opetuksen suola koska se on just sitä mitä mää tällä hetkellä haluan tehdä. (Teacher 2)
- (3) Jotta opetus olisi monipuolista, innostavaa, hauskaa, ikäryhmään sopivaa ja toisaalta siksi, että suurin osa ei osaa lukea ja kirjoittaa ja toiminnallisuutta tarvitaan enemmän.
- (4) Alkuopettajana uskon toiminnallisuuteen, vuorovaikutukseen ja pelillisyyteen. Yhteiset leikit, joissa toistetaan, lausutaan yhdessä, lauletaan ja liikutaan, edistävät oppimista.
- (5) Mielestäni tekeminen saa olla monipuolista mutta ei liian silppuista vaan asioiden ja työtapojen pitää toistua.
- (6) Helppo löytää ja käyttää.
- (7) Helposti saatavilla ja sopivat ko ikäluokan opetukseen.
- (8) Koska valmista [materiaalia] ei ole ollut saatavilla, on pitänyt soveltaa kaikkea mahdollista.
- (9) Jotain pitää kokeilla.
- (10) Kolmosten matskuista apua ja tukea
- (11) Kolmannen luokan kirjoissa on soveltuvia tehtäviä, esim. kuunteluita
- (12) 3. luokan laululeikkejä, kuvakortteja
- (13) Eniten ehkä käyttänyt kuitenkin vanhaa kolmoskuutosen materiaalia yippee kirjasarjasta. Eli otan sieltä ne kuvat, otan sieltä sen digimateriaalin koska pienet tykkää ne saa esimerkiksi käydä painamassa sieltä valita niitä sanoja ja painaa mistä ne tykkää ja sitten näitä keskusteluja on käyty niillä malliäänillä. (Teacher 1)
- (14) Siellä on sitten taas niin semmosta niinku perinteistä suomalaista kielenopetusmateriaalia, mun mielestä se ei oo etes hyvä, etes niille isommille oppilaille, jopa jotta näille pienille. (Teacher 2)
- (15) Mitä mää ite käytän eniten, on amerikkalaisten ja brittien tekemät home schooling tämmöset nettisivut. Elikkä mää varmaan seuraan, jos mä laskin nyt joululomalla oikein nii mä seuraan kahtakymmentäkahta eri homeschooling pagea ja mää sieltä etsin ne hyvät tehtävät, hyvät pelit ja sit mää leikkaan liimaa askartele laminoi ja siitä tulee aina se paketti. (Teacher 2)

- (16) Toivoisin että kustantajat miettis mitkä on ne arjen tärkeimmät sanavarastot. Niin kuin ne on tehneet muunkin materiaalin kolmosesta ylöspäin aikasemmin. Niin miettisivät miten se tuotais tänne alemmaksi niin että meillä olis semmoset tavarapompsit jotka voi ostaa helposti. Meillä on eläin ja lemmikkieläin ja villieläin ja suomalaiset eläimet ja ulkomaiset eläimet ja kulkuneuvot ja urheiluvälineet ja tämmöset ihan leluina mutta sellasina opetusleluina ja sellasina paketteina että ne pystyis kouluille sitten ostamaan. Että ihan tämmöset konkreettiset välineet (Teacher 1)
- (17) Kuuntelumateriaali, se on semmonen mitä ei oikein kukaan huomaa noista kustantajista Suomessa. (Teacher 1)
- (18) Se tehtävä antais niinkun ohjeet ääneen elikkä lapsen ei tarvi osata lukee ja sitte vaikka niinku että mmm yhdistä jotakin tai tee jotain että sä kuulet värin ja painat sitä väriä tai että laita värit järjestykseen tai numerot tai jotain. siis semmonen missä niinku yhdistyis se ääni ja tekeminen mutta siellä ei olis niinku kirjottamista eikä lukemista tai jos siellä ois lukemista nii ehkä joku tosi minimaalinen määrä (Teacher 3)
- (19) Olisi hienoa, jos opettajalle löytyisi valmis materiaalia (ilman oppilaan oppikirjaa), joka perustuisi suulliseen harjoitteluun ja josta opettaja saisi rungon sekä vinkkejä erilaisiin tehtäviin ja leikkeihin. Materiaalista saisi kokonaisuuden koko vuoden työn pohjaksi, eikä tarvitsisi tehdä 'palapeliä' pitkin vuotta. Tässä 'palapelissä' kun ei ole läpi materiaalin menevää punaista lankaa, joka linkittäisi asian/sanat toisiinsa.
- (20) Minusta tarjolla on jo yli äyräiden materiaalia. Koen että tämä on varsin yksinkertaista luokanopettaja-aineenopettajalle.
- (21) Olen tällä hetkellä tyytyväinen materiaalipankkiini, sillä olen kouluttautunut paljon ja kerännyt opetustyyliini sopivaa materiaalia jo useamman lukuvuoden. Käytän paljon samoja materiaaleja, leikki/pelivälineitä muiden oppiaineiden opetuksessa. Materiaalista on ylitarjontaa.
- (22) Open oma kielitaito riittää: kuvat, leikit ja videot/laulut ovat parasta.
- (23) Vierastan ilmaisua "oppimateriaali", koska enemmänkin varhennetussa kielessä tarvitaan aikuinen, jonka suusta tulee riittävän aitoa ko. kieltä, ja erilaista rekvisiittaa. Laulut/Videot ym. ovat toki "oppimateriaalia" mutta ne eivät ole varhennetun kielen ytimessä.
- (24) Että tokaluokalla ne on ok koska he osaavat jo lukea aikasemmin ja nyt ei mene se suomen kielen kirjoitusjärjestelmä sekaisin kun englannissahan se kirjottaminen on erilaista. Nyt ne ihan rauhassa havainnoi niitä sanoja mun mielestä kirjoitettuina kokonaišahmoina mutta ekaluokalle mä en niitä kyllä tarjoais oikein. (Teacher 1)
- (25) Et sit ku nykyset ykköset on kakkosella ja ens vuoden ykköset on kakkosella nii kyllähän me sitten varmasti jotain kirjoitetaan mut et ei se edelleenkään oo opsin mukaista se että lähetään kirjottamaan ekalla ja tokalla niinku sen varhennetun opsin mukaista. (Teacher 3)

- (26) Elikkä mä perustan oman tän englanninopetuksen siihen että mulla on aina teemat, mulla on teema yleensä kahelle viikolle, kolmelle neljälle viikolle. Maksimissaan neljä viikkoa sitä samaa juttua ja se perustuu johonkin tarinaan jonka lapset esimerkiksi tietää tai tuntee, johonki hahmoon. Tällä viikolla me esimerkiksi ruvettiin käymään lumiukkoo ja lunta ja talvee ja tämmöstä. Elikkä sieltä tulee kaikki se sanasto, siel on aina laulu, kirja, joku filmi, ömm pieni sanasto. Sit siihen ruvetaan tekemään pelejä ja sit niiden pelien kautta lapsetkin jotka ei osaa kunnolla lukea varsinkaan englanniksi sit oppii sen kuvasana yhistelemällä niin ku tunnistamaan sen sanan plus käyttämään niitä fraaseja. Ja yleensä mä alotan sen homman sillai et meil on laulu ja sit meil on sanat pelkästään ilman tekstiä. Elikkä ne oppii sen sanan et tämä kuva tarkoittaa vaikka snowflake ja niitten ei tarte osata lukee sitä. Mut sitten seuraavalla ja sitä seuraavalla siihen tulee myös se sana miltä se näyttää ja ne osaa sen jälkeen sen kuvan ja sen äänen yhdistää siihen sanaan ja sit ne osaa käyttääki et okei, we have five snowflakes ja sitte kaikkee tämmöstä elikkä se aina niinku kertautuu. (Teacher 2)
- (27) Joillakin saattaa olla vaikka 25 lisäsanaa esimerkiksi meillä oli tässä eläimiä, niin sehän oli ihan yhtä post it mereä se vihkoaukio sen jälkeen elikkä ne saa sen jos ne haluaa ja sehän on mun mielestä se idea tässä koko systeemissä, elikkä lapsille pitää antaa niin paljon mahdollisuutta oppia uutta et hän saa joka päivä koulusta kotiin mennessä sanoo et okei, mä opin tätä uutta, tää oli uus ja tää oli kiva eikä sillä lailla että kotiin mennään sanoo että okei ei taaskan tapahtunu yhtää mitään. Elikkä just se että mitä enemmän ne lukee mitä enemmän ne kirjottaa niin sitä enemmän ne motivoituu. (Teacher 2)
- (28) Matikka saattaa olla vähän tylsää, niillä on nyt vasta numero kymmenen käytössä ja ei ne nyt jaksu sit kauheen kauaa laskee sitä että mitä on viis plus neljä tai jotaki muuta eessuntakasi vaan nyt ku otetaan siihen enkku ja toiminnallisuus nii se onki sitte jo eri juttu. Ja se aina motivoi niitä eteenpäin ja ne käyttää sitä kieltä tosi hyvin. (Teacher 2)
- (29) Jotku opettajat on tehny vähä sellasta et on vaa kirjoitettu numerot tai jotain on kirjoitettu sinne vihkoon nii sit ne on ollu vähä sillee et eikse nyt oo vähä mälsää et ku eiks vähä kaikissa muissaki aineissa et silleen on ollu kiva se [paikallinen kielten kehittämishanke] -tunti ku se on ollu jotain muuta niinku erilaista kun niillä muilla tunneilla. (Teacher 3)
- (30) Luokassani näkyy kirjoitettua kieltä, mutta se ei ole varsinaisesti aktiivisessa käytössä varhennetun kielen tunneilla.
- (31) Käytän hyvin vähän kirjoitettua kieltä. Oppilaat saattavat nähdä sanoja, mutta kannustan suulliseen ilmaisuun.
- (32) Kirjoittaminen häiritsee helposti hyvän ääntämisen oppimista, joten siksi vältän sitä alkuopetuksessa.
- (33) Vähäisempi, sillä vältän sekoittamasta lukemaan opettelevia sillä, että englannissa sanat lausutaan eri tavalla kun kirjoitetaan.
- (34) Erittäin pieni, sanoja väritellään

- (35) Näkyy esim sanakorteissa sanahahmot, kirjoitan joskus jonkun sanan taulullekin, jos oppilaat kysyvät, kuinka se kirjoitetaan. Usein he kysyvät.
- (36) Olen kirjoittanut, kun joku oppilaista on kysynyt
- (37) Olemme harjoitelleet jo syksyllä vieraan kielen sanojen kirjoittamista. Ja jatkaneet sitä keväälle.
- (38) Aina esillä tukemassa puhuttua ja kuultua.
- (39) Kirjoitettua englantia opitaan tunnistamaan, kirjoitamme myös keskeisiä sanoja ja fraaseja vihkoon ylös. Muuten termistöön on vaikea palata, ellei ole jotain konkreettista tuotosta, sillä kirjoja ei ole.
- (40) Julisteita seinällä. Muuten ei kakkosten kanssa kirjoitettu, kuin keräämilläni aakkoskorkeilla. Kirjassa toki kirjoitettua kieltä esillä, mutta juuri sen vuoksi en kirjaa aio käyttöön ottaa.
- (41) Kyllähän sillä saadaan se lapsen innostus siihen uuteen ihanaan kieleen ja siihen, siihen niinku ihan totaalaisesti tapettua et jos me käytetään vaan sitä kirjaa. (Teacher 2)
- (42) Mä en halua että ensimmäisellä luokalla tungetaan heti eteen se kirja ja mm, passivoidaan se lapsi sillä tavalla ku kieltä voi opiskella niin monella eri muullakin tavalla. (Teacher 3)
- (43) Mä en halua että se on heti se kielenopiskelu sitä kirjottamista ja lukemista ja istutaan pulpettiin ja täytetään vaikka ois kuinka puuhakirja mut ku on muitaki asioita et Minna Huotilainen aivotutkija on todennu muun muassa et miten pilaat motivaation, miten tuhota motivaatio vieraan kielen opiskeluun, istuta lapsi pulpettiin ja anna kynä ja kirjutustehtävä niin se on siinä. (Teacher 3)
- (44) Kyllähän ne kirjat sillä lailla antaa hyvää runkoa jos ne on suunniteltu hyvin mutta kun ne on tehty ihan kirjottaville oppilaille pääasiassa niin ne ei niinku tähän tilanteeseen sovi. (Teacher 1)
- (45) Öö elikkä mä en halua ku tällä hetkellä ne kirjat on sellasia jotka vaatii aika paljon luku- ja kirjutustaitoa niin mä en halua että ensimmäisellä luokalla tungetaan heti eteen se kirja. (Teacher 3)
- (46) Mut et mun mielestä se ei, ei lähetä siitä että kielenopiskelu vaatis lukutaitoa ja jos katsoo näitä nykyisiä materiaaleja mitä on, niin hirveesti siellä on tekstiä ja mä en halua altistaa ihan heti sille sanahahmolle koska niin kun ääntämisen kannalta noi pienet jotka ei nää sitä sanaa nii oppii kaikkein parhaiten ääntämään. (Teacher 3)
- (47) Meillä on ollu Sanoman Go, mutta en ole kokenut sitä hyödylliseksi.
- (48) Itse en enää tilaisi kirjaa vaan tekisin ja keräisin materiaalit itse

- (49) Et sen mä tiedän et tosi moni on valinnu sen takia oppikirjan et on niinku ns vähän helpompi et voi vaan niinku ottaa sieltä ja tehdä niitä juttuja (Teacher 3)
- (50) No suuret ryhmäkoot on tosi iso toiminnallisessa että mulla oli 31 oppilasta tossa just nyt yhteensä [paikallinen kielten kehittämishanke] et se ei niinku toimi ku 15 oppilaan luokassa on niin siis iso ryhmäkoko on niinku isoin haaste. (Teacher 3)
- (51) Kaikki oppilaat eivät halua laulaa ja toiminnalliset leikit pistävät jotkut oppilaat ylikierroksille. En silti luopuisi niistä, sillä ne ovat mielestäni varhennetun parasta ainesta. Oppilaat tuntuvat oppivan parhaiten juuri laulujen ja leikkien kautta.
- (52) Haastetta tuo lähinnä se, että oppilaille totuttua leikkisemmät ja pelillisemmät metodit saavat usein mopon keulimaan, eli aiheuttavat paljon riehumista luokassa.
- (53) En osaa laulaa enkä soittaa mitään.
- (54) Kun on opettanut isompia, ei oikein osaa keksiä pienille sopivia leikkejä, enkä ole persoonaltani erityisen ”laulu-leikkittäjä”-tyylinen.
- (55) Leikeissä vuorovaikutuksellinen vieraan kielen käyttö jää helposti leikin tiimellyksen varjoon. Sellaisia valmiita leikkejä, joissa kommunikaatio olisi keskiössä, on heikosti
- (56) Kaikki hauska ja hyvähän ei, mikä onnistuu, ei aina vahvista sitten sitä osaamista. Mutta sellasten tuntien päälle pitää olla tyytyväinen siihen että ne olivat kuitenkin ilosia. (Teacher 1)
- (57) Kyllä se varmaan se toteutus on, koska siellä luokassa on niin paljon niitä muuttujia. Joidenkin oppilaiden kesken voi tulla sellanen konflikti joka niinku aivan räjähtää niin varmaan sillain päin se on että se on haastavampaa se toteuttaminen. (Teacher 1)
- (58) Elikkä koskaan sä et tiedä mikä siellä on et onksiellä jollain pissat housussa vai äitiä ikävä vai oksentaako joku sinne lattialle tai jotain muuta et kyl mä siinä määrin koen sen niinku pienen lapsen kohtaamisen toki aina haastavammaks kun ton isomman lapsen kun yleensä nuo isommat pystyy huolehtii itestänsä. (Teacher 3)
- (59) No tämä että et voi niinku normaalisti kielenopetuksessa viedä yhtä aikaa sitä käsitettä kirjallisena kun viet sitä kuvallisena tai puhuttuna tai ajateltuna normaalisti kun mä opetan vaikka neljännellä luokalla uutta sanastoa nii meillä on aina jotaki kuvatukea, sanatukea kortteina. Nyt ekaluokalta kokonaan puuttuu se kirjallinen osuus eli joutuu hakemaan uudet välineet, tavaraa, ja se on tavallisesti oltava konkreettista, että se on semmonen haaste. (Teacher 1)
- (60) Uusia ideoita ja näkökulmia on ehdottomasti on tuonut mut tottakai haasteita sillä tavalla et mun täytyy aina rakentaa ne jutut sen mukaan et ne lapset ei nää mitään tekstiä. Eli mun täytyy valita sen mukaan millasia juttuja mä käytän, millasia tehtäviä, sit jos on huono päivä niin on voinu esimerkiksi isommille oppilaille voi sanoo et öö tehkää vaik se tehtävä sielt kirjasta tai tehkää ne ja ne tehtävät mut et ei noitten pienten kaa niitten kans on oltava 110 prosenttisesti koko ajan läsnä ja niinku keksii niille tekemistä (Teacher 3)

- (61) Käytän tunteja suunnitteluun. Haalin rekvisiittaa vapaa-ajalla ja ostan omaan piikkiin tarvikkeita. Vaatii paljon työtä, jotta onnistuu.
- (62) Suunnittelu on haastavaa koska se vie älyttömästi aikaa. Se on esimerkiksi jos sanotaan että tää talvijakso joka nyt on kolmeksi viikoksi niin elikkä se tarkoittaa esimerkiksi yhdelle luokalle kolme tuntia. Ja sen yhen kolmen tunnin pätkän suunnitteleminen kestää varmaan nelkyt tuntia. Et siihen saa, toki mä käytän sitä sitten neljälle luokalle mut et se vie se alkusuunnittelu kaikki se netistä se materiaalin ettiminen se jo vie varmaan se yks kaks kyt tuntia aikaa ja sitte loppuaika menee siihen et mää teen powerpointit mää teen kuvat mää leikkaa liimaa askartele laminoi, taas leikkaa pelit ja teen niistä sen systeemin. Etin ne videot etin ne kirjat etin ne laulut niin se, se vie älyttömästi aikaa. (Teacher 2)
- (63) Välillä on vaikea valita esim. Lauluista, mitkä ovat sopivan tasoisia kus. oppilaille. Ilman kirjaa tarvitsee kahlata aika paljon materiaalia läpi löytääkseen sopivaa.
- (64) Materiaali pitää kaivaa itse, tekijänsuoja ei ole aina kunnossa.
- (65) Olisi hienoa, jos olisi tekijänoikeuksien kannalta ongelmattomaa musiikki ja videoaineistoa enemmän saatavilla.
- (66) Toiminnallisuus ahtaassa luokassa myös haastavaa.
- (67) Koska opetuksessa on paljon liikettä ja leikkiä, täytyy erityisen paljon pohtia tilan antamia/rajoittamia mahdollisuuksia, kun tunnit ovat aina oppilaiden omissa luokissa.
- (68) Tilaa olisi kyllä ihan kun vaan pystyis kaikki hyödyntämään, mutta tuo älytaulun läsnäolo on aika tärkeä että saa ne äänet ja animaatiot ja laulut ja tämmöset. (Teacher 1)
- (69) Semmosia tosi korkealentoisia luentoja olen kuunnellut. (Teacher 1)
- (70) Meijä nykysissäkin täällä näissä päivän koulutuksissa että annetaan aihe joka on hyvin semmonen kelluva ja mieltikää itse, pohtikaa itse, toteuttakaa itse ja sit se on joku ihme posterit tai mind map ja se jää sit siihen et siitä ei oo ihan oikeesti semmosta käytännön hyötyä sitte et siinä ois paljon kehittämisen varaa. (Teacher 2)
- (71) Olen kyllä saanut hyviäkin koulutuksia mutta ollu paljon koulutuksia joissa ohjaajat ovat aivan yhtä ulalla siitä varhennetun tai pienen lapsen kielenopettamisesta kun me koulutettavatkin. (Teacher 1)
- (72) Eli siellä oli esimerkkinä että on kuvakortit toisessa päässä luokkaa ja sanakortit toisessa päässä luokkaa, ja ekaluokkalainen ei edes välttämättä osaa ollenkaan lukea. (Teacher 1)
- (73) Siellä oli kirjantekijä oli se koulutuksen pitäjä ja tottakaihan hän suosittelee sitä, omia metodeja ja omaa kirjan käyttöä ja muuta (Teacher 2)
- (74) Tavoista sen sijaan on tullu paljon ihan hyvääki, että miten toiminnallisesti leikkien laulaen, puhuen, riimitellen ja niin eteenpäin opitaan näitä pieniä ilmaisuja. Ne on ollu ne tapojen opetukset ihan hyviä. (Teacher 1)

- (75) Piilotusleikki, jossa on ruuan kuvia esillä. Muut sulkevat silmät ja yksi oppilas piilottaa yhden kuvan maton alle. Arvaava oppilas sanoo esim. ”Cheese please”, piilottaja kaivaa juuston esiin ja sanoo ”Here you are”... ”Thank you”. Tämänkaltaiset pienet leikit toimivat usein parhaiten.
- (76) ...laulettiin värit, puhuttiin värit ja lähdettiin sitten suoraa päätä ostoksille. Ja he tulivat ostamaan mielivärinsä minun tiskiltä ja mulla on nyt erityisopettajaksi ollu siinä apuna niin hän oli kaverina meillä oli kaksi luukkua joista sai ostaa värejä ja kolme mieliväriä sai ostaa ... Opeteltiin siinä sitten kohteliaisuussanat samalla.
- (77) Kalastusleikki, jossa kala-altaassa, jona toimi sininen muovilaatikko, oli kalaleluja. Yksi oppilas poistui luokasta, jolloin muut valitsivat ”pahan kalan”. Oppilas palasi luokkaan ja alkoi nostella kaloja. Laskimme samalla yhdessä one, two, three jne. Kun oppilas otti valitun kalan, sanoimme: ”bad fish” ja kalat tippuivat takaisin. Vuoro vaihtui.
- (78) Nimien opetteluun ”My name in Mickey Mouse-leikki. Ensin opeteltiin kirjan avulla What’s your name? Sitten leikittiin. (pyöritään piirissä ja hoetaan What’s your name x 3 and stop. Piiri pysähtyy. Piirin keskellä on sokkona tai mytynä oppilas, joka osoittaa jota kuta piirin kehällä olevaa kurkkimatta. Osoitettu sanoo englanniksi My name is Mickey Mouse ja muuttaa ääntänsä. Jos oikein arvattu, osat vaihtuvat.
- (79) Nää on parhaat nämä lelut ja nyt kun mä sain eläimiä nyt meille joulun alla tilattiin eläimiä ja erilaisia kulkuneuvoja että niitä voidaan ottaa käteen vielä ja niitä voi piilottaa ja niitä voi arvuuttaa ja niitä voi ostaa ja näin niin tämmösillä meillä sitten varmaan kevät sujuu. (Teacher 1)
- (80) Käsinukketouhut toimii aina. Nuken kanssa kaikki uskaltavat puhua ja lausuminen sujuu kuin itsestään.
- (81) Lisäksi jo mainittu Goethe Institutin Felix ja Franzi, koska ilmainen paketti ja ihanat käsinukkehahmot, joita lapset rakastavat.
- (82) Luokkaan tullessa tervehditään sitä käsinukkee... sitten on se sama lopetus eli käydään heippaamassa se käsinukke ja saattaa olla joskus niin että mulla on sit se password siinä ovella et heidän pitää kuiskaa sille käsinukelle se joku sana minkä he on oppinu. (Teacher 3)
- (83) Värien kanssa: oppilaille kortti, jossa ”väriläiskä”. Käydään pelaamassa kavereiden kanssa. 1-2-3 ja näytetään oma kortti. Se kumpi sanoo ekana saa toisen kortin. Korttinsa menettänyt hakee opelta uuden.
- (84) No sitte tietysti nää tämmöset numeroleikit ko saa arvata tai värileikit kun saa arvata että mikä puuttuu, taululla on niitä numeroita ja sitte ku ne saa yhdessä kuorossa ne hokee että mikä sieltä nyt puuttuu ja sitten kaikki saa arvata yhtä aikaa sen että mikä sieltä



puuttuu tai sitte ku opettaja yrittää arvata mitä numeroa hän näyttää ilman että katsoo sitä numeroa niin se on hauskaa että pitääkö pienentää vai suurentaa sitä numeroa että sitä huudetaan innoissaan ja ehkä nää kuitenkin kans kaikki on semmosia jotka vahvistaa kyllä sitä osaamista. (Teacher 1)

- (85) Olimme opetelleet värejä useamman oppitunnin. Lapset kokosivat tekemistäni jätskitötterövohveleista ja jätskipalleroista (clipart-kuvilla tehdyt) lempparijätskit ja kertoivat oman lempparinäskinsä omalle pikkuryhmälle in English. Lopuksi värittivät vielä tekemäni jätskimonisteeseen oikeat värit jädepalloihin.
- (86) Ruokajakso niinku noit opiskeltii vähä ruokajuttuja ruokakulttuuria sit ne askarteli semmosen aaaa niinku aamupalalautaseen jossa oli kaakaomuki ja huovasta tehty croissant (Teacher 3)
- (87) Kuvakirjoja lukemalla olen saanut levottomimmatkin tyypit rauhoittumaan ja kuuntelemaan. He ovat reagoineet spontaanisti englanniksi (no/yes/toistelemalla sanoja) ja ovat olleet innoissaan siitä, että ymmärtävät jotain. He ovat jopa pyytäneet lukemaan saman kirjan uudestaan heti perään.
- (88) Sadun lukeminen dokumenttikameran avulla, kysymykset luetun tekstin jälkeen, oppilaiden vastaukset sekä keskustelu varhennetulla kielellä. Mahdollisesti lisänä satuun liittyvä värityskuva.
- (89) No esimerkiksi miten me syksyllä vaikka lähettiin, lähettäs liikenteelle niin tota öö, perinteinen englantilainen lastenkirja very hungry caterpillar, niin siitä lähetään lukemaan. Lapset tunnistaa et okei, tää on mmm, me katotaan yleensä filmi siitä, okei toukka ja siitä tulee perhonen ja sit se syö sitä ja tätä ja tuota. Ensimmäisenä me ruvetaan ottamaan sieltä vaikka ne numerot. Opetellaan numerot ykkösestä seiskaan tai ykkösestä vitoseen ja niillä numeroitten kans pelataan. Sit seuraavalla viikolla siihen samaan aiheeseen ku se syö yhtenä päivänä vaikka viis, neljä mansikkaa tai jotaki eli siihen tulee sitte ne strawberries tai apples and oranges and plums. Elikkä sinne tulee ne hedelmät ja nyt me osataanki jo numerot ja hedelmät. Seuraavalla viikolla meille tulee niihin viikonpäivät ja sit meille tulee numerot. Elikkä meillä on se sama aihe johonka tulee eri pelejä ja sit me yhistetään siihen ehkä viime viikon peliin vielä joku uus peli. Elikkä siihen tulee vaikka niinku korttia tai vaikeusastetta lisää. (Teacher 2)
- (90) Jump in -kirjassa oli äänneagenttitehtäviä. Ne innostivat suuresti oppilaita, mistä yllätyin.
- (91) Ensin on se paikoilleen meneminen jokaselle on pantu nimellä paikka ja sitten tuota seuraavaksi opettaja tervehtii toista opettajaa ja sitten tervehtii koko luokkaa eli harjotellaan nää kuulumiset siinä. Sen jälkeen sitten kuoroharjoituksena tää sään kyseleminen että näytän sitä symbolia jotka mä oon valmistanu magneetilla ja laminoinut, että sataako tänään, tuuleeko tänään, onko tänään pakkasta 30 vai onko tänään pakkasta 10 astetta... se sääkartta meillä on se vakituinen. (Teacher 1)
- (92) Myös se että aika paljon tämä varsinkin ykkösen alussa tää pelien kaava on aika samanlainen et siellä on hyvin samantyyppisiä ne pelit että ei aina tartte sen pelin sääntöjä niinkun opetella sillä lailla niin hirveesti että, et päästään toimimaan. Ei tartte selittää, ei tartte puhua vaan päästään tekemään niin se on hirveen tärkeä. Ja just sitten

se myös että, et jokaisesta tarinasta jokaisesta asiasta on yksi tai useampi aina kirja et se on niinku tärkeätä se kirja, ihan konkreettinen kirja on siis myös siinä opetuksessa mukana aina. (Teacher 2)

- (93) Sitte meillä on aina, meillä on ne tietyt leikit, siis ei tietyt leikit vaan et siinä on sit aina tavallaan se leikki osio (Teacher 3)
- (94) Elikkä, aika monet ekaluokkalaiset varsinki keväällä tai kakkosen syksyllä sanoo et, et koulu on tylsää ja ei tuu mitään uutta varsinki jos käyää sillai perinteisesti että mennään kirjan mukaan eteenpäin ja siel ei tuu mitään, mitään muuta että niitä yks plus yks laskuja ja muuta. Elikkä me sillälaila voiaan myös sitten tehdä sitä että sitä enkkua laajennetaan sinne muihinki oppiaineisiin. Ja se on myös semmonen, semmonen mikä on iso etu ja se motivoi tosi paljon lapsia koska siihen pystyy eriyttämään ihan kaiken.
- (95) Meillä voi olla vaikka joku tiedeaihe esimerkiks nyt tää talviaihe tästä jatkuu niin siihen me ruvetaan tekee suomi englantti science juttuna tutkitaan vettä, jätää ja siitä tehään semmonen yhteinen projekti. (Teacher 2)
- (96) Me ollaan tehty sillee että he [luokanopettajat] on esimerkiks valmistellu jossai kuviksessa tai käsitöissä tai jossain tai sit he on jatkanu mitä me on tehty [paikallisessa kielten kehittämishankkeessa] et kyl me sellasta yhteistyötä aika paljonki on tehty. (Teacher 3)