ORAL ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN TEXT-BOOKS

Master's Thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Kielen opetus on siirtynyt kommunikatiiviseen opetukseen ja suullinen kielitaito nähdään nykyään hyvin tärkeänä osana kielen opintoja. Nykyinen Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2015, kuten myös tuleva Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2019 ovat nostaneet suullisen kielitaidon tärkeäksi oppimiskohteeksi kielen opinnoissa. Myös suunnitteilla oleva suullinen koe osana kielten Ylioppilaskokeita on edistänyt suullisen kielitaidon tärkeyttä.

Tässä tutkimuksessa pyrittiin selvittämään vastaavatko lukion kielten oppikirjat opetussuunnitelman vaateisiin suullisen kielitaidon osalta. Aineistona käytettiin Otavan *Insights* ja *Ponjatno!* -oppikirjoja. Tavoitteena oli selvittää, minkälaisia suullisia tehtäviä oppikirjoista löytyi. Tehtävät analysoitiin niiden sisällön ja mitä suullisen kielitaidon osa-alueita niissä harjoitellaan. Tehtävät analysoitiin myös niiden tehtävätyypin mukaan drilleihin, harjoituksiin ja tehtäviin (drills, exercises, tasks). Analysointi tapahtui laadullisen sisällön analyysin keinoin ja tulokset esiteltiin osin määrällisen tutkimuksen menetelmin. Tehtävien kategorioinnissa käytettiin osittain aiemmissa tutkimuksissa käytettyjä kategorioita.

Tutkimuksessa ilmeni, että englannin oppikirjasarjassa osa suullisista tehtävistä olivat varsin kommunikatiivisia ja vaativat vapaata tuottoa. Suuri osa tehtävistä oli kuitenkin harjoituksia, joissa painopisteenä ei ole suullinen kielitaito vaan sanasto- ja rakenneharjoitukset. Venäjän oppikirjassa tehtävät eivät olleet kovin kommunikatiivisia. Suurin tehtävätyyppi oli drilli, joten tehtävät olivat hyvin mekaanisia. Molemmissa kirjasarjoissa muun muassa kommunikaatiostrategiat ja ei-verbaalinen viestintä jäivät varsin vähäiselle huomiolle. Vaikka molemmat kirjasarjat noudattavat Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteiden 2015 määräyksiä koskien suullista kielitaitoa varsin hyvin, molemmissa on vielä kehitettävää.

Asiasanat – Keywords Oral skills, oral activities, textbooks, suullinen kielitaito
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1 INTRODUCTION

Ability to speak a language has been one of the main goals of language learning for a long time. In everyday face-to-face communication, oral skills are a significant asset especially in intercultural contexts. Today, globalization has brought people from different countries closer as they are able to communicate easily. Thus, being able to speak in a foreign language will aid in communication with people from other cultures.

The importance of oral skills in working life and in everyday communication has made oral interaction a visible part of the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary School in Finland (Tergujeff & Kautonen 2017: 16). There have been plans made to include an oral language test to the Matriculation Exams of languages and some piloting of the test in Finnish upper secondary schools has already been done (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2017: 52). Language teaching has been criticized before for the emphasis put on grammar and written language norms. One of the reasons for the focus on written language skills is the influence of the Matriculation Exams that only assess the written language skills together with reading and listening comprehension (Takala 1993). However, Finnish language teaching has for decades now emphasized communication and communicative proficiency. The addition of an oral test to the Matriculation Exams should bring more focus on the teaching of oral skills.

Another possible reason for the focus on written language comes from the dependence on textbooks in foreign language teaching (Tergujeff and Kautonen 2017: 12). The language textbooks have had to adjust to contain more oral activities as the current National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools has raised oral communication and interaction to be one of the central aims for learning languages. There is, however, a difference between oral activities where the focus is on the vocabulary and structure, and oral activities where the aim is to practice oral skills (Tergujeff 2017: 99). Previous studies (Leskinen 2015 and Hietala 2013) on oral activities in language textbooks have revealed that while the textbook series claim to follow the NCC, they are still found lacking in the area of practicing oral skills. The activities mainly practice vocabulary and grammar with few chances of practicing features of oral skills. In oral communication, linguistic knowledge of grammar and vocabulary are certainly important, but having knowledge of oral skills and conversational strategies is even more crucial (Thornbury 2005). To be proficient in oral communication, one needs to be aware what kind of language is appropriate to different contexts.

The aim of this study is to examine if the current language textbooks follow the requirements of oral communication and interaction set in the NCC 2015. Two textbook series were chosen: *Insights* in English and *Ponjatno!* in Russian. These textbook series will give a view on how oral skills are presented in two different level language textbook series. *Insights* is used to teach syllabus A1 English while *Ponjatno!* has been designed for syllabus B3 Russian. Both textbook series also offer a new version for the new NCC 2019 which will replace the current NCC in the fall semester of 2021. I will also analyze the first textbooks of the new series that have been published to see how they follow the new requirements and if there are any changes made compared to the older textbook series.

The present thesis consists of four chapters besides introduction. In chapter 2, the theoretical framework of the study will be discussed. I will present the two documents that guide language education in Finland, also the necessary terminology will be presented and discussed. I will also provide discussion of the role of textbooks in language teaching and what are the typical activities that can be found in language textbooks. In addition, I will present some previous research that have studied textbooks and oral skills. Also, the rationale of this study Chapter 3 will present the methodology of this study. First, the focus of this study and the research questions will be presented. Next, the data of this study will then pe presented as will the chosen method, content analysis. Chapter 4 is the analysis part of this thesis. There I will present the findings I analyzed from the data. The thesis will then conclude with chapter 5.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the key concepts and the framework for teaching oral skills is presented and discussed. First, I will describe what the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools expect from teaching and learning spoken language and oral skills. Second, I will discuss how textbooks are used in language teaching and learning. Third, I will present the three main activity types that can be found in language textbooks. Lastly, I will provide justification for this thesis by discussing the previous research on textbooks and oral skills.

2.1 Framework for teaching oral skills

The two guiding documents that direct teaching of all languages in general upper secondary school in Finland will now be presented and described. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary School (NCC) set the requirements of what is to be taught and how it will be taught in language education. The Council of Europe compiled the CEFR to help European countries to standardize language teaching. The NCC, which has even more influence on language teaching and learning, partly base the language teaching and assessment on the CEFR to conform to the European ideals concerning language education. First, I will describe the CEFR's view on language education and knowledge of spoken language. Then, I will move on to the NCC and present what requirements and aims it has set for language education.

2.1.1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The CEFR was created by the Council of Europe as a tool to help standardize language learning and teaching in Europe. The Framework now has a companion volume which updates the 2001 version to the needs of current language education. However, the updated version asserts that the original CEFR is still valid. The CEFR gives a common set of guidelines that can be used when creating a curriculum for teaching languages. By giving a set of proficiency levels, the CEFR presents a way to assess the learner's knowledge and skills in the language in long term.

(CEFR 2001: 1) The CEFR can also be used to get a reliable source for language testing that can be applied in the countries across Europe. The results and diplomas are thus more comparable between the countries and support the mobility of the European people. (CEFR 2001: 1)

The CEFR emphasizes the social aspect of languages and thus gives special attention to interaction between language users (CEFR 2001: 1, CEFR 2020: 28). The framework wants to implement the real-life needs for language learning into the teaching as interaction between real people might differ greatly from what the language teaching expects. It wants to shift the focus from the technical side of the language to learning how to use the language in different contexts (CEFR 2020: 28-29). It also draws attention to the connections that languages have with each other, in which ways they are similar and how they differ.

The Council of Europe developed the CEFR from their ultimate goal of unifying their members (CEFR 2001: 2). Firstly, they seek to protect the vast cultural and linguistical diversity and to make this diversity into a resource. Secondly, they wish to aid European mobility by diminishing discrimination. This is to be achieved by greater knowledge of European languages and increasing the interaction between European people. Lastly, by having the member states developing their educational policies, they wish to create stronger bonds within the European Union.

The CEFR (2001: 9) sees language learning from an inclusive, action-oriented point of view. The language learners and users are seen as social agents who act in certain situations as individuals and make sense of the context based on their experiences. Thus, the social context is what guides the language user to make sense of the circumstances by using their cognitive, emotional and volitional resources. The CEFR simplifies language learning and use as:

> Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences**. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various **conditions** and under various **constraints** to engage in **language activities** involving **language processes** to produce and/or receive **texts** in relation to **themes** in specific **domains**, activating those **strategies** which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences.
>
> (CEFR 2001: 9)

Competences are defined as all the knowledge, skills, and characteristics the language user possesses and has developed from previous experiences. While communicative language competences are applied when a person needs their linguistic knowledge to act, the general competences are applied in all situations and actions, including ones where language is used.

(CEFR 2001: 9.) Communicative language competences consist of linguistic (e.g. lexical, grammatical, semantic knowledge), sociolinguistic (e.g. knowledge of politeness conventions, dialects, register differences), and pragmatic competences (discourse, functional, design competence) (CEFR 2001: 108-130). There will be further discussion of communicative competence in section 2.2.

The CEFR approaches assessment from a very positive angle, emphasizing what the learner can do in each proficiency level instead of focusing on what knowledge the learner might lack (CEFR 2020:2 8). The CEFR sees language learning as a long-term project. The language learner or user develops their knowledge in all interaction. Language learning is thus an ongoing process.

The CEFR suggests the use of six proficiency levels. The language learners are categorized into three groups based on their knowledge of the language: the basic level (A), independent (B), and proficient (C). The proficiency levels are then further divided into two groups, for example A1 and A2. Table 1 shows the six proficiency levels as presented in the CEFR. It should be noted that the CEFR views texts as both oral and written text.

Table 1. Common Reference Levels: global scale (CEFR 2001: 24)

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and

		explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

The CEFR proposes a new model to the four skills of language knowledge (traditionally seen as reading, writing, speaking, and listening) as it claims that communication is much more complex than what the traditional four skills imply (CEFR 2020: 32-33). The new model consists of reception, production, interaction, and mediation. These four skills are more adequate in presenting the real-life needs of communication. In this work, I will concentrate on skills what is relevant to the production of oral language and communication, mainly production and interaction.

The CEFR divides oral language into to subcategories: oral production and spoken interaction (CEFR 2001: 57-60, 73-82). Oral production is seen as a longer oral text that is received by one or more listeners. The production is not seen as very interactive in nature as the communication is mainly produced by one person. Examples of oral production are a presentation, speech, and a concert where the artist sings. However, spoken interaction is more interactive than oral production. The roles of the speaker and listener change repeatedly as they take turns

in producing language. For example, a conversation, interview, and debate are spoken interaction activities.

The CEFR presents scales of overall oral production (Table 2). Furthermore, the CEFR presents scales for more specific areas of oral production including sustained monologue (describing experience), sustained monologue (putting a case), public announcements, and addressing audiences (CEFR 2001: 58). The scales for these specific areas of oral production can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 2. The CEFR Overall oral production scale (CEFR 2001: 58).

	OVERALL ORAL PRODUCTION
C2	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing well-structured speech with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
C1	Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on complex subjects, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
B2	Can give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.
	Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest, expanding and supporting ideas with subsidiary points and relevant examples.
B1	Can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within his/her field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points.
A2	Can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list.
A1	Can produce simple mainly isolated phrases about people and places.

The CEFR also presents scales of overall oral interaction (Table 3). As with oral production, the CEFR divides spoken interaction also to more specific areas of spoken interaction which are understanding a native speaker interlocutor, conversation, informal discussion, formal discussion and meetings, goal-oriented co-operation, transactions to obtain goods and services, information exchange, interviewing and being interviewed (CEFR 2001: 73). The scales for these specific areas of spoken interaction can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 3. The CEFR Overall spoken interaction scale (CEFR 2001: 74)

	OVERALL SPOKEN INTERACTION
C2	Has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning. Can convey finer shades of meaning precisely by using, with reasonable accuracy, a wide range of modification devices. Can

	backtrack and restructure around a difficulty so smoothly the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.
C1	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions. There is little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies; only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.
B2	Can use the language fluently, accurately and effectively on a wide range of general, academic, vocational or leisure topics, marking clearly the relationships between ideas. Can communicate spontaneously with good grammatical control without much sign of having to restrict what he/she wants to say, adopting a level of formality appropriate to the circumstances.
	Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction, and sustained relationships with native speakers quite possible without imposing strain on either party. Can highlight the personal significance of events and experiences, account for and sustain views clearly by providing relevant explanations and arguments.
B1	Can communicate with some confidence on familiar routine and non-routine matters related to his/her interests and professional field. Can exchange, check and confirm information, deal with less routine situations and explain why something is a problem. Can express thoughts on more abstract, cultural topics such as films, books, music etc.
	Can exploit a wide range of simple language to deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling. Can enter unprepared into conversation on familiar topics, express personal opinions and exchange information on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
A2	Can interact with reasonable ease in structured situations and short conversations, provided the other person helps if necessary. Can manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort; can ask and answer questions and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations.
	Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters to do with work and free time. Can handle very short social exchanges but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.
A1	Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition at a slower rate of speech, rephrasing and repair. Can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.

2.1.2 National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary School

The National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools has been developed a lot during the decade of 2010. The current NCC was created in 2015 and took effect in 2016. However, the Finnish National Agency for Education has already published a new NCC that

will take effect in 1 August 2021. The NCC sets the norm of what will be taught in upper secondary schools that all education providers need to follow. It defines the general content of the subjects and the values that the content aims to convey. It gives importance to a lifelong learning and that the student is an independent, active component in the learning process (NCC 2015: 14). One of the NCCs general objectives is the value given to languages. The student will be guided to make use of their linguistical repertoire. (NCC 2015: 34).

2.1.2.1 Oral language skills in the NCC

The NCC 2015 shows that the aim in learning foreign languages is that the student will have more confidence in their language skills and to use them. It emphasizes the importance of interaction in the global world. Thus, the NCC wants to guide students to use their language skills in their spare time and realize how vast their linguistical repertoire is. (NCC 2015: 107). In foreign languages, the NCC 2015 expects the students to reach the following proficiency levels in reference to the CEFR presented in Table 4. It should be added that, just like the CEFR, the NCC defines text as both spoken and written text.

Table 4. Levels of Language Proficiency Scale to be achieved by upper secondary school students in foreign languages (NCC 2015: 108).

Language and syllabus	Skills in interaction	Skills in interpreting texts	Skills in producing texts
English A	B2.1	B2.1	B2.1
Other languages A	B1.2	B1.2	B1.2
English B1	B1.2	B1.2	B1.2
Other languages B1	B1.1	B1.1	B1.1
English B2	B1.1	B1.1	B1.1
Other languages B2	A2.2	A2.2	A2.2
English B3	B1.1	B1.1	A2.2
Languages of Asia and Africa B3	A2.1	A2.1 (spoken text) A1.3 (written text)	A2.1 (spoken text) A1.3 (written text)
Other languages B3	A2.1	A2.1	A2.1

As the Table 4 shows, the NCC divides language skills to skills in interaction, skills in interpreting texts, and skills in producing texts. The NCC has further divided skills in interaction to three subcategories, such as, interaction in different situations, use of communication strategies, and cultural appropriateness of communication. Due to the NCC defining text as both spoken and written, all these skills are relevant to this study as they all include oral language.

In this thesis, I am interested in syllabus A English and syllabus B3 of other languages, particularly, Russian.

The NCC presents an adaptation of the CEFR created by the Finnish National Agency for Education which specifies what the student can do in each proficiency level (NCC 2015: 240-249). Students of syllabus A English should achieve the proficiency level B2.1 in the three skills by the end of the upper secondary school. This means that they should reach the first stage of independent proficiency. Table 5 illustrates what a student is expected to be able to do in the proficiency level B2.1.

Table 5. Scale of description for language proficiency level B2.1 (NCC 2015: 247).

Skills in interaction	Interaction in different situations	Student can communicate fluently even in new communicative situations that use somewhat conceptual but still articulate language.
	Use of communication strategies	Student can express their opinion and sometimes use standard phrases to take time. Student can negotiate the meaning of complicated matters and concepts. Student can observe their understanding and communication as well as correct their language errors.
	Cultural appropriateness of communication	Student aspires to express their thoughts appropriately and respectively to their communicative partner considering the requirements of different situations.
Skills in interpreting texts	Text interpretation skills	Student understands conceptually and linguistically complex speech. Student can follow extensive speech and complex argumentation as well as express main points of what they heard. Student understands most of conversations happening around them.
Skills in producing texts	Text production skills	Student can express themselves reasonably clearly and correctly about matters

		within their circle of experience using versatile structures and moderately diverse vocabulary including idiomatic and conceptual expressions. Student can also participate in somewhat formal conversations and possesses a moderately diverse vocabulary and complex sentence structures. Pronunciation is clear, primary stress of words is in the correct syllable, and speech consists of some intonation models typical of the target language.

The NCC expects students of syllabus B3 language to reach proficiency level A2.1 by the end of the upper secondary school. This stage is called the first stage of basic proficiency. Table 6 shows what a student should be able to do in the proficiency level A2.1.

Table 6. Scale of description for language proficiency level A2.1 (NCC 2015: 243).

Skills in interaction	Interaction in different situations	Student can exchange thoughts or knowledge in familiar and everyday situations as well as occasionally maintain communicative situation.
	Use of communication strategies	Student participates increasingly in communication relying less in non-linguistical expressions. Student needs to ask for repetition or clarification quite frequently and can somewhat apply expressions used by their communicative partner in their own communication
	Cultural appropriateness of communication	Student can manage short social situations and can use most frequent polite greetings and forms of address as well as express politely requests, invitations, propositions, apologies, and answer these.

Skills in interpreting texts	Text interpretation skills	Student understands easy, familiar vocabulary and expressions, and texts consisting of clear speech. Student understands main points of predictable texts consisting of familiar vocabulary. Student can achieve basic deductions supported by context.
Skills in producing texts	Text production skills	Student can talk about everyday, concrete matters that are important to them using simple sentences and concrete vocabulary. Student knows easily predictable basic vocabulary and many central structures. Student can apply some basic rules of pronunciation in expressions that have not been practiced.

The NCC (2015: 108) states that the foreign languages are to be assessed according to the general and subject specific objectives. Moreover, the students will be given feedback on their skills in different areas of language proficiency. The common reference levels presented in the CEFR, that have been adapted to the NCCs needs, are used as a tool for assessment. The NCC goes on to say that the common reference levels are used more extensively later in the studies as at the beginning the assessment is more focused on the student's ability to develop their language learning skills. (NCC 2015: 108). Specifically, in the course 8 in syllabus A and in the course 6 in syllabus B1, spoken language is assessed with an oral test provided by the Finnish National Agency for Education and with other competence demonstrations completed during the course (NCC 2015: 229).

As already shown above, foreign languages are separated into different syllabi. For example, English is almost always studied as a syllabus A language which is the most extensive syllabus since the learning begins in Grade 1 in basic education (previously in Grade 3). Syllabus B3, however, is the shortest syllabus and does not have as high a proficiency level aim, as syllabus A. The learning of syllabus B3 languages starts in the upper secondary school.

According to the statistics of Vipunen (n.d. a) and Official Statistics of Finland (OSF n.d. a), English has been the most popular choice for the syllabus A language in the upper secondary

school by a huge margin for the whole 2010s. Over 90 percent of the upper secondary school students prefer English to other languages as their syllabus A language, compared to the second most common choice of Swedish that is chosen by circa 7 percent of the students. In the 2010s, while English is clearly the most popular choice, it has lost some students to other languages. In 2010, English was chosen by 30,497 students who had completed their studies which is 93,1 percent and in 2017 it was chosen by 28,429 students which is 92,8 percent.

The statistics of Vipunen (n.d. b) and OSF (n.d. b) also show that during the 2010s, Russian has been the fourth most popular choice for a syllabus B3 language. However, it can be noted that it is the only one of the four most common syllabus B3 languages that is on the rise in the options for a syllabus B3. The others (Germany, Spanish, and French) have lost students each year while more and more students study Russian. In 2010, Russian was chosen by 613 students who had completed their studies which is 1,9 percent, compared to 2017 when Russian was chosen by 839 students which is 2,7 percent. In 2017, Russian was chosen by more students than French, so it became the third most popular language for a syllabus B3 language.

The NCC describes what is to be taught in the language syllabi. In the compulsory courses of syllabus A English the emphasis is on the development of the learning skills, development of language skills, and how to act in different interactions. In addition, the compulsory courses deepen the understanding of different text types and how the language can be used in acquiring knowledge. It is also stated that oral and written interaction are practiced diversely in all courses. (NCC 2015: 110). Further, in the optional courses, the language skills are developed for more specific purposes. The students will develop their knowledge of interpreting and producing text (both spoken and written). In particular, course 8 is dedicated to oral language. The course will focus on improving oral language skills and the ability to understand and produce spoken language. (NCC 2015: 111). The subject specific objectives for English as a syllabus A language are that the student:

- develops as a user of English and as an agent in a culturally diverse world in local, international, European, and global communities
- understands the significance and role of English as the language of international communication
- can assess the sufficiency of their own skills from the point of view of further studies
- can plan their language studies for the future needs of their work life and internationalization
- gets experience in reading, interpreting, and handle more extensive English texts

- can proportion their skills according to the stage B2.1 of the developing language proficiency level scale, and to assess the development of their skills and develop the skills even further

(NCC 2015: 109-110)

As opposed to syllabus A in upper secondary school, a syllabus B3 language is usually a new language for the student. The learning starts from the basics and the student will be introduced to the new language and culture. A syllabus B3 language is always an optional subject and, thus, the courses are optional. The NCC (2015: 117) states that at the beginning the language teaching focuses on oral interaction and smaller written tasks that are easily related to those oral interactions. Even though oral language is practiced in all courses, the amount of written language will be increased gradually. The aim is to develop language skills for everyday interaction. Moreover, the teaching will concentrate on good pronunciation throughout the studies. (NCC 2015: 117). The subject specific objectives for syllabus B3 language are that the student:

- finds increasing their linguistical repertoire meaningful
- develops as a user of the target language and as an agent in a culturally diverse world in local, international, European, and global communities
- can proportion their skills according to the stage A2.1 (other languages) or B1.1/A2.1 (English) of the developing language proficiency level scale, and to assess the development of their skills and develop the skills even further

(NCC 2015: 117)

As already mentioned above, the new NCC 2019 will replace the 2015 version in the fall of 2021. According to the Finnish National Agency for Education, the education of upper secondary schools will be facing some reforms on structural level while the content of what and how to teach and assess is nearly same as in the 2015 version. The NCC (2019: 10) states that the most prominent changes are that the students will earn credits after completing a course. A student will need 150 credits, of which 20 credits are to be elective studies, to graduate. The compulsory studies will be structured into modules worth 1 to 4 credits. These modules can be constructed for one subject or in collaboration with other subjects. However, if the study module consists of more than one subject, it will be assessed separately for each subject (NCC 2019: 10). The general aims of the new NCC (2019: 9-10) are to improve student well-being and to give more guidance in the studies. The reforms are also supposed to guide more students to higher education. Moreover, the studies need to reflect the real-life needs for education, therefore, the studies seek to generate transversal competence. Transversal competence can be

divided into six different competences. These include welfare, interaction, multidisciplinary and creativity, societal, ethical and environmental, and global and cultural competence.

Regarding foreign languages, the new NCC (2019: 174-177) aims to increase language awareness and multilingual competence. The students are encouraged to use their linguistic skills and to appreciate all linguistic knowledge. Moreover, the general aims are cultural and linguistic diversity, study skills, and skills in interaction, interpreting texts, and producing text. It is interesting to note that the new NCC (finally) states that the aim is not to achieve a native like skill level. Instead, the aim is to increase skills in constructive interaction and reciprocal understanding.

The objectives of English as a syllabus A language are close to the ones stated in the current NCC. The courses are changed into modules to reflect and include the concept of transversal competence and the overall aims of the new NCC (2019: 180-185). However, the new NCC describes the aims of the module ENA8 (oral language course) in more detail (NCC 2019: 184-185.) Students will practice oral language skills diversely, such as, spoken interaction, knowledge of different language variants, and oral text production that needs to be prepared. In addition, the aim is to practice negotiation, taking their communicative partner into consideration and appreciating them.

As with syllabus A English, the aims of syllabus B3 languages have not been fundamentally changed for the new NCC. The objectives have been directed to the overall aims of upper secondary school education. The increase of language awareness and linguistical repertoire are still the most important aims in teaching foreign languages as syllabus B3 (NCC 2019: 193). One of the more major changes is the special emphasis put on oral language skills in syllabus B3 languages. The beginning of the language teaching concentrates on oral language skills with only small written interaction tasks included. It is mentioned that after Module 3, the student can get a certificate of their oral language skills (NCC 2019: 194).

The guidelines of teaching oral skills have now been described. Next, the key concepts of teaching spoken language are discussed to determine what should be taken into account when teaching spoken language.

2.2 Communicative proficiency

Chomsky (1988:4) divided knowledge of language into competence and performance. He defines competence as the knowledge of grammar, or the rules of language. Performance is defined as how the speaker uses the language in real situations. Chomsky (1988:3) feels that a language user is expected to speak in an ideal interactional situation where they know the language perfectly, grammar and vocabulary, and everyone around them has a homogenous way of speaking. He states (1988:3) that the reality is, however, rougher. The language user will make errors in using the language, they get distracted, they bend the grammar rules. All this is showcased in performance as it reveals how the language user actually uses the language. Knowledge of grammar and rules of language is not the only indicator of knowledge of language, Chomsky (1988) shows that knowledge of language needs the communicative aspect to indicate the actual knowledge.

Chomsky's theory of competence and performance was criticized by Hymes (1972) for its lack of sociocultural aspect. Hymes (1972: 271-272) points out that social rules of what is appropriate to do and say affect the communicative situation greatly. Chomsky (1988:) also notes the appropriateness of language but Hymes (1972: 271-272) counters this by claiming that Chomsky only focuses on the cognitive side of language such as grammatical errors or defective attention spans. According to Hymes (1972: 271-272), Chomsky does not explain how the social world affects the interaction. Even though Hymes focused on first language acquisition and on communication in a setting where all participants spoke the same language and did not consider communication in intercultural contexts (Byram 1997: 9), it can be gathered (Hymes 1972: 279) that people judge others based on their learned cultural norms. So, playing by, and being aware of, especially in intercultural situations, the social rules is essential if one is concerned with receiving a positive review.

Due to his criticism of Chomsky, Hymes (1972) coined the term communicative competence. He (1972: 281-286) describes four questions (or variables) that summarize communicative competence: whether (and to what degree) something is possible, feasible, appropriate, and performed. Whether something is possible refers to the rules of language, the grammar. Feasibility provides a psycholinguistic aspect and how one processes different language instances. Appropriateness takes into account the context. Speech can be grammatically appropriate but also socioculturally. Appropriateness utilizes tacit knowledge of culture. Lastly, performance,

in this case, refers to whether something is done. A language user might choose not to say something even if it has the requirements of the three other questions above.

Hymes' view on communicative competence interested many linguists (see for example Canale and Swain 1980, Van Ek 2000, Bachman 1990, Wiemann and Backlund 1980) and was further developed to include intercultural contexts. Byram (1997: 7-8) explains that Hymes' ideas were adopted by foreign language teaching and learning. However, he criticizes this as Hymes composed his notion of communicative competence in the context of first language acquisition and it suggests that the learners should compare their knowledge to the native speakers even though the communicative situation is different in intercultural context.

The attributes of communicative competence have been described in various ways to include the context of foreign language learning. Canale and Swain (1980) were some of those who adapted the Hymesian concept of communicative competence for foreign language learning. They conclude (1980: 28) that grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence are the base for communication teaching in a foreign language. They (1980:29) put emphasis on exploiting learners' experience of communicating in their first language to the use of the foreign language. The learners' previous experience will guide them in choosing the grammatical features that are most likely used by native speakers, appropriate for the interactional context, and reasonably complex to their skill level. These should be taught in meaningful communicative tasks that the learner is probably going to participate in in real life. Canale and Swain (1980: 30-31) are also especially interested in the strategic competence and how the learner will cope in communicative situations where they compensate for errors in grammar use and/or sociocultural rules. They stress the importance of the teacher being capable to create meaningful communicative situations where the learners will be able to practice their strategic skills.

Van Ek (2000) also has his own take on communicative competence in foreign language learning, however, he calls it communicative ability. By combining several theories, he (2000: 31) presents six competences that constitute communicative ability: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic, sociocultural, and social competence. Linguistic competence (2000: 33) means that the language user is able to produce and decipher utterances that follow the linguistic rules of the language. Sociolinguistic competence (2000: 35) concerns the context of the interactional situation. Van Ek separates linguistic competence and sociolinguistic competence by determining that linguistic competence deals with the conventional meaning or the most

basic meaning that a native speaker would give to an utterance on its own, while sociolinguistic competence gives the utterance a situational meaning. When a learner chooses strategies to produce or decipher texts (written or oral), they are exploiting discourse competence (2000: 41). Strategic competence (2000: 49) means the ability to handle errors in communicative situations. Sociocultural competence (2000: 51) refers to having a certain frame of reference that comes from culture. Everyone is shaped by their environment and experiences, and they interact with that frame of mind. The competence comes from being able to expand this frame of mind to include others. Lastly, Van Ek (2000: 57) describes social competence. This consists of the skill, willingness, and motivation to interact with others. Social competence also deals with the language learner's personality, how self-confident and empathic they are.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by the Council of Europe (CEFR 2001: 13) divides communicative competence into three competences: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence. Linguistic competence consists of knowledge of language, such as, vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and orthography. Sociolinguistic competence deals with sociocultural conditions and the notion of appropriateness. Lastly, pragmatic competence is defined as the practical use of language knowledge. This includes flexibility, turn-taking, thematic development, cohesion and coherence, propositional precision, and fluency. It is emphasized (CEFR 2020: 129) that these competences are always influencing all language use together not separately. (CEFR 2001: 13-14, 108-130, CEFR 2020: 129-142.)

Taylor (1988: 148-149) brings into attention how the term competence has been completely misunderstood since Chomsky brought it up. He points out that Hymes and others who developed his theory of communicative competence further have all misinterpreted Chomsky's definition of competence. He (1988: 151) claims that competence in Chomsky's work only means knowledge of language rules and grammar. Chomsky does not mean the ability to use these rules. He (1988: 149) asserts that *knowledge* and *ability to use knowledge* are different concepts. Much of Hymes' criticism of Chomsky, by claiming that there is no room for appropriateness and knowledge of sociocultural language rules, is thus invalid (Taylor 1988: 148). According to Taylor (1988: 149, 166), Hymes widened the meaning of competence so much that he actually changed its meaning to proficiency. He (1988: 166-167) prefers the term communicative proficiency. He places proficiency between competence and performance, or in other

words, competence is knowledge of grammar, proficiency is the ability to use grammar rules, and performance employs proficiency by putting the ability of grammar use in action.

Hall (2019) agrees with Taylor (1988) that the term competence creates too much confusion in the linguistical field due to the juxtaposition of the Chomskyan and Hymesian view of the term. He suggests/proposes terms repertoire or expertise to replace competence. He (2019: 86) explains that since the 1990s, language knowledge of foreign language learners has been described with an assortment of multiple competences that derive from different linguistical resources. Language knowledge is thus better described with a repertoire of competences that the learner draws from when using a language (Hall 2019: 86-87). In addition, Hall (2019: 87) believes that the term repertoire works better than competence in characterizing the dynamic nature of language learning as experiences have a different amount of influence on one's life. A language learner might lose some factors of their repertoire while keeping others for their whole life. It is implied that competence is the opposite. It is seen as a more stable kind of knowledge, for instance, if one learns something, then they will know it for always and not forget it. (Hall 2019, 87). While Hall concurs with Taylor that competence is a problematic term, he (2019: 87) also criticizes the use of the term proficiency. In his opinion, it is too generally used in describing language skills and does not work in a real-life context as well as expertise, or the knowledge that language users gain from their social groups.

Today, language learning and teaching quite widely use the term communicative proficiency. Perhaps one of the more authoritative users of communicative proficiency is the CEFR. The CEFR (2020: 32) describes language knowledge as proficiency. Communication is highly present in the CEFR's definition of proficiency: "the ability to perform communicative language activities ("can do …") while drawing upon both general and communicative language competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic) and activating appropriate communicative strategies" (CEFR 2020: 34). Communicative proficiency is especially used in the context of assessment. The CEFR, for example, has a chapter on language proficiency assessment. In their view (CEFR 2001: 38), a positive approach to assessment is more productive than a negative approach, or in other words focusing on what the learner is able to do rather than what the learner lacks or cannot do. Thus, the CEFR (2001: 183-184) brings up proficiency assessment which means the evaluation of what the learner can do with the language in real-life situation. This goes along with their notion of communicative language learning which has its base in real-life needs. In proficiency assessment, a learner performs with the language knowledge

they have. The CEFR (2001: 187) reminds that one can never truly evaluate different competences alone, what is evaluated is the learner's performance. Performance is therefore language proficiency. The CEFR (2001: 187) also ties proficiency to communicative competence by stating that proficiency is competence in action.

The term communicative proficiency has now been explained. While communicative proficiency is the goal of spoken language learning, proficiency in spoken language is obtained with the help of oral skills. Next, I will discuss what is meant by oral skills and how they are taken into account in teaching and assessment.

2.3 Oral Skills

Oral communication is usually termed as one of the most important goals of foreign language teaching. To be able to orally communicate and develop communicative proficiency, one needs knowledge of oral skills. Even the students of foreign languages mark spoken language skills as their aim in learning the target language (Takala 1993). While language has always been taught mainly through written language, in the recent decades the importance of the spoken language has been getting noticed due to the globalization and international mobility, but the emphasis is still on the written language. However, there have been plans made to include oral language testing in the Finnish Matriculation exams in the future, thus, the significance of oral language skills has been getting noticed and oral skills are now taught more systematically. In this section, I will discuss features that are specific to oral skills. Then I will present some discussions on how to teach and assess oral skills.

2.3.1 Features of oral language

Spoken language is temporal. It happens here and now. A listener hears the text at the same time as it is produced. Due to this, Tiittula (1992: 19) explains, the speaker is under a lot of pressure to plan and produce at the same time. The speaker needs to monitor and repair their speech constantly while also taking notice of the listener's reactions and alter the speech on terms with the received feedback. Unlike in written language, the repairs the speaker makes in their speech stay visible and they cannot be erased. The speaker can and will, however, start over and use other strategies to mask the errors. Tiittula (1992: 19) adds that spoken language

is temporal also in the sense that it gets forgotten quickly. The speaker needs to work within the parameters of the listener's working memory. There is also a chance that the speaker might forget what they were about to say. In the case of a foreign language learner, the production of speech and interpretation of what they have heard is slower than what a native speaker is capable of since a learner is not as familiar with the culture and context.

Spoken language relies on context. The situation where the interaction happens directs speech. The genre of communication has its own demands on the language appropriate to the situation. Nunan (1991: 44) describes genres as the types of function of the communicative situation. For example, people use language differently in a casual conversation and in a public speech event, and telling a joke differs from telling a story. Different genres have certain structures and features that make it easy to tell the difference between them. However, genres can differ culturally. Thornbury (2005: 32) adds that the more every day genres tend to follow similar structures and are, thus, less culturally determined. It should be noted that a conversation usually does not include only one genre. The genres and the functions of the communicative situation change repeatedly as, for example, someone is telling a story and it turns into a debate whether that is what happened at all (Tiittula 1992: 110). Furthermore, the interlocutors add context to the communicative situation. In face-to-face conversations all interlocutors have an effect on what is said and how it is said. The relationship of the interlocutors is part of the context (Luoma 2011: 26). A conversation between friends is quite different compared to a situation where the interlocutors are not familiar with each other or if the other has a much higher status. Luoma (2011: 26-27) states that familiarity of the interlocutors with each other, social distance between the interlocutors, relative power of the interlocutors, and mutual knowledge, or the knowledge gap, between the interlocutors are all features of context that affect the communicative situation. For instance, a person would speak and act differently with their boss and their friend, and speak differently to a family member and a doctor. Tiittula (1992: 38) points out that context also helps with explicitness of expressions as the context can supplement the speaker's intentions.

Context also influences what is appropriate language use in communicative situations. Tiittula (1992: 52) comments that people usually only notice appropriateness when the social norms are broken. She explains that social norms direct the whole communicative situation. Here, the genre of the situation affects how much people can deviate from the norms. The more formal the situation, the more people avoid breaking the rules of the social norms. The rules affect

what people talk about, how and when they should take a turn in speaking, and additionally, how politeness is expressed in utterances. International communicative situations are especially challenging as social norms and appropriateness (Tiittula 1992: 52, Byram 1997, Moeschler 2004). This may cause misunderstandings as deviation from the rules is usually interpreted as a negative personality trait rather than just ignorance of the target language's cultural norms.

Emotion is clearly present in spoken language. Tiittula (1992: 99) states that a speaker constantly conveys their attitudes in what they are saying. Emotion is also displayed through different means such as exclamations, swearing, or even with the use of pet names. Prosody and non-verbal communication bring their own aspects on expressing emotion, and as Tiittula (1992: 99) notes, these are not easily brought to written text as effectively as in spoken language.

Spoken and written language are used for different purposes. According to Tiittula (1992: 11), the most common use for spoken language is casual conversation and written language is used when one needs to address a large audience, in media for example. However, Tiittula (1992: 11) reminds that the line between spoken and written language is not always clear. Some spoken texts, such as a monolog in a lecture or a public speech, closely resemble written text as the speaker has most likely carefully prepared the speech beforehand and has probably practiced more complex sentences than usually is used in spoken language. On the other hand, some written texts also have similarities with spoken language. For example, text messages use written language quite freely and do not use as complex sentences as written language typically prefers. In addition, different typographical effects and emojis bring non-verbal aspects to the written language (Tiittula 1992: 12-13).

Spoken language, in the case of everyday language use and conversational situations, tends to be syntactically simpler than written language. Brown and Yule (1987: 4) show that spoken language is full of unsubordinated phrases that are related to each other in how they are said. Thornbury (2005: 4) calls this an add-on strategy. Speakers tend to put together short phrases and clauses, instead of combining the clauses in complex grammar as in written language. In addition, as Brown and Yule (1987: 4) explain, these clauses are related with pauses and rhythm that indicate what clusters of words are supposed to be decoded together. Here it should be noted that the syntax of spoken language differs in monologues and more formal situations. The longer spoken texts tend to be pre-rehearsed and can, thus, include more complex

structures. (Brown & Yule 1987: 7). Luoma (2011: 16-17) states that the vocabulary in everyday spoken language is simpler and more general than in written language. The expressions do not need to be as precise as in written language because speaking happens in a certain context and what is being spoken about is somehow familiar to all interlocutors. Users of spoken language tend to use a lot of pronouns, conjunctions, deictic expressions, pragmatic materials that are also called discourse particles, moreover, spoken language is full of incomplete sentences and false starts. The use of pronouns and deictic expressions comes from the importance of context. People tend to speak about their own life and what they have experienced, which, according to Tiittula (1992: 56), is manifested in the use of first person and pronouns. In addition, pronouns are related to explicitness, it is usually enough of a reference to use a pronoun rather that describe the person explicitly. When the interlocutors have a conversation face-to-face and most likely have a mutual understanding of what each other knows, they do not need to describe things intricately, they can point to an object and say *that over there*. (Tiittula 1992: 56). Conjunctions are used to relate clauses and utterances together to save the speaker from making complex structures (Tiittula 1992: 57.) Pragmatic materials, or particles, are small, semantically quite empty words that are used to structure discourse (Tiittula 1992: 60-61, Archer et. al 2012). For example, a speaker of English could start their turn with a discourse particle such as *well* or *you know* to tie the expression into the previous utterance. In Russian, they might use *вот* or *так*. Tiittula (1992: 65) notes that learners of foreign language use much less discourse particles compared to native speakers which makes them sound less fluent and unnatural. She (1992: 65) states that even though discourse particles are central in spoken language grammar, they are ignored in foreign language teaching as the teaching usually concentrates on written language norms and discourse particles are not considered to be part of grammar in written language. Fillers are part of the pragmatic materials. Their purpose is to fill pauses without bringing much meaning to the utterance (Tiittula 1992: 73). This is part of fluency as long pauses in speech are disrupting so they should be filled to the best of the speaker's ability. Tiittula (1992: 75) claims that the ability to keep talking even if one would not have anything to say makes the speaker seem fluent. Fillers are used to indicate that the speaker wants to continue but is in need of a short planning break (Brown and Yule 1987: 30). Common fillers are *um, uh*, and *you know*. Luoma (2011: 18) adds that in reality native speech is full of these expressions, but they are not appreciated in oral language tests. Tiittula (1992: 75) agrees with Luoma but reminds that few people are so fluent as to be able to speak without some form of hesitations or fillers. Due to the short planning time, speakers usually start with

a certain structure but later realize that it is not suitable (Tiittula 1992: 70). This leads to incomplete sentences as they may decide on another structure and start the utterance again.

Pronunciation is also part of oral skills. A learner of a foreign language needs to learn how to pronounce words to able to speak it. Tergujeff and Kautonen (2017: 14) emphasize the importance of pronunciation. They state that pronunciation is an important part of message transmission as it affects fluency, interaction, and accuracy. Languages have different sound systems that can complicate understanding when, for example, a Finnish person would attempt to pronounce English or Russian with the standards of the Finnish sound system. However, Brown and Yule (1987: 26) remind that perfect native-like pronunciation is quite impossible to attain, and it is not even necessary. Especially with a language like English that is used so widely in the world, with many different standards, it would be difficult to set a criterion on what the learners would be judged against (Luoma 2011: 9). Luoma (2011: 10) proposes that a more realistic approach to pronunciation is needed. She would judge learners on basis of comprehensibility that would take into account the native standards but would be more merciful for the learners. She (2011: 11) argues that other features of use of voice in communication, such as intonation, stress, and rhythm, affect comprehensibility than the ability to pronounce individual sounds. Tiittula (1992: 21) also believes that prosody is central to comprehensibility. Stress and intonation can be used to change or amplify the message. They also structure conversation as the speaker can indicate the wish to end a turn using just intonation. (Tiittula 1992: 22-23). Tiittula (1992: 23) claims that features of prosody differ from culture to culture. Even if they are quite universal, they are still used in conventionally different ways, and thus can create problems in interpreting messages as the interlocutors will be using their own conventions in decoding them. For example, especially in Russian, the placement of stress in words is important for the interpretation, the meaning of words can change with stressing a certain vowel (за́мок = castle and замо́к = lock). However, the context can sometimes salvage the situation if the listener realizes that the word was simply pronounced wrong.

2.3.2 Oral skills in interaction

Reciprocity is an important feature of spoken language. Although a speaker is in the spotlight, a listener has a significant role. The speech is addressed to them and they will need to participate by signaling if they heard and understood the message. This kind of feedback also includes

signals of their opinion on the message and if they want to get a turn or want the speaker to keep talking. After getting the feedback, the speaker can then keep explaining or yield the turn to speak. Tiittula (1992: 113) explains that feedback can be non-verbal in the case of a nod or shaking a head. Verbal feedback can be very short, for example, *uh-huh*, *okay, right*, or a bit longer such as *that's right*, *I don't believe that*. She adds that even silence in certain situations can be interpreted as feedback. Thornbury (2005: 8) points out that feedback affects even speakers who are producing a monolog. Bygate (1987: 13) notes that paying attention to feedback is necessary, as otherwise the speaker might seem arrogant or stupid. Feedback can also be used to observe the listener's reactions on appropriateness (Tiittula 1992: 71). The speaker can accommodate the listener's reactions by correcting the utterance to be more mellow if they estimate that their message was too harsh or inappropriate for the situation as usually the listener's reaction shows what they truly feel of the utterance. They can also make the message more specific in the case of the listener indicating that they are confused with the meaning of the message.

Negotiation of meaning is part of the reciprocity in communication, it also ties into giving feedback. Bygate (1987: 22, 27) states that negotiation of meaning happens when problems of understanding arise in communication. The listener confirms that they have understood the message, that the speaker is trying to express, appropriately. The participants need to make sure that they have achieved mutual understanding. While in written language the writer needs to be explicit enough as the reader cannot confirm that they have understood in any way, in spoken interaction, the speaker and listener are able to ask for confirmation and make sure they have understood. The speaker assumes what knowledge the listener already has and chooses his expressions accordingly. (Bygate 1987: 29-30). By taking note of the feedback given by the listener, the speaker is able to confirm that the message has been understood as it was intended, or they can alter the message and add more explicit expressions in the case of the listener signaling their confusion (Bygate 1987: 32). Tiittula (1992: 96-97), however, warns against excessive explicitness as it can change the interpretation of the message. For example, a too explicit answer to a question (*Have you brought your coat? Yes, I have brought my coat*) can make the answer seem cranky, even if it was not intended to be so. She further explains that foreign language learners tend to use excessively explicit language and fully structured phrases while native speakers would be more implicit and vague. This may derive from the

influence of written language in oral language teaching and from the speaker's wish to appear more advanced in their knowledge of the language.

Turn-taking is an important part of the dialogic nature of conversation. The participants take turns in holding the floor and use certain signals to show their wish to take or end a turn (Sacks et. al 1974). Sacks et al. (1974) go on to say that, usually, speakers talk one at a time. There will most likely occur some overlap but not for a prolonged period of time. Turn-taking situation is quite a bit more complex than one would think. Thornbury (2005: 9) explains that a person will need to have skills in keeping their turn, recognize when someone is showing signs of wanting a turn, giving up the floor to them, show that they are listening, and then recognize an appropriate moment to get another turn. According to Tiittula (1992: 128), interlocutors are experts in coordination and co-operation as a listener can quite well predict the organization of the conversation from communication cues, they can anticipate what the speaker is going to say and when their turn will end. Similarly, the speaker can predict when the listener wants to have a turn.

Turn-taking is also a skill of management of interaction. Managing interaction, according to Bygate (1987: 36) includes, besides turn-taking, agenda management. While turn-taking refers to who speaks and for how long, agenda management conducts the content and topic of the conversation. A topic is always proposed by one interlocutor, others then decide if they approve of the topic and they may continue to converse about it, then, someone offers another topic which is then accepted or declined. Topics normally change swiftly in casual conversation with one interlocutor getting an idea for a topic from something that was said previously. As mentioned above, the topic should always be interesting to all interlocutors and appropriate for the situation or it might be declined.

It is generally thought that a good speaker is fluent, and it is used as one of the criteria in spoken language assessment (Salo-Lee 1991: 7). Hildén (2000: 175) defines fluency as the flowing of speech without too many disruptive pauses**.** Thornbury (2005: 6) explains features of fluency further. Fluency can be enhanced or at least a speaker can appear to be fluent by adding automaticity into the speech production. A speaker can use memorized phrases that are suitable for the current discourse. This adds automaticity into the production of speech and leaves more time for planning the more unfamiliar phrases. Thornbury (2005: 6) highlights that all this is possible with practice. If the interaction situation is completely unfamiliar, the more likely it is

that the speaker will seem inarticulate. Thornbury (2005: 28) points out that excessive monitoring of speech in hopes of not making errors slows down the speech production so much that it can affect fluency. Another feature that affects fluency is pausing, or rather, the placement of pauses (2005: 7). Pauses that support fluency happen at the intersection of clauses, or after meaningful units. Pauses that have a negative effect on fluency happen in the middle of related groups of word as they interrupt understanding and make the speaker sound hesitant. Thornbury (2005: 7) also adds that a fluent speaker is able to fit more words between pauses than a hesitant speaker. In accordance with Hildén and Thornbury, Tiittula (1992: 25) mentions that correctness and fluency are not the same in spoken language, while correctness greatly affects fluency in written text, in spoken language pausing is more important. A fluent speaker is allowed to make grammatical errors and, respectively, grammatically correct speaker can be inarticulate in terms of fluency. Speakers are also adept at noticing errors in their own speech and constantly repair any errors they identify. To make themselves seem more fluent, the speaker uses different production strategies to disguise the errors in speech production.

The visible nature of errors in spoken language makes it seem chaotic from the written language point of view. In written text, the writer only presents the finished product that has no marks of the repairs that have been made. In spoken text, the strategies to mask errors are important for production, understanding, and interaction (Tiittula 1992: 68). Bygate (1987: 42-47) calls these strategies learner strategies of communication. They are used by speakers to help them when problems arise in speech production. He includes two main strategies: achievement strategies and reduction strategies. These strategies are then divided further into sub-strategies. Achievement strategies are used mainly when a speaker wants to compensate their lack of target language knowledge by improvising. In the case of not remembering certain vocabulary, for example, a speaker can try guessing strategies by trying to create a word by using their first language as a resource. This could happen by foreignizing a word from their first language and pronouncing it by the target language standards. They can try to borrow a first language word or just literally translate it in the hopes that the listener will recognize it. They might also attempt to come up with a whole new word, for example layer house to mean apartment building. Another achievement strategy is paraphrasing. The speaker can try to come up with another way of saying what they want to express. They can use an alternative expression, a synonym, or a more general word. If these strategies do not help, they can opt for co-operative strategies and enlist their listener's help by asking for help or a translation by gesturing and pointing. Reduction strategies, on the other hand, are used when the speaker just wants to avoid making

errors altogether. The speaker can avoid complex structures by using alternative options but as Bygate (1987: 47) points out, they will probably end up altering their meaning. They can also just leave the message incomplete and start over or fall silent. Thornbury (2005: 30) would add a discourse strategy in which the speaker borrows parts of the previous speaker's expression to save time for their own speech production and also to seem more fluent. Brown and Yule (1987: 9) discuss repetitions further, by repeating what the previous speaker has just said, the current speaker indicate that they are still on the same topic and understood the previous message. They can also repeat their own utterances to fill up the time to come up with their intended message. Thornbury (2005: 30) remarks that relying too much on strategies can have a negative effect on the linguistic development. Even if communication strategies are useful in problematic situations, learners of foreign language should still focus on the development of their linguistic skills so that they can eventually survive communicative situations without using communication strategies too much. However, communication strategies are still seen as an essential and natural part of spoken language (Bachman 1990).

Spoken language is expressed through multiple channels, not only verbally (Tiittula 1992: 38). Speakers use non-verbal communication to support, extend, and replace their expressions. Argyle (1975) divides non-verbal communication into eight features: facial expression, gaze, gestures and bodily movements, posture, bodily contact, spatial behaviour, appearance that includes clothes and physique, and non-verbal vocalizations. For example, facial expressions such as smiling, or expression of shock can be used as feedback to the speaker, and appearance such as clothes can be used to indicate a status or being a part of a certain group. Argyle (1975: 50) adds that non-verbal communication can signal a different message than what they are saying out loud. This may cause confusion as the listener does not know which channel to believe. There are also always two parties who interpret the non-verbal signal. According to Argyle (1975: 56), the signal means something to the speaker, but it can mean something else to the listener. Tiittula (1992: 45) comments that this is quite typical in international context. Non-verbal communication can differ culturally and may cause misunderstandings if the interlocutors are from different cultures and not aware what is appropriate in the other participant's culture, for example greetings and the physical distance between interlocutors differ from culture to culture.

People judge others depending on how they use spoken language. People always wish to be seen as intelligent and competent (Bygate 1987: 41). However, speaking in a different language

with people from different culture can influence what others think of the speaker. The speaker's skills in spoken language can determine if their wish comes true or not. According to Luoma (2011: 9-10), people are unconsciously making judgements of others based on their voice, they also usually strive to express some type of image of themselves to others by their way of speaking. People can talk in a way that is typically used in a certain social group to show that they want to be identified as part of that group. For instance, in a culture where an emphasis is given to differences of social classes, someone from a working-class background might imitate the speech of a higher social class member to be seen as part of that higher class. Other features that can be identified from voice is the gender, age, personality, and where they come from. Halonen (2017: 77) states that accent is one of the most distinguishable traits in the voice that people use to judge others, especially if one is a native speaker or not. She (2017: 77) explains that usually a strong foreign accent is seen as a negative trait (in some cases also positive) and people who speak with a strong accent are seen as unpleasant. Especially when making judgements on a speaker's social class or education, people with strong accent are unconsciously judged to be less educated and originating from a lower social class (Halonen 2017: 79). In foreign language teaching, Halonen (2017: 79) suggests, students should be made aware of the diversity of voices and emphasize that everyone has an accent when they talk. She explains that tolerance of other accents starts from within; when a student realizes that they also have peculiarities in their voice, they might not be as eager to judge others. She (2017: 82) adds that prosody influences fluency and understandability more than accent as listeners tend to tolerate accented speech more if it is fluent in other ways. Halonen (2017: 76) states that people who are native to the target language also have different ways to speak, such as different dialects. Brown and Yule (1987: 7-8) take into consideration the differences in the spoken language of adults and adolescents. They believe that it would be quite odd to have young foreign language users who speak in a typically adult language. Young people speak with less formality than adults as they have not been in situations where the language should follow certain formal structures, such as an interview or business meetings. It would be quite unreasonable to have young foreign language students learn such forms that even native young people do not use (Brown and Yule 1987: 8), as young learners of foreign language will probably rather identify with the other young speakers of the language than with the old speakers (Lintunen and Dufva 2017: 56). Brown and Yule (1987: 21) also bring up the point that foreign language speakers often use spoken language that is too perfect. When a speaker focuses too much on the structure of the language, the language might resemble the grammar of written language, which from a

spoken language point of view is inappropriate because, as already explained in this section, oral language is full of incomplete sentences and repairs that make perfect sense in spoken language. When speaking with written language grammar, the speaker will be seen as if speaking to an audience and they will be judged as unfriendly.

To sum up these features of oral skills, Nunan (1989: 32) provides a list of features that make the base of oral communication. A foreign language learner needs to have skills in:

- comprehensible pronunciation
- prosody
- fluency
- different genres and functions
- turn-taking
- management of interaction
- negotiating meaning
- conversational listening and giving feedback
- knowing about and negotiating purposes for conversations
- using appropriate conversational formulae and fillers

I would add non-verbal communication and awareness of cultural differences to this list. Non-verbal communication is added because it is always present in face-to-face communication. In the case of cultural differences, awareness of them is needed in intercultural communication where the interlocutors come from different cultures and their social norms differ from each other.

The features of oral skills have now been presented and discussed. Next, the features of spoken language are transferred into the context of language teaching and assessment. There will be discussion of how the features are displayed in language teaching and how they are taken into account in language assessment.

2.3.3 Teaching and assessing oral skills

Excessive focus on written language and its norms in language education can be quite harmful for the development of oral skills, because as I have explained in the previous section, oral language and written language differ quite a bit and teaching spoken language according to written language norms is not applicable in teaching the features specific to oral language. Additionally, oral language even differs in itself due to a variety of spoken language genres. When using written language to teach oral skills, the product will be assessed by written

language norms. Tiittula (1992: 9) explains that even the dialogues in language textbooks are written and created according to written language standards, the dialogues are only then spoken aloud. If the teaching happens through written language, most of the characteristics of spoken language are not taken into account and not practiced as they may be seen as errors or mistakes (Tiittula 1992: 3). It is often assumed that students will learn spoken language skills by listening in class and in their free time due to the language immersion opportunities of the Internet and television, especially with English. However, Tergujeff and Kautonen (2017: 17) remind that this assumption is not accurate. Learners do not automatically search opportunities to use the target language as they might not even be aware of the possible opportunities. Therefore, they should be continuously encouraged to search for these opportunities.

In the recent decades, communicative proficiency has been an increasingly important term in foreign language teaching. Language teaching is aiming for the students to be able to use language effectively and appropriately in different situations. (Tiittula 1992: 9). Globalization and international mobility, according to Takala (1993: 30), has raised demands for users of foreign languages that have high speech communication skills. Ylirenko (1991: 25-26) explains that most Finnish civil servants, while being proficient in the foreign language, are afraid to speak it as they want to avoid making mistakes. The planned oral language test in the Finnish Matriculation exams has also increased the need for systematic oral language teaching. When the focus of the Matriculation Exams has only been on written language, teaching of spoken language was neglected on behalf of the written skills (Ylirenko 1991). According to Tergujeff and Kautonen (2017: 16), the planned oral language test will most likely raise oral skills on the same level as the other linguistic skills. At least, the NCCs are moving to that direction.

Teachers have a hard task of finding ways to teach the features of oral skills in the classroom. As Brown and Yule (1987: 21) point out, it would be quite counterproductive to teach students how to create incomplete sentences. Tergujeff et al. (2017: 99) state that spoken language is learned simply by interacting with spoken language. They comment that the teacher should always be aware of what is the point of the spoken activity they expect the students to complete. In most cases, the spoken language activity is just a vocabulary or grammar exercise that is completed out loud rather than truly an activity to practice oral skills. To practice oral skills, the task should have the purpose to practice oral skills, such as turn-taking, using fillers to appear fluent, or giving feedback appropriately. Nunan (1989: 40-41) has also contemplated the purpose of communicative tasks. He makes a distinction between tasks that practice real-

world needs and tasks which have a pedagogic purpose. Real-world rationale is of course self-explanatory as the tasks can be justified by the need to practice target language skills that will be needed outside the classroom. On the other hand, tasks that have a pedagogic purpose might not be needed outside the classroom but will develop skills that are needed in language acquisition. For example, using tongue-twisters to practice the pronunciation of individual sounds. However, usually tasks are not distinctly divided into real-world or pedagogic tasks, most have features of both (Nunan 1989: 41).

Learners use their teacher as the model on how to speak the target language (Lintunen and Dufva 2017: 48). The teacher should be aware of how they use the language to give the students an appropriate model on how to pronounce, use prosody, and produce spoken language. The teacher is also the one who decides if the learner is able to use the oral skills properly and what aspects they need to develop to have sufficient knowledge of the target language. For a long time, there has been a consensus that corrective feedback should be avoided when the learners are practicing the spoken language (for example Brown and Yule 1987: 37). The request for help and correction should come from the learner when they ask how to say something in the target language. The teacher can, and should, provide a list of essential words that can help with the completion of the communicative task. Ellis (2009: 14, see also Lyster et. al 2012), however, in a more modern view, argues that corrective feedback can be effective and beneficial to learning if it is done correctly. He agrees with Brown and Yule (1987) that the students' anxieties about feedback should be taken into consideration if the teacher notices that the students do not take corrective feedback well. Feedback should, after all, further learning, not increase anxiety.

Salo-Lee (1991: 32) argues that practicing speaking without fear of mistakes or corrections is especially important for Finnish students of foreign languages. She believes that developing communicative fluency is more beneficial for communication than the accuracy of the language. She explains that, even when using their first language, Finnish people tend to get nervous when they need to perform alone, they also interpret a simple communication context as a performance. She (1991: 65) adds that even the students blame their fear of speaking in the foreign language is the lack of practice. They also think that the focus on grammar,

Nunan (1991: 51) states that spoken language tasks are more productive when the students work in pairs or small groups. They use language with more functions than when the teaching teacher-oriented where the teacher asks questions, and the students answer. In group activities

the learners need to practice their conversational skills to complete the task. Nunan (1991: 50) also adds that learning is most productive when the learners are exposed to language that is just above their skill level. To make this exposition possible, Brown and Yule (1987: 32) propose to take advantage of different skill levels. They suggest using learners who have studied the target language longer to help conversing with the beginner level student. The more advanced learner would be able to practice their skills in holding the conversation and being the more dominant interlocutor. The beginner level student would have a chance at practicing their more undeveloped oral skills with an interlocutor who is able to hold the conversation even if they get shorter and simpler answers.

There are ways of making the learning situation more comfortable for the learner and, thus, make them more receptive to new skills. Brown and Yule (1987: 34) bring up the notion of communicative stress. There are contexts that are more stressful and others where the student is more comfortable to express themselves. For example, when the environment and the interlocutors are familiar to the speaker, when the speaker feels that they have more knowledge of the topic than their interlocutor, and if the communicative task and topic are familiar and they have the necessary vocabulary, are all attributes that create a positive learning event for the foreign language learner.

It might be assumed that as learners are already proficient conversationalists in their mother tongue, they would be able to apply their oral skills in the target language. However, Tiittula (1992: 132), comments that students might not even be aware of their first language resources as they might not realize the connection between the target language and their first language. Salo-Lee (1991: 18) adds that learners should be made aware of their existing speech communication skills.

Feedback is a crucial part of a learner's development. A learner needs to know what their problematic areas in the acquisition of the target language are so that they can practice more to develop them. Tergujeff et al. (2017: 100) argue that encouraging and supporting feedback is more beneficial than excessive critical feedback. Giving critical feedback in front of the class has a chance of embarrassing the learner and, eventually, discourage the learner. A teacher should rather highlight the parts of the learner's knowledge that they already can do and where they have progressed. The difficulties can then be presented in a way that make them seem attainable.

Ullakonoja and Dufva (2017: 39) recommend that a teacher should get to know the students to understand what kind of problems they might have in learning oral skills, for example, students' first language can affect how they learn to pronounce the target language. Students are also diverse; they learn differently and can benefit from different teaching methods. Knowledge of the students is also beneficial when designing a test. Nunan (1991: 47) implies that when testing conversational skills, the interlocutors should have approximately same level skills so that the other interlocutor would not be a hindrance to the other. Conversation is always a reciprocal situation where all interlocutors work in collaboration to achieve the communicative goal. If the teacher is well aware of their student's skills, they will be able to choose well-matched pairs for the test.

2.3.3.1 Assessment of oral skills

Especially in recent years, the assessment of spoken language has been increasingly discussed and contemplated as the importance of spoken language and oral communication has gained ground in foreign language curriculum. There are even plans to incorporate a spoken language test to the foreign language Matriculation Exams. Speaking is such a complex phenomenon that assessing it is challenging. Huhta (1993: 143) notes that reliability of spoken language evaluation is not as challenging as has previously been thought, it all depends on the quality of teacher training. According to Huhta (1993: 143), all of the most popular English language tests include spoken language evaluation. Focusing on grammaticality would do injustice to the nature of spoken language but, on the other hand, accuracy should be judged somehow (Luoma 2011: 1). Additionally, the construction of the spoken language criterion can seem to be vague. The notion of native-like or perfect oral skills is now seen as an unnecessary goal, and the assessment of oral skills focus more on the sufficient completion of the communicative task and that the learner is able to get their meaning across (Ullakonoja and Dufva 2017: 23). Sufficient completion and getting meaning across, however, can mean different thing to different teachers.

To ensure reliability in a spoken language test, Ahola (2017: 161) suggests using qualified and respected criteria, such as the scales of description based on the CEFR. The CEFR, as expressed in the section 2.1.2, recommends focusing on what the learner can do rather than criticism. Ahola (2017: 162) presents an extensive list of different criteria that are usually used to assess

oral skills, including fluency, pronunciation, interaction, appropriateness etc. The teacher can decide to what extend they stress these features. Takala (1993: 30) notes that if spoken language is to be assessed, especially in such a high-stake situation as the matriculation exam, the criteria need to be refined carefully. He also mentions that the arrangement of the assessing occasion should be negotiated as not to cause too many inconveniences.

According to Ahola (2017: 156-157), due to the spoken language test requiring spontaneous responses from the learners, they need to have skills in both routines and improvisation. Routines, as explained above, are memorized phrases that save time in producing a language. A learner can use these phrases during the test to have more time to produce more improvised speech. Improvisation is natural to communication and a test is for the most part spontaneous. Ahola (2017: 157) reminds that speech in a spoken language test, and in general communication, does not need to be perfectly grammatically structured.

Correctness in spoken language is quite controversial. Salo-Lee (1991: 14) states that usually teachers are fundamentally expected to correct mistakes that the learners make. Brown and Yule (1987: 21) state that it is not easy to decide what standard to use for assessing spoken language as there is so much variation to standards and norms. Lintunen and Dufva (2017: 46) suggest that the chosen variation model should be the one that is spoken most widely but also politically neutral so that the learner does not unintentionally convey impressions they do not want. Usually, the chosen model is the one that the news anchors use in the target language. Language variation is also affected by individual performances of speakers as they have their own way of using the language. Although linguists have been able to distinguish some characteristics of spoken language (see section 2.3.1), people also have their own way of speaking that are the sum of their environment. Tiittula (1993: 66) describes that variation occurs due to, for example, the place in the case of dialects, age, sex, social class, and context. In addition, as Brown and Yule (1987: 21) describe, spoken language is full of errors because of the spontaneous nature of spoken language. If assessed by the written language standards, no one would get high marks from correctness. However, in spoken language, most of the slips and errors are important for the production of meaning and coherence (Tiittula 1992: 3).

Linguistic knowledge is not enough to be able to orally communicate. Learners of foreign language should also be assessed on appropriateness. Ahola (2017: 157) comments that in a testing situation, the context should always be explained to the students. Otherwise, it would be quite difficult for the student to express their message appropriately if they are not aware of the

intended situation. The intended context in the task, according to Ahola (2017: 157), should be familiar to the learner so that they can benefit from their previous experiences and knowledge. She (2017: 164) adds that appropriateness should be assessed so that the student would become aware of how important conducting themselves appropriately is when communicating with other people as inappropriateness would lead to unintentional misunderstandings.

In assessment tasks, the requirements are usually for the learner to get their meaning across appropriately and to complete the communicative task sufficiently. They are not required to use certain structures or beforehand given vocabulary; however, the student needs to make sure that the language they use is appropriate for the communicative task. (Brown and Yule 1987: 109) Moreover, Huhta (1993: 191) reminds that there is always a chance that the evaluation is not completely valid. For example, an accent might not be an official criterion of the assessment, but the interviewer might still count it as part of the oral skills. So, if a learner has a very thick accent, the interviewer might assess them more harshly even if it would not hinder understandability or fluency. The evaluation also reflects the teacher's subjective opinions on such things as fluency or appropriateness. The reliability could then be questioned, but, as Brown and Yule (1987: 104) point out, the teacher is probably only the one who can make judgements on such features of spoken language as they are familiar with the learner's competences and skill level. Even if spoken language is usually evaluated on its grammatical correctness and extent of vocabulary, the assessment is partly subjective as the score is commonly presented with a quite vague verbal definition such as *can express themselves quite fluently and without hesitation* (Brown and Yule 1987: 102).

Takala (1993: 31) emphasizes the importance of self-evaluation. He believes that self-evaluation skills advance the general development of the learner's linguistic skills. Their self-evaluation can be included in the overall score of the spoken language test. Kuronen (2017: 72) agrees with Takala that self-evaluation improves learners' awareness and development of their own skills. He emphasizes that teacher's feedback combined with the learner's self-evaluation is beneficial for oral skill development. Ahola (2017: 164-165) adds that self-evaluation helps the learner understand the assessment criteria and use them to actively develop their skills. The teacher may also get a new perspective on the student's skills.

The spoken language test event is time consuming and takes a lot of resources. Tergujeff and Kautonen (2017: 12) comment that the setup of spoken language test takes time as the teacher cannot listen to all of the students at the same time. They explain that written language tests

are easier to organize and evaluate. In general, spoken language tests are usually arranged for assessing one student at a time or in pairs. At most, the test could have a small group of students communicating together, but it should be noted that the more students there are in the test situation, the more difficult it is for the teacher to reliably divide their attention to all of the test takers. Takala (1993: 32) suggests recording the testing occasion. It would give the teacher a chance to evaluate the communication situation more reliably. Even if the teacher would take notes of the test, they would still need to rely mainly on their memory, and there would still be a chance of the teacher missing something. Ahola (2017: 159) comments that as recording of the test would happen in a studio or with a computer, the test situation might feel unnatural to the student. This could affect the test outcome as the student might feel stressed and uncomfortable due to the presence of the recording device. Nevertheless, recording the test is a great way to ensure reliability of the test and using a studio where the test material is the same for every student gives the students a common basis to showcase their skills, whereas, in a casual conversation task might not be possible.

A spoken language test for second and foreign language matriculation exams has been under planning for years. The Ministry of Education and Culture proposed in 2017 that an oral part should become part of the matriculation exams (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2017: 51). In 2006 it was decided that it was not possible to arrange spoken language test yet. However, since then one of the optional courses of A1 and B1 languages was changed into an oral language course so that spoken language could be tested. A spoken language test would require pilot testing of the task types, testing situation and test assessment, and also updating the teacher training in Finland, At the earliest, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017: 53), the spoken language test would be part of the matriculation exams in 2022, first in the second languages, Swedish and Finnish. Tergujeff et al. (2017: 98) implore that now is the time that spoken language should be taught and assessed systematically from the first lesson in elementary school to the last.

2.3.3.2 Problematic areas of oral skills for foreign language learners

Finnish students of foreign languages have some problems in developing their oral skills due to the cultural and linguistic differences of the characteristics of spoken language (Tiittula 1992: 131-143). Tiittula categorizes four main problematic areas for Finnish learners: dialogue,

interpretation strategies, fluency, and cultural differences. From the point of view of foreign people, Finnish conversation is sometimes stereotypically described as quite monologic, full of long turns and long pauses and lacking in feedback and interruptions. Tiittula (1992: 131), however, comments that this seems to be the case when Finns are speaking in foreign language. Conversation in the mother tongue has a lot of variety. In international contexts, typically, Finnish speakers tend to be more passive and do not take the lead (Kovalainen and Keisala 2012). Tiittula (1992: 131) explains that this passivity could derive from how languages are taught in Finland. The dominance of written language norms in textbooks steers students to focus on producing grammatically and structurally perfect sentences and, therefore, using the limited production time only to the structure, not to the interactive features. Even the circumstances of the learning situation can generate passiveness. The teacher is the dominant participant who asks questions and chooses the topic and manages the interaction by giving out speaking turns. The students are not given possibilities to practice the interactive part of oral skills. The students may not be able to activate their knowledge of interaction from their first language and link it to the foreign language because they have only used the foreign language in the context of the classroom. (Tiittula 1992: 132). Interactivity is quite hard to illustrate in written form, so it is quite understandable that textbook dialogues are not able to provide appropriate models for interaction. For example, the constant feedback given by the listener and the negotiation of meaning would make the text dialogue 'messy'. (Tiittula 1992: 133)

The second problematic area is interpretation, and the strategies learners use to decode messages. The interlocutors constantly negotiate meaning. The listener gives feedback to the speaker to indicate that they have understood the message, either by asking further questions or otherwise signaling that they have understood. The speaker then signals if they accept this interpretation. In the case of misunderstanding, the speaker can give more information to correct the confusion. (Tiittula 1992: 133). In intercultural contexts, the interlocutors cannot assume that they have mutual understanding of the context. They need to be more explicit and clear in asking for further information. In textbook dialogues the interlocutors always understand the message perfectly, they might ask one or two additional questions but generally the dialogue in reality is not as simple. (Tiittula 1992: 134). Tiittula (1992: 135-136) gives examples of what kind of problems with understanding can happen: an acoustic problem where the listener does not hear what was said, a semantic problem means that the listener does not understand what something means, and contradiction of expectation happens when the listener

hears something unexpected. In these cases, the speaker can, respectively, repeat what they said, paraphrase it, or give more information that will level the knowledge gap.

Problems relating to fluency usually come from the limited production time as a learner of foreign language needs more time to formulate utterances than a native speaker, also the interpretation takes more time (Tiittula 1992: 137). Part of fluency, as already explained above, is automaticity. By recreating a set of frequently used phrases for different discourse to appear more fluent. These phrases are, however, as Tiittula (1992: 138) explains, culturally specific and their use might have different connotations depending on the culture. Another feature of fluency is pausing. Tiittula (1992: 138) suggest that a learner can appear more fluent by learning how to fill pauses by either learning pragmatic particles or just slowing down the entire speed of their speech and thus avoid having longer pauses.

The last problematic area concerns cultural differences. Different cultures can have interactional customs that other cultures might interpret differently. This can create misunderstandings if interlocutors are not aware of these differences. (Tiittula 1992: 139). For example, conventions in how politeness is expressed differ from culture to culture. Someone might be judged to be ill-mannered if they do not express politeness as abundantly as they are used to, even if they are being perfectly polite according to their own cultural norms. Tiittula (1992: 141-142) explains that grammatical errors are usually more acceptable than sociocultural or pragmatic errors. She explains that a native speaker expects a foreigner to have less linguistic knowledge, but pragmatic errors will have a negative effect on their perceived personality. Others might think that they are rude or timid as they will judge the person according to the norms they are used to. Tiittula (1992: 143) concludes that the more linguistically correct a language user is, the more socially appropriate they are expected to be. On the other hand, learners are not expected to be knowledgeable about everything that might differ culturally, but they should be aware that there are culturally specific conventions which might affect how they perceive others and how others perceive them. Positive attitude and an eagerness to communicate are at the core of oral communication and success. (Tiittula 1992: 143).

The features of oral skills have now been discussed. I have also considered how oral skills are taught and assessed in language education. Next I will describe how textbooks are used in the classroom and teaching languages. I will also present and describe the three main activity types that can be found in language textbooks.

2.4 Textbooks

Much of foreign language teaching relies on textbooks. According to Luukka et. al (2008: 94), approximately 98 percent of language teachers named textbooks as their main teaching material, so they influence what exactly happens in the classroom greatly. Pitkänen-Huhta (2003: 259) also observed that textbooks are used very extensively in foreign language class and that the linguistic models presented in the textbook were treated as the only right answer. So, textbooks are very highly respected as an authority on how to use a language. This has not always been the case. Karjala (2003: 51) points out that in the old times, textbooks were not used to learn languages, and people learned languages just as well. Therefore, textbooks are not as crucial to learning as usually thought. Even if publishers attentively follow the decisions concerning new NCCs, there can still be some questionable content and linguistic deficiencies. Therefore, teachers should not blindly trust that new textbooks are adequate but familiarize themselves with the textbook before deciding if it is suitable.

Lähdesmäki (2004: 271-272) describes how language textbooks are usually structured. Much of the textbook focuses on the target language itself; how it is structured, vocabulary, and how it is used in communication. This is of course natural as the textbook is used to teach the target language and the learners need to have knowledge of how to use the language. On the other hand, language is used to communicate about something. In language textbooks, the chapters usually represent some theme that is then taught using the target language, for instance, the themes in modern textbooks consist of current social topics such as environment, wellbeing, and multiculturality. The themes are part of the general upper secondary school values presented in the NCC for general upper secondary school (NCC 2015: 13). Alanen (2000: 192) adds that the themes are usually chosen by their relevance to the students' lives.

Textbook dialogues can be far from the reality of what actually happens in communicative situations. As explained in the previous section, communicative situations are presented more neatly in written form than in face-to-face conversations to make them more accessible in paper. Tiittula (1992: 9) emphasizes that written language should not be used as a model for spoken language. Many features of spoken language are left out so that the text does not appear chaotic, or they are simply impossible to present in written form. (Tiittula 1992: 15). Tiittula (1992: 15) criticizes textbook dialogues for their unnatural way of describing communicative situations as they are first written and only afterwards read out loud. Simplified conversations

in textbooks usually lack the reciprocal aspects of spoken language, such as giving feedback and the negotiation of meaning (Tiittula 1992: 133). Karjala (2003: 58) points out that in the textbook dialogues the speaker never makes structural mistakes or repairs. The interlocutors in textbook dialogues always understand immediately what the speaker is saying, at most, the listener asks for confirmation but then instantaneously understands the explanation. He states that language textbooks should contain more models for understanding strategies as in reality, there will come situations where the learners will need more examples of negotiation of meaning than the few basic phrases provided in textbooks. Karjala (2003: 56) notes that textbooks try to be as authentic as possible but there are some concessions as textbooks do not, for example, present improper and vulgar language that is certainly part of spoken language use outside the classroom. Alanen (2000: 192) found that textbooks use quite a bit of informal language, slang and vernacular style. Slang is constantly changing and might be associated with only a certain group of people. The learners might sound out of place and cause confusion when they use these learned vernacular expressions. In addition, when used interchangeably with formal style in textbooks, the learners might mistake the vernacular expressions as suitable for all genres. (Alanen 2000: 193).

Lintunen and Dufva (2017: 47) state that models for the spoken language presented in the textbooks are chosen by the publishers. Textbooks should represent different varieties of the target language so that the learners could get practice on decoding these different variations. For example, in the case of English, there are many linguistic variations that the learners will encounter in international communicative situations. If they are familiar with only one model, they might have difficulties in interpreting messages as they might not recognize certain words. There is also always a risk that learners will start to think that the language model in the textbook is the only appropriate one (Luukka et. al 2008: 64). When textbooks give examples of variation, the learners can see that there are many ways that one can get their message across and can more freely give their own varied answers. Nevertheless, as Hannus (1996: 13-14, cited in Karjala 2003: 60) states, when making a textbook, the publisher needs to make a lot of compromises. It is difficult to create a textbook that would consider all pedagogical methods, curricula, students, teachers, and the geographical location. There would always be someone who is not satisfied with the textbook. The publishers make their own informed decisions on what to include and leave out from it.

Since the survey by Luukka et al. was published in 2008, the use of different learning materials has changed quite significantly (Tergujeff 2017: 86). Luukka et. al (2008: 94) reported that the main teaching material used in language class were textbooks, CDs, and sheets. Digital materials, internet sites, and videos were sometimes or hardly ever used. However, today digitalization has increased the use of digital learning materials and the publishers now offer digital learning materials quite extensively on the newer foreign language textbooks. In addition, action-based and phenomenon-based teaching have decreased the use of physical textbooks (Tergujeff 2017: 86). Students also increasingly have their own electronic devices at school and in most schools, the school itself provides students with tablets or laptops. These electronic devices are used to search the internet for knowledge and to carry out different tasks.

Even though textbooks have been appointed as one of the most used teaching materials, they sometimes irritate and frustrate their users (Lähdesmäki 2004: 271). As textbooks always represent the values and attitudes of their makers, and can, thus, influence students with these values, they need to be studied more so that teachers can become aware of what these values are and if they are suitable for their students. Usually, as Lähdesmäki (2004: 272) states, textbooks try to generate positive attitudes towards the target language and its culture. According to Tergujeff (2017: 86) textbooks by Finnish publishers are principally high quality. She reports that language textbooks have a lot of material with contemporary and relevant recordings, tests, and digital materials. She, however, points out that even if textbooks were very high quality, following them too much would still restrain teachers and make them passive.

Lähdesmäki (2004: 274) reports that there have not been made any extensive studies on textbooks but, on the other hand, unpublished master level theses on textbooks have been made copiously, so the studies do not reach the general public. Kauppinen (2006: 210) hypothesizes that extensive studies have not been made because of the general belief that as they have already been chosen as the course book, they are ready to be used and there is nothing to criticize. Another reason could be that textbooks are seen as such a fundamental part of schooling institution that it is not proper to criticize them. Nevertheless, Kauppinen (2006: 209) also reports that teachers assess textbooks mainly orally and if a publisher ask for comments on their upcoming textbooks. She (2006: 204) further explains that textbooks receive a lot of feedback in their production stage as textbooks are developed by an expert group of researchers and teachers. Kauppinen (2006: 205-206) lists main problems in textbooks in general: content, “hidden” text or questionable values, structure of the text, style, learning process, and typography. Of

these, she mentions that especially style is a problem in language textbooks. Language textbooks usually present informal and formal style interchangeably, and there is a lack of models for natural conversation, which Tiittula (1992) brings up also. Kauppinen (2006: 209) concludes that textbooks, despite their high quality, are not perfect and they should be developed more.

Lähdesmäki (2004: 273) brings up the teaching material business. In language textbooks, especially English, the competition is hard. In Finland, publishers must produce their textbooks carefully so that they will keep up with the quality and competition in the markets. Tergujeff (2017: 86) adds that as English is the most studied language in Finland, most textbook publishers invest more on the production of English textbooks than on the other languages. English teachers can pick and choose from a wide selection of textbooks, while teachers of optional languages need to choose from just a couple of options. In the end, however, despite the competition, the teacher has the power to choose which textbook series will be the most suitable for their needs, and the teachers are quite the experts of their field (Kauppinen 2006: 205).

Even though Luukka et. al (2008, 64-65) state that textbooks influence a lot of what is taught, they remind that one cannot make too accurate conclusions of what happens in the classroom from a textbook alone as textbooks are used differently by teachers. According to Pitkänen-Huhta (2003: 260), the teacher is actually the one with the power to dictate what is taught in school. The teacher decides how and how much textbooks are used in teaching; the usability depends on the teacher's creativity. Teachers also make use of other materials during lessons (Luukka et al. 2000: 65). Luukka et. al (2008) also bring up that, despite the values presented in the NCC or textbooks, the teacher's values and philosophies also have a lot of influence to the students, for example, if the teacher does not value the importance of the spoken language skills and sees written language as the more useful skill, they probably would not teach oral skills even if the textbook would have a great number of oral tasks. Tergujeff (2017) states that at the start of their career, young teachers often find themselves depending on textbooks to guide what to teach due to their insecurities as a new teacher. On the other hand, depending on textbooks can give them more time to carry out their other tasks concerning teaching such as planning lessons and grading tests when they do not yet have routines for them. Kauppinen (2006: 209) adds that many schools do not have the financial resources to pay for teachers' in-service training and the teachers often rely on textbooks to further their education.

2.4.1 Oral activities in textbooks

There are different kinds of activities in textbooks that are used to practice language use. The term activity can be used as a collective name for any work in a classroom that includes language use. Generally, three main activity types are recognized: drills, tasks, and exercises. Drills have a distinct definition that is recognized in language teaching. The other two activity types, tasks and exercises, however, do not have explicit and generally accepted definitions (Ellis 2003: 3). They are used flexibly and often used to mean the same thing. Nevertheless, definitions for these three activity types are presented below to determine how they are generally used in language practice and how different activities in textbooks can be categorized.

Drills are part of the more mechanical type of activities. They make use of the audio-lingual method where learners mechanically repeat certain structures so that these structures would then habitualize in their mind and become automatized structures (Wong and VanPatten 2003: 404). Learners would first create the form, and only after, the meaning. When the forms and structures have been drilled to the head, learners could then express their meaning through these forms. Errors were strictly forbidden as if the learner would repeat an error, it would start to form into the structure and it would be hard to unlearn it. (Wong and VanPatten 2003: 404). As this view is not appropriate in the more modern pedagogical methods, the notion of drilling was supplemented with communicative aspects. In eclectic approach to drills, habitualization of forms was combined with meaningful language use (Wong and VanPatten 2003: 405).

Paulston (1976: 4) divides drills into three categories: mechanical drills, meaningful drills, and communicative drills. The different types of drills differ mainly in their degree of control and how the learner will get the answer (Kivilahti 2012: 24). Mechanical drills are the most controlled activity and there is only one right answer. The purpose of the drill is to memorize the structure without fear of error as the right answer is controlled (Paulston 1976: 4). Paulston adds that anyone can complete the task successfully even if they could not speak the target language. A meaningful drill is similar to the mechanical drill with one alteration; the learners will have to comprehend the input semantically and structurally. Meaningful drills are controlled and there is only one right answer. (Paulston 1976: 7). To know whether a drill is mechanical or meaningful, Paulston (1976: 6) recommends adding a nonsense word to the drill. If the nonsense word does not hinder the completion, it is mechanical. In the case of a meaningful drill, the completion of the activity would not be possible. For example, a meaningful

task could be: *What is on John's desk? A book is on John's desk?* Or, *Where is Jenny? Jenny is on the swing*. On the other hand, in a communicative drill, besides having to understand the input, the learner is expected to add new information that is not yet known (Paulston 1976: 9). So, the learner needs to keep the structure but cannot get the answer without creating it themselves as the situation does not give the answer, unlike in mechanical and meaningful drills. To illustrate, a communicative drill could be: *What are you going to do in the summer? I'm going to swim. I'm going to eat ice cream*. Communicative drills aim to give the learned grammatical structures context and to give the learners an opportunity to express themselves with memorized structures.

Wong and VanPatten (2003: 406) state that Paulston intends the drills to work from easier to the hardest. First, the learners are taught the structures using mechanical drills, then the structures will be given a meaning with meaningful drills, and lastly, the structures are applied to a real word context with communicative drills. Wong and VanPatten (2003: 417) criticize the use of drills as they argue that they are unnecessary and might even hinder learning as there are other pedagogical methods that have better results in language acquisition. They believe that structures can be learned using other methods that are also beneficial to communicative proficiency. However, despite the criticism, drills are still quite popular activities in learning grammatical structures.

A task is "a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward" (Long 1985, cited in Ellis 2003: 4). For example, driving a car or dressing up are tasks. However, as this thesis is interested in spoken language activities, I will concentrate on definition of a task from a pedagogical perspective and how it is defined in the language classroom. Nunan (1989: 10) defines task with a communicative approach: "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form". He emphasizes that the purpose of the task is communication as the learners will express themselves with the language while applying their knowledge of the language. A bit more recent definition comes from Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001, cited in Ellis 2003: 5) which also emphasizes the meaning rather than structure: "a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective".

Ellis (2003: 3) describes tasks and exercises by contrasting them together as they are generally seen as synonymous but, according to him, their purposes, or rather how they execute the

purpose, differ so much that they can be described as separate activities. Tasks and exercises are differentiated by their focus on meaning and form. Tasks give students a chance to express their thoughts using the language without the need to be accurate while exercises focus more on the structure. In an exercise, the content is not in the main role, it is more important to be accurate in using the grammatical structure. Another view of meaning versus form is the role of the participants (Ellis 2003: 3). In tasks, the participant's role is language user. They will communicate with the language as they would in real-world. In this situation learning manifests as a byproduct, or in other words, learning is not the main goal, but it is always a benefit. In the case of an exercise, the participant's role is language learner, the language is used with a purpose to learn. (Ellis 2003: 3). There is a chance that a task becomes an exercise (Ellis 2003: 5). Even if the activity is supposed to activate meaningful language production, the learners might actually just complete the activity by different means than expressing their own thoughts using the language. For example, in a spot-the-difference task, the learners are expected to describe the differences and they end up just pointing at the picture and saying *here*, or *this*, or just ending up pointing the difference with their finger. To draw from Ellis' (2003: 8) comment on task assessment, the assessment of an activity depends in if it generates the kind of language it is supposed to. In a task, it should be meaningful, in an exercise, consequently, it should promote learning of structures.

The key concepts of the present thesis have now been described and discussed. I will now present research that has been previously done on textbooks and oral skills. In addition, I will give justification on the present thesis.

2.5 Previous research on textbooks and oral skills

As already stated in section 2.4, according to Lähdesmäki (2004) and Kauppinen (2006), there is a lack of extensive studies on textbooks in Finland. However, textbook analyses are quite popular at master level theses. Textbooks continue to be one of the most important teaching materials in language teaching even if they have needed to yield with the increase of digital materials (Tergujeff 2017: 86). Textbooks are designed following the principles set in the NCC, so they are used as a guide of what to teach and how (Karjala 2003: 50, Luukka et. al 2008: 64). When a textbook makes this kind of a claim, it should be examined if it actually does meet the requirements of the NCC.

There are many aspects of textbooks that have been studied and analyzed. In master level theses, there has been research on teachers' opinions about English textbooks (Hietala 2015). English textbooks have also been analyzed from the point of view of, for example, how the culture of English-speaking world is presented (Heininen 2021), how globalization is presented (Tommiska 2020), and how grammar (Vornanen 2016) is practiced in textbooks. Kumpumäki (2020) also brings attention to heteronormativity in English textbooks. Master level Russian textbook analyses focus on aspects such as grammar (verbs Juntunen 2020, adjectives Sormunen 2017 and gender nouns Savolainen 2013), translation (von Creutlein 2016), speaking etiquette (Kärkkäinen 2016), and oral interaction (Koikkalainen 2015). In addition, one of the popular topics in language textbooks, in general, is gender roles and how they are presented in language textbooks (see for example Jaakkonen 2018, Alatalo 2013 and Laakkonen 2007).

Previous research on oral skills includes attitudes towards oral skills teaching in Finland (Vaarala 2013 and Ahola-Houtsonen 2013), how pragmatic competences are practiced (Ali-Hokka 2019), accent variation (Pystynen 2018), politeness (Seppänen-Lammassaari 2016), meaning negotiation and compensation strategies (Vepsä 2019). Some of the master's theses focusing on oral skills and communication have been produced in a form of material packages (for example Kallio 2016, Konttinen 2012 and Rovasalo 2008). Vaarala (2013) concluded that especially students hope for more communicative practice of oral skills while teachers generally feel that spoken language is quite well presented in English studies. Both the students and teachers also agree that the Matriculation Exams should have a section for oral language exam. The thesis by Kärkkäinen (2016) focuses on appropriateness, particularly on the Russian speaking etiquette. She explains that speaking etiquette is a very important part of Russian culture. She concluded that the language used in the Russian textbook *Kafe Piter* does not give models of situations where more formal language is needed. Typical Russian spoken language was described quite well in everyday dialogues, but the language was not very versatile. Pronunciation is one of the more popular research subjects concerning oral skills, for example Jaatinen 2019, Mikkola 2018, Salenius 2011, and Tergujeff 2013 have analyzed how pronunciation is practiced in different language textbooks.

There are a couple of master level theses that are similar to the present thesis. Gonzales Jalonen (2019) analyzed two Spanish textbook series to examine what kind of oral activities the textbooks have and what is the role of oral skills in Spanish studies. She also examined teachers' and students' views on the topic. In conclusion, she found that teachers are satisfied with the

oral activities and that oral activities are quite numerous in the first couple of textbooks in both series, but they decrease in number towards the end of the series. Leskinen (2015) analyzed German and Swedish textbooks that are designed for A2 languages. She compared how each textbook series followed the requirements set in the CEFR and in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014. Even though she concluded that both textbook series met the requirements, the textbook series were on different levels concerning variation in oral activities. The Swedish textbook series lacked for example in free production of speech. Hietala (2013) conducted a study on oral activities in English textbooks that follow the requirements of the previous NCC 2003. She analyzed *Open Road* and *ProFiles* textbook series to determine what kind of oral activities could be found in the textbooks and what is the focus of spoken language in each activity category. She concluded that fluency is emphasized while, for example, communicative strategies only appear in a couple of activities in one of the textbook series. The textbooks aimed to practice formal and grammatically perfect speech even if it is not appropriate in everyday language use.

2.5.1 Rationale for this thesis

To my knowledge, there are no English or Russian textbook analyses that focus on oral activities in language textbooks that follow the current NCC 2015. Most of the previous research on oral skills focuses on a certain feature of oral skills like pronunciation. There are not many textbook analyses that examine oral activities as a whole, and certainly not in textbooks that are designed for the current NCC. I could be stated that there is clearly a need for this textbook analysis which focuses on oral skills and communicative proficiency.

The CEFR and the current NCC emphasize the importance of interaction and communication so the textbooks that claim to follow the current NCC should have the same emphasis. Spoken language skills are thought to be especially important at the beginnings of the English and Russian studies (NCC 2015: 110, 117). This should be visible in the first textbooks of the series. Concerning the new NCC 2019, as the first textbooks of *Insights* and *Ponjatno!* textbook series have been published, I will be able to analyze them according to the requirements set in the NCC.

Oral activities do not equally practice different oral skills as previous studies (Hietala 2013) on oral activities conclude. Some of the activities are only produced orally, but no real oral skills

are expected to complete them. Since oral skills are such a complex phenomenon, the activities that practice them should be examined on the content and what kind of spoken language skills they expect the students to produce to determine whether they even practice oral skills in reality.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is now complete. At first, I presented what is expected of spoken language learning and teaching by the two documents that determine the aims and objectives of general upper general school education. I have also presented and discussed the key concepts, how textbooks are used in language learning and teaching, and how the three activity types are defined. Discussion of previous research revealed that there is a need for examining what kind of oral activities can be found in the current English and Russian textbook series, and how they meet the requirements of the current NCC. I will next proceed to the research design of this thesis.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Previous chapter outlined the theoretical background of this thesis. This chapter will introduce the methodology of this study. I will begin with presenting and explaining the research questions of the study. Then, I will proceed to present the data. Lastly, I will discuss the research method used in this study.

3.1 Research questions

As stated before, the present thesis aims to study how oral activities are presented in English and Russian textbooks for upper secondary school. There is a need to investigate whether the currently used language textbooks meet the requirements concerning oral language since the NCC for upper secondary school emphasizes the importance of interaction and spoken language has gained ground in the aims of the NCC 2015. The thesis aspires to answer the following questions:

- What kind of oral language skill activities can be found in English and Russian textbooks?
- Do the textbooks and oral activities coincide with the requirements of the National Core Curriculum for General Upper Secondary Schools?
- Do oral language skill activities differ in English and Russian textbooks?

The first research question addresses oral skills and oral activities. I am interested to know what kind of activities and how many can be found in the textbooks in focus that practice features of oral skills and communicative proficiency described in section 2.2. The second research question focuses on the requirements and aims set in the NCC 2015 to language teaching and learning, and examines whether the textbooks follow these requirements as the publisher claims. The third research question considers the differences in oral activities and their shares in the two languages under study. As explained in section 2.1.2.1, English and Russian are usually taught at different levels in Finland. English is usually studied as a syllabus A1 language, starting in very early in the comprehensive school, while the study of Russian is

typically started in the upper secondary school as a syllabus B3 language. It can be assumed that English syllabus A1 textbooks in the upper secondary school would have activities that need higher skill level to complete than Russian syllabus B3 textbooks. I would also hypothesize that they are more communicative and practice oral skills more extensively due to the students having generally higher skills in the language.

Now that the research questions and the aim of this thesis have been presented, I will now describe the data and method used to accomplish answering the questions.

3.2 Data: *Insights* and *Ponjatno!* textbook series

The data of this thesis consists of two textbook series *Insights 1-8* and *Ponjatno! 1-3*, and the newer versions of the first textbooks of the series, *New Insights 1-2* and *Ponjatno! 1-3* (Modules 1-3). These two textbook series were chosen because they are currently widely in use in language teaching in upper secondary schools, *Insights* in English and *Ponjatno!* in Russian. It was also a crucial benefit that they both have newer versions unlike the other textbook series designed for English and Russian in upper secondary school. Both textbook series claim to follow the principles set in the current NCC 2015, so it can be expected that they both are designed to follow the requirements and aims of the NCC. The new NCC 2019 will replace the current one in the fall of 2021, thus, the new versions of the first textbooks *New Insights 1-2* and *Ponjatno! 1-3* (others are not yet published) are included in the study to compare if there are any changes made. However, this thesis concentrates more on the current NCC, so all examples of the data are derived only from the older textbook series. The new textbooks are only included to examine how the changes of the upcoming NCC affects the learning of oral skills in the textbooks and if the change is to a more interactive and communicative direction.

Insights textbook series is used in A1 syllabus English in upper secondary school. The series consists of eight textbooks that coincide with the eight courses offered in upper secondary school. The series also offers a digital version of the books. Other digital resources include an app for a dictionary which holds all of the vocabularies used in the eight books, and a student's mp3-record. All eight textbooks are divided into themes that are then further divided into chapters. Each chapter has a special focus on some aspect of linguistic skills or life events such as applying to a university or a job. All chapters have a text that is related to the theme and

activities. The themes of the *Insights* textbooks follow the themes of the NCC 2015 (110-111). *Insights 1* focuses on the varieties of English and aspects of teen life. *Insights 2* has themes concerning wellbeing and relationships. Course 3 and *Insights 3* concentrate on culture and cultural phenomena. In *Insights 4*, the themes include the society and human rights. The fifth course and *Insights 5* focus on science and future. In *Insights 6*, the focus is on future studies, work, and economy. In the optional courses 7 and 8, the themes include sustainability in *Insights 7*, while *Insights 8* revisits the themes of the earlier courses.

Each *Insights* textbook has sections for *Vocabulary Revision*, *Learning to Learn*, and *Grammar*. In addition, at the end of the book, there is a *Keys* section that holds the answers to the activities found in the textbook, excluding homework. The *Vocabulary Revision* section has activities that can be used to rehearse vocabulary of the texts of the textbook. In the *Grammar* section, different features of English grammar are taught in Finnish with activities that are to be completed in English. The section *Learning to Learn*, however, varies in each textbook. The section has themes that all give the students tips on how to study foreign languages, which coincides with the NCC's aims to develop learning skills, but also, the *Learning to Learn* section has parts that are dedicated to pronunciation of English and other linguistic skills, including oral skills.

New Insights is the new textbook series that follows the upcoming NCC 2019. *New Insights 1-2* is the only one that has yet been published. It includes modules 1 and 2 which are the equivalent of courses 1 and 2, thus, the new textbook series combines *Insights 1* and *2* together. There will be a total of seven textbooks as the other textbooks will only contain one module. The textbooks will have digital version and they offer an app for the recordings and some of the videos used in *New Insights 1-2*. In this new textbook series, the vocabularies used in the texts have also been recorded. The students will thus get to hear the word instead of having to interpret the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The dictionary of all English textbooks published by Otava is also offered in an app. *New Insights 1-2* is divided into themes that follow the themes of the NCC 2019. Module 1 focuses on language identity and developing studying skills. Module 2 includes the themes of English as a lingua franca and interaction with others. Like the older textbook series, *New Insights 1-2* has sections for *Vocabulary Revision, Learning to Learn, Grammar*, and *Keys*.

Ponjatno! is designed for syllabus B3 Russian. The series consists of three textbooks. The first textbook *Ponjatno! 1* includes courses 1-3, the second textbook *Ponjatno! 2* includes courses 4-6, and the last one, *Ponjatno! 3*, covers courses 7 and 8. The textbook series also offers digital materials but there is no digital version of the textbooks themselves. The digital materials include mp3-recordings, digital dictionaries of the vocabularies used in the whole textbook series, and other special material such as flashcards and activities that are marked with a digital activity symbols in the physical textbooks. All *Ponjatno!* textbooks are divided into the courses and their themes. Just like the NCC 2015 (2015: 117-118) describes, the themes of the first textbook consist of getting to know the language and people, traveling and social communicative situations such as going to a café, and everyday life which includes school, hobbies, and home, for example. The second textbook, *Ponjatno! 2*, includes the themes of intercultural interaction such as nationalities and different cultural aspects, wellbeing and digitalization, and lastly, culture and media which includes literature and music, for example. The last textbook, *Ponjatno! 3*, covers the themes of future studies and work in the first part of the textbook, and societal and environmental issues in the second.

Besides the actual chapters, *Ponjatno!* textbooks have separate parts for knowledge of Russian culture, language, and cities. They are scattered throughout the textbooks and are marked with special symbols. The sections include *Поехали!* and a symbol of a card that give additional and basic information about the city each chapter relates to, *Тема* which consists of thematic vocabulary and phrases, *Экстра* giving extra knowledge of vocabulary, *Факт* that consists of knowledge of Russia and Russian culture, and *Kielitieto* which includes linguistic structures and grammar.

Ponjatno! 1-3 is part of the new textbook series that is designed according to the new NCC 2019. The other textbooks will be published later. Similarly to the older textbook series, *Ponjatno! 1-3* will cover the first three courses of Russian offered in upper secondary school. Unlike in the NCC 2015, the new NCC 2019 (2019 194-197) does not describe the modules with themes. They are rather described by the skill level the student is expected to reach in each module. For example, Module 1 is described as the beginner level of the basics. The NCC 2019, however, presents the central contents each module is expected to cover. As *Ponjatno! 1-3* consists of Modules 1-3, it covers polite phrases and introducing oneself and others (Module 1), social communicative situations in everyday life such as traveling, going to a café etc.

(Module 2), and social communication is situations such as hobbies or school (Module 3). After each module, *Ponjatno 1-3* has a self-evaluation page that the students are expected to fulfill. This is to raise awareness of the students developing learning skills that is one of the aims in the NCC 2019.

3.3 Research method

Content analysis is the chosen method of the present thesis, particularly theory-guided content analysis. Content analysis is considered to be one of the most frequent analysis methods when the subject of the study is a text or a document (Huckin 2004: 13, Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018: 103). Tuomi and Sarajärvi add that the definition of content analysis has extended so much that it can be connected to any qualitative or quantitative analyzing method. They (2018: 109-110) explain that the guiding principle of theory-guided content analysis is that the content is analyzed using previous theories as a frame of reference, in other words, theory only guides the analysis, it does not determine it. In this method, the data will provide important and distinctive information that can be categorized with the help of pre-existing theories. Content analysis could be conducted with two other principles as well: data-driven or theory-driven (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018: 108-112). These two could be described as the two ends of a continuum with theory-bound content analysis in the middle. In data-driven content analysis, the theory is contrived from the data, so no predetermined theories guide the analysis. In theory-driven content analysis, on the other hand, the data is determined according to a pre-existing model or theory.

Content analysis can be described either as qualitative or quantitative. According to Huckin (2004: 14-15), qualitative content analysis is descriptive, and the findings are explained while quantitative content analysis focuses on certain words that can then be presented by their frequency. However, he explains that it is more common to find content analysis research that utilizes a mix of both methods. It is generally thought (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018: 78, Hirsjärvi et. al 2015: 136-137), that research usually benefits from a mix of both qualitative and quantitative analysis as using the methods together can provide findings that might not be possible to interpret using only one method. Hirsjärvi et. al (2015: 136-137) explain that today, rather than seeing the two methods as opposites, they are seen more as complementary orientations.

In the present thesis, the ideals defined in the CEFR and NCC are the guiding theory, and the actual oral activities are the data. The oral activities are categorized by their content and what

kind of focus the activity has concerning the spoken language. I have used Hietala's (2013: 47) categorization of oral activities as a guide to determine how oral activities can be categorized by their content and for what purpose spoken language is used in activities. The activities are also further categorized into the three main activity types described in section 2.4.1: drills (and further mechanical, meaningful, and communicative), exercises, and tasks.

The present thesis can be described more as a qualitative study rather than quantitative. The aim is to interpret the content and focus of oral activities found in the data, so the analysis focuses on the qualitative analysis of the activities. The analysis is supported by visual examples of the oral activities. The publisher of the both textbook series has granted the permission to copyright. The best way to present a descriptive overview of the findings, however, is by numerical tables which include the total numbers and shares of the activity categories compared to the total number of oral activities in the textbooks when the aim is to also compare the textbook series. Therefore, the study will also contain quantitative features to complement the qualitative nature of the analysis.

The methodological framework of this thesis has now been presented. I discussed the focus of this study by presenting and explaining the research questions. I also provided reasoning why I used content analysis methodology to examine the data. Next, the chapter four will answer the research questions and present the findings of the present thesis.

4 ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings of the study to answer the three research questions explained in section 3.2. The oral activities of the textbook series will be presented in separate sections to answer the first and second research questions. Lastly, the third research question will be answered by comparing the findings of both textbook series.

The first and second research questions were concerned with what kind of oral activities can be found in language textbooks and whether the activities, and consequently the textbooks, meet the requirements of the NCC and the CEFR in the case of oral skills. To answer these questions the oral activities of both textbook series were examined. I identified a total of thirteen categories. These categories are a) discussion, b) interview, c) problem-solving, d) role-play, e) presentation, f) report, g) pronunciation, h) read-aloud, i) game, j) vocabulary and structure, k) translation, l) conversation strategies, and m) non-verbal communication. In each category, the students are expected to use the target language in a specific way, for example, in a discussion, the students are expected to express their thoughts and opinions on a certain topic. The analysis will provide examples and tables of the number of the spoken language activities found in each textbook series.

The activities were also categorized in to three main activity types: drills, exercises, and tasks. Activities that were recognized as drills were also divided into the different types of drills: mechanical, meaningful, and communicative. The numbers and shares of these activity types and examples of the activity types will be presented in tables to give a comprehensive view of the oral activity types found in each textbook series.

In this thesis, only activities where students are expected to produce the target language orally were included in the analysis. If the activity is supposed to be performed in Finnish, it was not included in the study even though it would be performed orally as the focus of this thesis is on the production of spoken language in the target language. If the instructions of the activities were unclear as to whether it was to be produced orally or in writing, they were not included. It would depend on the user to decide how the activity would be completed. Fortunately, the instructions usually inform that the activity is supposed to be performed orally with an oral task or with listen and repeat symbol (*Ponjatno!*), or it is otherwise stated (*Insights*) in the

instructions that it should be completed in pairs or in small groups. *Insights* textbooks also have a symbol indicating when a particular activity is suited to be recorded or filmed.

4.1 *Insights*

4.1.1 Activities of oral language

Table 7 presents the numbers and shares of all oral activities found in *Insights* textbook series. The newer textbook *New Insights 1-2,* which has been created to cover the first two modules (first two courses in the current NCC) in the new NCC and follows the requirements set in in the new NCC, is presented separately so that it would not cause any bias in the shares of oral activity categories.

Table 7. Activities of oral language found in *Insights* textbook series

	Insights 1	*Insights 2*	*Insights 3*	*Insights 4*	*Insights 5*	*Insights 6*	*Insights 7*	*Insights 8*	Total	%	*New Insights 1-2*	%
Discussion	15	13	9	15	10	9	6	20	97	16,0	18	12,7
Interview	4	1	-	2	3	-	1	1	12	2,0	5	3,5
Problem-solving	3	3	4	6	4	8	1	14	43	7,1	7	4,9
Role-play	5	4	3	4	4	3	2	22	47	7,8	8	5,6
Presentation	4	8	11	15	3	4	2	9	56	9,3	9	6,3
Report	7	3	10	8	8	1	8	8	53	8,8	6	4,2
Pronunciation	2	7	5	-	1	1	-	15	31	5,1	9	6,3
Read-aloud	5	3	2	6	6	5	3	1	31	5,1	5	3,5
Game	3	5	-	2	2	2	4	6	24	4,0	7	4,9
Vocabulary and structure	30	18	11	12	9	11	11	26	128	21,2	40	28,2
Translation	10	11	8	9	3	9	6	6	62	10,2	21	14,8
Conversation strategies	7	4	0	0	0	1	2	6	20	3,3	7	4,9
Non-verbal communication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0,2	-	-
Total	95	80	63	79	53	54	46	135	605		142	

As Table 7 shows, the total number of oral activities in *Insights* textbooks is 605. The most numerous oral activity type in *Insights* textbook series is vocabulary and structure with about 21% of the total number of oral activities. The other two most notable groups are discussion with about 16% share and translation with just over 10% of the total amount. Non-verbal communication is clearly the smallest group of activities with only 1 activity and 0,2% of the total amount. It was also only found in *Insights 8* which covers a course that is dedicated to spoken language.

Insights 8 has the biggest number of oral activities out of the whole series. This was quite predictable as it covers the only course that is dedicated to spoken language. The course 8 (NCC 2015: 111), which utilizes *Insights 8*, focuses on oral skills and the production of different spoken language genres. The *Learning to learn* section, at the back of the textbook, covers features of more informal spoken language genre, conversation, while also including more formal genres of speech and presentation that require much more preparation than casual conversation. The textbook presents conversational strategies that include conversational styles, compensation strategies, active listening, agreeing and disagreeing, and inclusive language. All of these features have a short introduction and explanation why they are an important part of conversational skills, they are also contrasted to the Finnish norms so that the students would become aware that people from different cultures act differently and it is important to be aware these differences exist.

The grammar part of *Insights 8* only includes phrasal verbs which are commonly used in informal spoken language. This would implicate that either the other textbooks have already covered all of the grammar of English language that A1 level English is expected to cover, or the textbook that that focuses on spoken language wants to concentrate on the one part of English grammar that is typically associated in informal oral language and not in the more formal genres, spoken or written.

As stated in the current NCC (2015: 117), the beginning of syllabus A1 level English emphasizes the importance of oral language. Written tasks will then gradually increase in numbers. This can be seen in Table 1, as the first textbook holds more oral activities than the others, besides *Insight 8*. The number of oral activities gradually decreases, with the exception of *Insight 4* which holds more oral activities than *Insights 3*. The steady decline of oral activities continues until *Insights 8*, which understandably holds the biggest number of oral activities. The total amount of activities, including written, is most likely the same throughout the

textbooks, so the decrease of oral activities would imply that the number of written activities, on the other hand, is steadily rising.

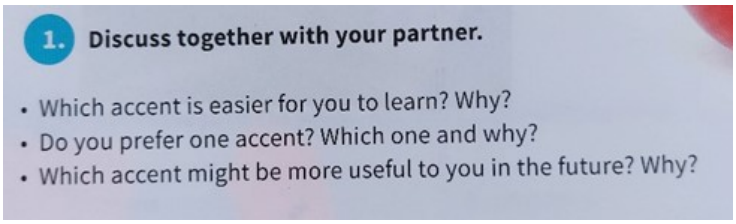
To compare the current and the upcoming NCCs, I have included in Table 1 *New Insights 1-2*, which covers the first two modules of the new NCC 2019. As can be seen, the total number of oral activities decreases when the two first modules are compiled into one book. *Insights 1* and *2* have a total number of 175 oral activities while the *New Insights 1-2* has 142. It would be assumed that the new textbook would hold about the same amount, or even more, oral activities since the new NCC (2019: 181) emphasizes that in the first two modules the aim is to support the development of reciprocal skills and production of spoken language. Of course, it is understandable that when previously two textbooks are combined into one, the number of activities decreased as the textbook has a limited amount of space. It needs to hold two textbooks' worth of grammar in addition to the chapters of two courses. So, the total number of activities, spoken and written, would therefore also be less than previously. When compared to the total number of oral activities of *Insights 1* and *2*, the shares of different oral activities in the new textbook increase in interviews, problem-solving, role-play, pronunciation, games, vocabulary and structure, and translation. There will be a smaller share of activities like discussions, presentations, reports, read-aloud, conversation strategies, and non-verbal communication (none). For example, *Insight 1* and *2* have 28 discussion activities combined, so their share of 175 oral activities is 16%, whereas the *New Insight 1-2* has only 12,7% of discussion activities out of 142 activities. The new textbook does not seem to emphasize reciprocity and conversational skills as much as the older textbooks if assumed that especially discussions, conversation strategies, and non-verbal communication activities are more beneficial to the development of reciprocal skills than the other activities listed due to the amount of free communication.

Moving on to the content of the oral activities found in the *Insight* textbook series. I will now provide examples of the different categories of oral activities found in the textbooks and discuss how these activities present and teach features of oral skills. As explained in section 2.3.1, oral skills in foreign languages have features that need special attention in language teaching as communication and interaction can differ culturally and in different genres of spoken language. It should be noted that real-life communication can be difficult to practice in a classroom environment as it might not be as natural as interaction with other speakers of English in the real-world. English speakers in real-world rarely get any instructions on what to do in communicative situations like students in English classroom do.

Discussions

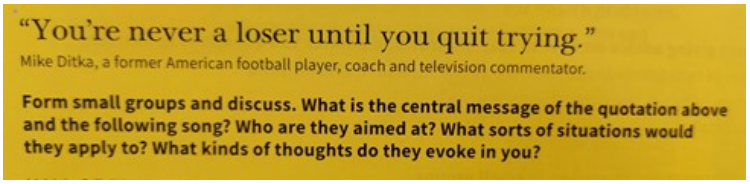
In discussions, students are expected to express their thoughts and opinions on topics provided by the textbook. The students will exchange their thoughts together freely to increase their knowledge on the topic together in pairs or in small groups. All discussion activities have a list of questions that provide the students with something to talk about, but they differ in their specificity and with how open ended the questions are. Some questions ask to give examples and reasons to the answers, most likely to ensure more in-depth answers than simple yes or no as some students might be tempted to give (Example 1, see also Footnote 1). Some give the students a bit more freedom to discuss as much as they want (Example 2).

(Example 1)



(*Insights 2*: 120)[1]

(Example 2)

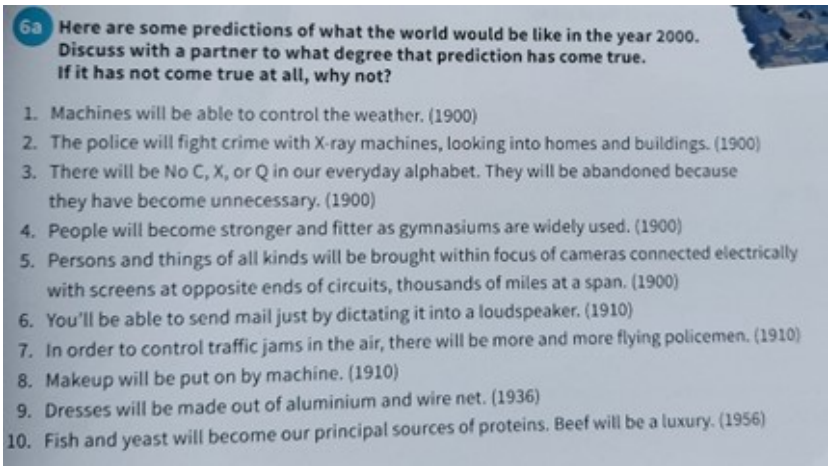


(*Insights 2*: 28)

Discussion activities are often used to engage students into the new text and its topic. The students will get a chance to express what they already know of the topic and can revive any vocabulary concerning the topic they are already familiar with (Example 3). Many of the discussion activities also come later in the chapter to cover the theme of the chapter and the students are expected to use the vocabulary learned in the text (Example 4).

[1] Otava has granted the permission to copyright 24 March 2021.

(Example 3)

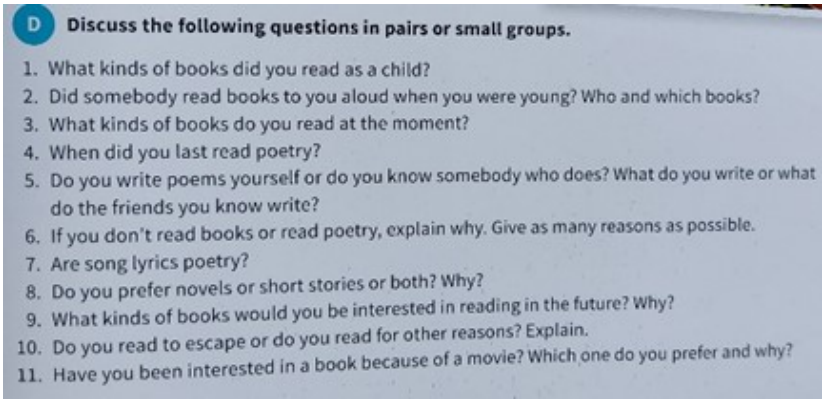


6a **Here are some predictions of what the world would be like in the year 2000. Discuss with a partner to what degree that prediction has come true. If it has not come true at all, why not?**

1. Machines will be able to control the weather. (1900)
2. The police will fight crime with X-ray machines, looking into homes and buildings. (1900)
3. There will be No C, X, or Q in our everyday alphabet. They will be abandoned because they have become unnecessary. (1900)
4. People will become stronger and fitter as gymnasiums are widely used. (1900)
5. Persons and things of all kinds will be brought within focus of cameras connected electrically with screens at opposite ends of circuits, thousands of miles at a span. (1900)
6. You'll be able to send mail just by dictating it into a loudspeaker. (1910)
7. In order to control traffic jams in the air, there will be more and more flying policemen. (1910)
8. Makeup will be put on by machine. (1910)
9. Dresses will be made out of aluminium and wire net. (1936)
10. Fish and yeast will become our principal sources of proteins. Beef will be a luxury. (1956)

(*Insights 5*: 65)

(Example 4)



D **Discuss the following questions in pairs or small groups.**

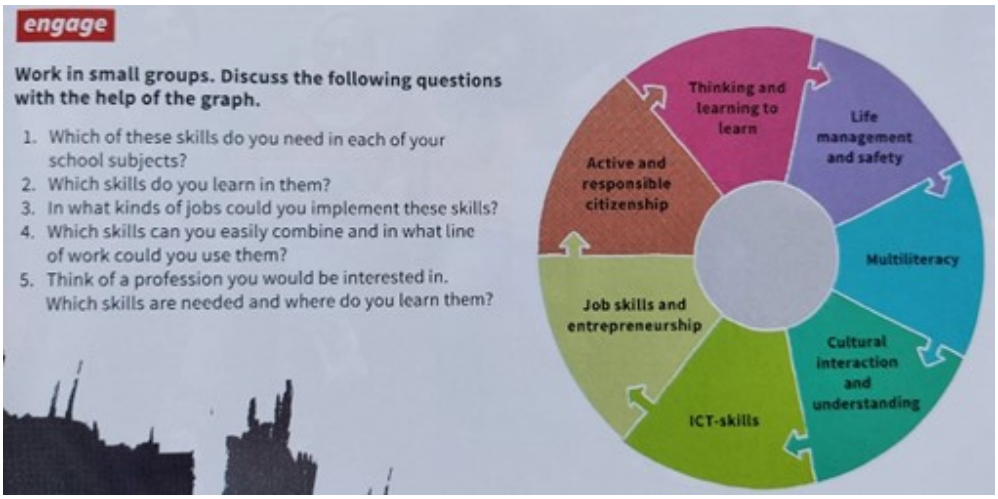
1. What kinds of books did you read as a child?
2. Did somebody read books to you aloud when you were young? Who and which books?
3. What kinds of books do you read at the moment?
4. When did you last read poetry?
5. Do you write poems yourself or do you know somebody who does? What do you write or what do the friends you know write?
6. If you don't read books or read poetry, explain why. Give as many reasons as possible.
7. Are song lyrics poetry?
8. Do you prefer novels or short stories or both? Why?
9. What kinds of books would you be interested in reading in the future? Why?
10. Do you read to escape or do you read for other reasons? Explain.
11. Have you been interested in a book because of a movie? Which one do you prefer and why?

(*Insights 3*: 47)

Sometimes the students are given certain roles in the discussion to keep track of the conversation. There might be a leader who guides the conversation and a secretary who will take notes on what the group talks about to be able to report them to class later.

In some cases, the discussion activity provides a set of charts, diagrams, and other visual cues on the topic students are supposed to discuss (Example 5).

(Example 5)



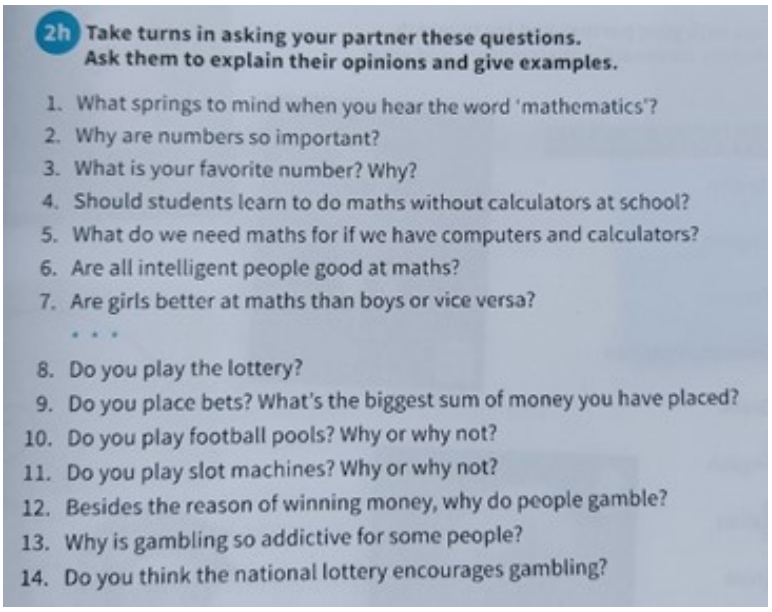
(*Insights 6*: 39)

Discussion activities provide students with a chance to practice their conversational skills in the classroom. Of course, it might not be just like in real-world, but discussion activities are quite close as the focus is on interaction with other people. In real-world discussions, outside the classroom, people are hardly ever provided with a set of discussion questions, so the flow of topics is more natural. However, in discussion activities, the students will be able to speak freely with their own words and are likely to use conversation strategies to survive situations where they might not be able to express their thoughts fluently.

Interview

Interviewing activities are close to discussions but in these activities only the student who answers is expressing their thoughts on the matter, the other just reads the question aloud. Of course, in most of the interviews, both students are supposed to answer the questions so both get a chance to produce free speech (Example 6).

(Example 6)



2h **Take turns in asking your partner these questions. Ask them to explain their opinions and give examples.**

1. What springs to mind when you hear the word 'mathematics'?
2. Why are numbers so important?
3. What is your favorite number? Why?
4. Should students learn to do maths without calculators at school?
5. What do we need maths for if we have computers and calculators?
6. Are all intelligent people good at maths?
7. Are girls better at maths than boys or vice versa?

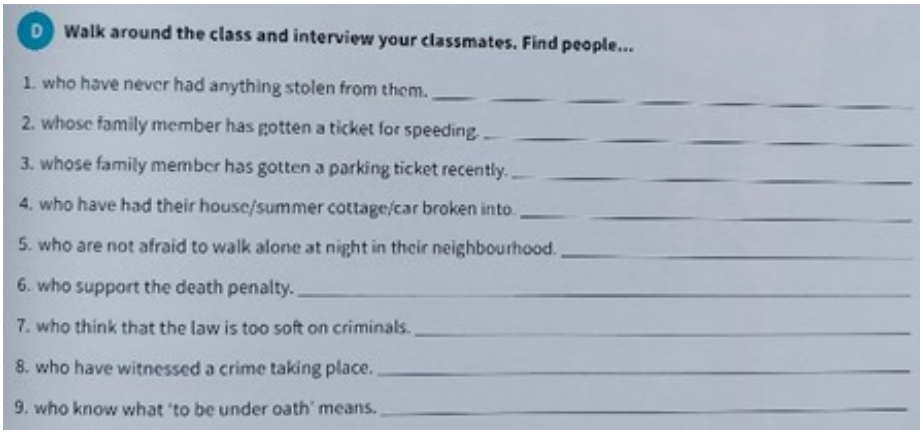
. . .

8. Do you play the lottery?
9. Do you place bets? What's the biggest sum of money you have placed?
10. Do you play football pools? Why or why not?
11. Do you play slot machines? Why or why not?
12. Besides the reason of winning money, why do people gamble?
13. Why is gambling so addictive for some people?
14. Do you think the national lottery encourages gambling?

(*Insights 5*: 29)

In some of the interviewing activities, students are expected to walk around the classroom and interact with others by asking them questions and are expected to find people to fit each of the questions. The student who answers is seemingly supposed to elaborate their answer but will most likely answer with only a yes or no (Example 7).

(Example 7)



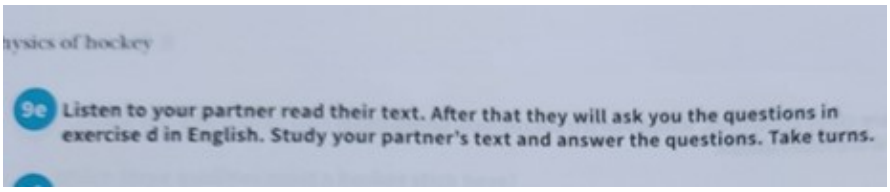
D **Walk around the class and interview your classmates. Find people...**

1. who have never had anything stolen from them. _____
2. whose family member has gotten a ticket for speeding. _____
3. whose family member has gotten a parking ticket recently. _____
4. who have had their house/summer cottage/car broken into. _____
5. who are not afraid to walk alone at night in their neighbourhood. _____
6. who support the death penalty. _____
7. who think that the law is too soft on criminals. _____
8. who have witnessed a crime taking place. _____
9. who know what 'to be under oath' means. _____

(*Insights 4*: 43)

Some interviewing activities are used to go over the text together with a partner. The students will ask each other questions on the text and the other finds the answer from the text (Example 8). The students are given different texts to read, and they will answer to questions they have previously translated into English.

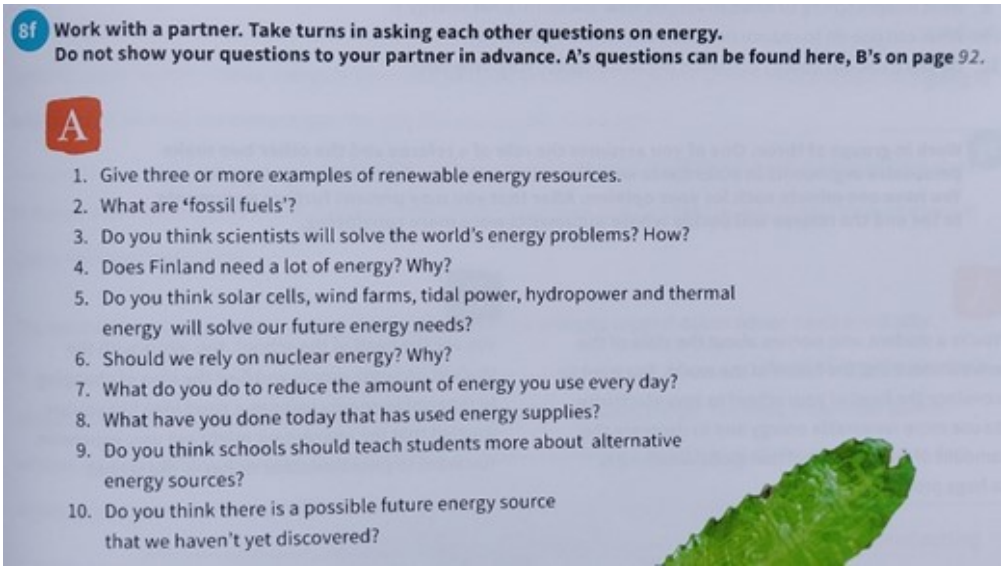
(Example 8)



(*Insights 5*: 96)

Interviewing tasks are also used as quizzes where all of the students will answer the quiz, or one student asks and the other answers. Students can quiz each other on a certain topic with a set of questions. Sometimes answers are provided but, in some cases, the purpose is to give opinions as there are not necessarily right answers to the question (Example 9). They are supposed to provoke thoughts on the topic and to raise awareness.

(Example 9)

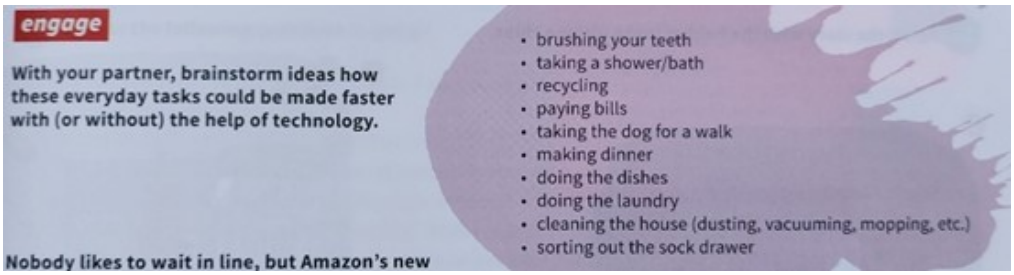


(*Insights 7*: 91)

Problem-solving

In problem-solving activities, the purpose is to reach some kind of consensus by negotiation and discussion with fellow students. The students are given a problem that they are supposed to find a solution to together (Example 10). Problem-solving is quite similar to discussion as the students will get a chance to practice interaction and their conversational skills freely with a purpose, so they are not focused on producing utterances with perfect grammar. It is more important to express opinions and come to a compromise.

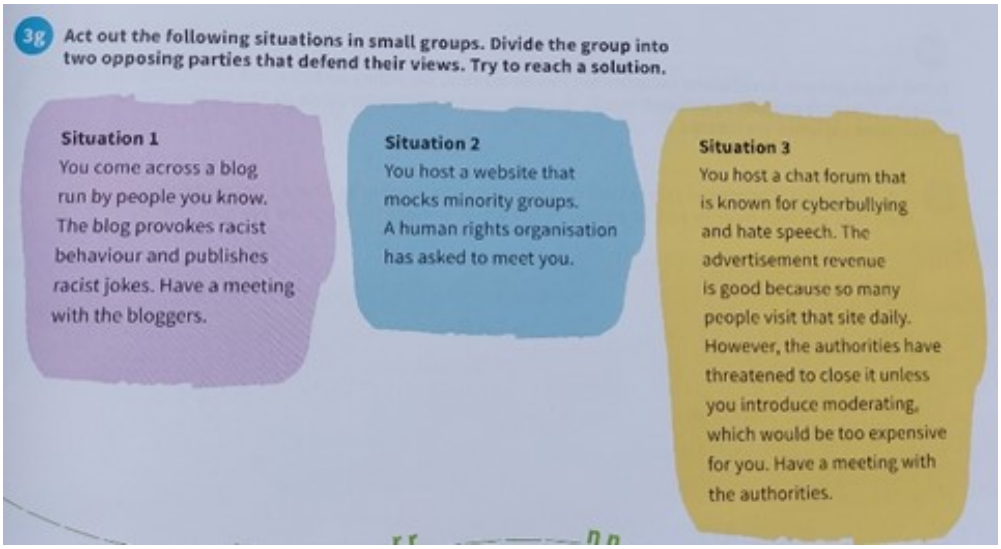
(Example 10)



(*Insights 8*: 35)

Most of the problem-solving activities cover current difficult themes from around the world. The activities raise awareness on the topic by getting the students to talk about certain issues and problems in the society. The students are not supposed to find solutions to these problems, but they are expected to discuss them and brainstorm how they could make a difference in making the world a better place. The themes cover issues such as discrimination (Example 11), war, crime, digitalization, and sustainability for example.

(Example 11)



(*Insights 4*: 37)

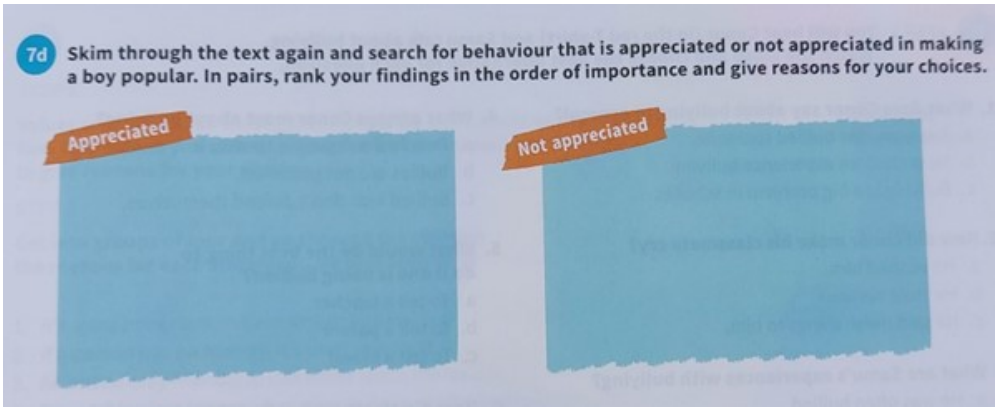
Some problem-solving activities have themes that are quite relatable for the students in upper secondary school. The topics are related to their near future such as future education or getting a job. For example, the purpose of the task is to prepare for a job interview, what kind of a music video they would create, or how to improve self-esteem. These topics are quite important in a young adult's life, so the students will get a chance to work on the topics together (Example 12).

(Example 12)

(*Insights 8*: 69)

Sometimes the problem-solving activities are used to rework the text of the chapter. In these types of activities, the students will process the text again to complete some kind of a problem or to use the ideas presented in the text to compile a list of advice like in the Example 13.

(Example 13)

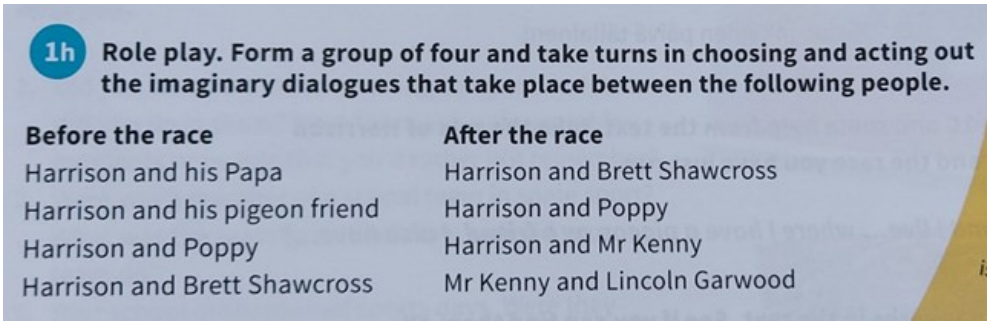


(*Insights 1*: 67)

Role-play

In role-plays, the students are supposed to act out dialogues by enacting a role. Role-plays are usually done in pairs, sometimes in small groups, and they are all given a certain role that they are supposed to reflect. The students are provided with a dialogue by the textbook, or they are expected to create their own (Example 14).

(Example 14)



(*Insights 1*: 16)

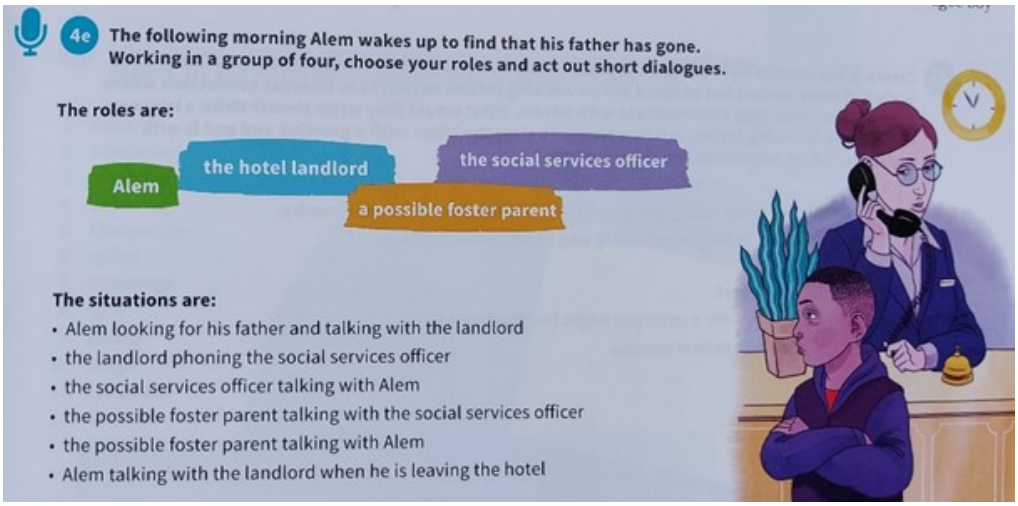
In some of the role-plays, the students use a preset dialogue with Finnish cues that they are expected to act out. These kinds of A-B role-play activities make use of the vocabulary of the text to produce the lines. The students are given a bit of freedom to come up with their own lines provided that they follow the given script. Most of the A-B dialogues have scripted the whole conversation and the students will have to come up with appropriate utterances in English. Most of the dialogues start with greetings before moving on to the topic of the conversation and end with proper goodbyes as can be seen in Example 15 below. However, there are some dialogues that start the conversation by going straight to the point without taking into account how to politely start or end a conversation. The students are just asked to discuss the topic with cues provided by the textbook unlike in Example 15 where the students are first asked to greet the other before moving on to the topic of the conversation.

(Example 15)

(*Insights 8*: 65)

In the more open-ended role-plays, the students are given a certain role, but they will have to create the dialogue between the characters themselves (Example 16). When creating their dialogue, the students are usually supposed to use the vocabulary of the chapter as the situations always somehow relate to the topic of the chapter, but they have freedom to say whatever they want. They, also, have the power to decide how complicated a dialogue they want to create. It could be very simple with short turns, or more complex, where the students create a long conversation.

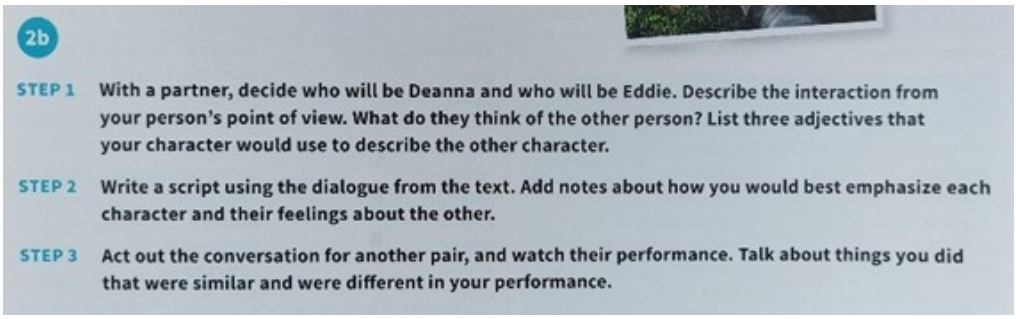
(Example 16)



(*Insights 1*: 43)

Role-play activities can be used to retell the text. The students will take on the roles of the characters and use the text to create the dialogue (Example 17). In these cases, the students are usually expected to get to know the characters a bit more so that they can become more familiar with the characters' feelings on the topic and to express them.

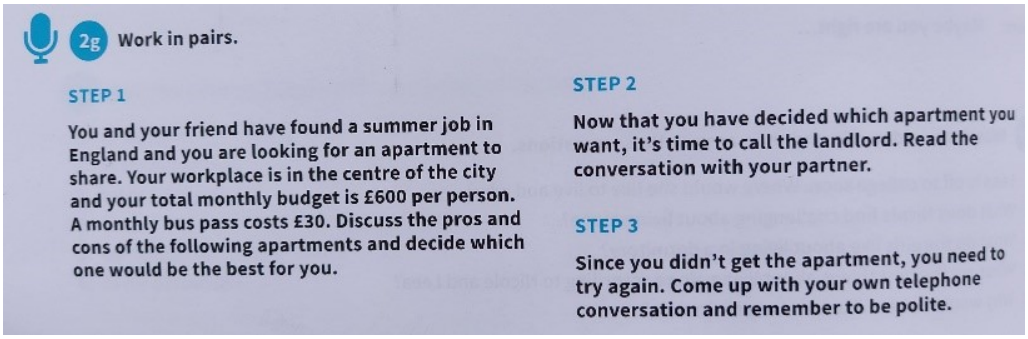
(Example 17)



(*Insights 7*: 24)

Some activities encourage the students to make use of conversation strategies to keep the conversation flowing in problematic situations. Conversation strategies are also used to make the students aware of the appropriateness of the language used in the dialogues. The students are expected to create dialogues where, for example, they are polite depending on the genre of the communicative situation (Example 18).

(Example 18)



2g Work in pairs.

STEP 1

You and your friend have found a summer job in England and you are looking for an apartment to share. Your workplace is in the centre of the city and your total monthly budget is £600 per person. A monthly bus pass costs £30. Discuss the pros and cons of the following apartments and decide which one would be the best for you.

STEP 2

Now that you have decided which apartment you want, it's time to call the landlord. Read the conversation with your partner.

STEP 3

Since you didn't get the apartment, you need to try again. Come up with your own telephone conversation and remember to be polite.

(*Insights 3*: 76)

Sometimes the students are supposed to act out the dialogue to the rest of the class or somehow record it so that it can be viewed later. Most likely so that the students can see that they can come up with many different dialogues on the same topic and that, in general, conversations do not follow same patterns.

Presentation

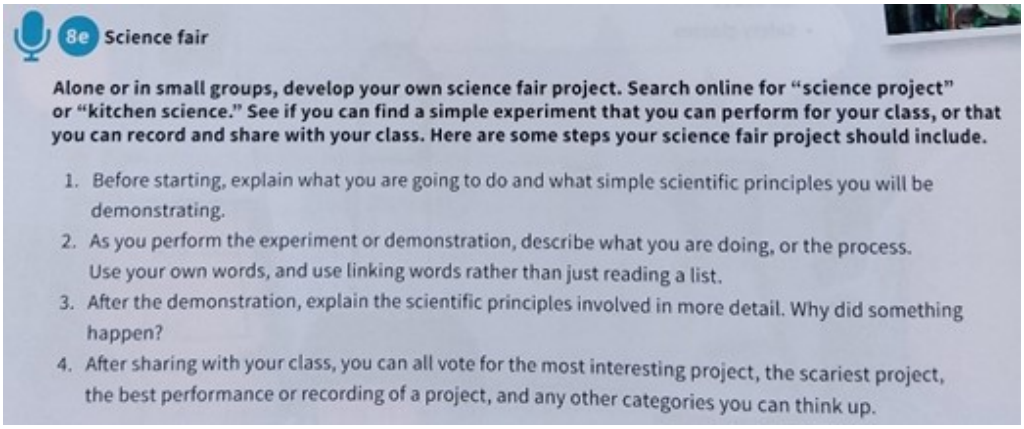
Presentations are activities where the students prepare to present their work to the whole class. They will find information on their topic and then present the information in a form of a slideshow, poster, speech, or a debate, for example. In presentation, the genre of the language use is more formal than in discussions and the student will need to have skills in producing speech for a sustained period of time. The language will also be more complex as the student will have had time to prepare what they want to say and how they want to say it. The situation is also more daunting than a normal conversation as it is produced in front of a group. While, for example discussions are executed in smaller groups where all students express their thoughts, presentation is typically performed in front of the whole class alone.

The instructions on how to do the presentation differ greatly between the activities found in *Insights* textbooks. Some give detailed instruction on how, for example, a debate is performed, while other activities only state that a presentation should be prepared.

Presentations are executed either alone or in small groups. Individual work usually requires the student to find information on a certain topic and then prepare a slideshow to present the findings. Giving a speech on a given topic is a typical individual presentation but it can be prepared in pairs or small groups. When the presentation is executed in a small group, the presentation is usually expected to be more comprehensive and interactive (Example 19). Debates, for

example, are usually prepared in pairs or small groups as they need to have people on the both opposing sides.

(Example 19)



8e Science fair

Alone or in small groups, develop your own science fair project. Search online for "science project" or "kitchen science." See if you can find a simple experiment that you can perform for your class, or that you can record and share with your class. Here are some steps your science fair project should include.

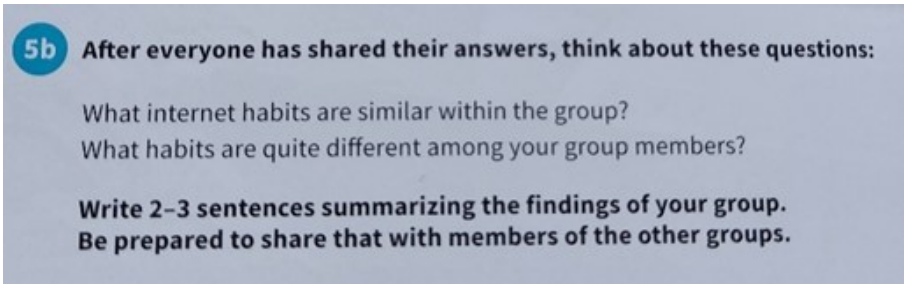
1. Before starting, explain what you are going to do and what simple scientific principles you will be demonstrating.
2. As you perform the experiment or demonstration, describe what you are doing, or the process. Use your own words, and use linking words rather than just reading a list.
3. After the demonstration, explain the scientific principles involved in more detail. Why did something happen?
4. After sharing with your class, you can all vote for the most interesting project, the scariest project, the best performance or recording of a project, and any other categories you can think up.

(*Insights 5*: 84)

Reports

Reports are similar to presentations, but they are executed in a much smaller scale. The students are often asked to report their findings of their individual works to their partner or to a small group. This does not require much planning or information gathering as the students are basically just asked to read their answers aloud to their partner. In some reporting activities, the students have completed the activity with a pair or small group, and they are then asked to give a summary of their work to the whole class like in Example 20. Some reporting activities encourage the students to ask following questions about their opinions and give reasons to their choices, so there will be some conversational aspects to the activity. In addition, reports are an easy way to bring spoken language to an otherwise written activity. Reporting activities also increase interaction in the target language even if it requires to just read the answers aloud. It can be assumed that the students will report their findings in English rather than Finnish even though it is not specifically stated.

(Example 20)



(*Insights 2*: 54)

Reporting is also used in situations where the student looks for information on the internet and they are expected to share the videos, music, or stories that they have found. They are asked to choose the ones they find most interesting or engaging to be shared in class. This encourages the students to use English in their free time as the activities seem to be given as homework and should be completed after school (Example 21).

(Example 21)

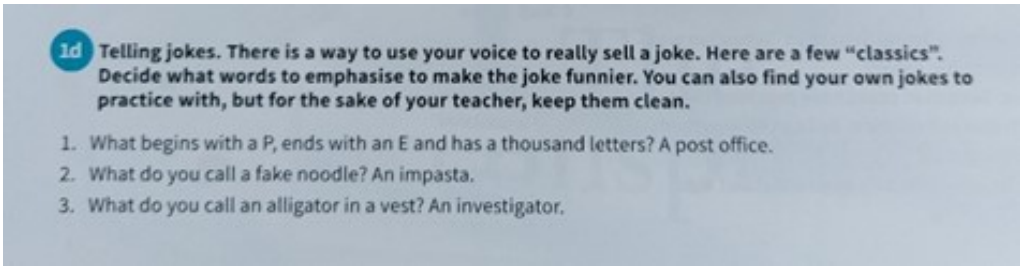
(*Insights 1*: 77)

Pronunciation

The focus in pronunciation activities is on the correct pronunciation of English. This includes prosody, or the stressing of syllables, intonation, and rhythm, and the pronunciation of words and letters. The textbooks have a Learning to Learn section where the students will find information on how to pronounce English. Most of the pronunciation activities can be found in this section, but there are some activities sprinkled to the other parts of the textbooks also, especially in *Insights 8*. Pronunciation seems to be considered part of the theory of English, just like grammar, as the whole section of pronunciation is written in Finnish, only the activities are in English and expected to be performed in English as well.

Many of the pronunciation activities ask for the student to read aloud text or dialogue while concentrating on the correct pronunciation of the words. The students are also asked to consider how intonation affects the language (Example 22). Pronunciation activities aim to have the students become confident and fluent in their pronunciation of English. (Example 23)

(Example 22)

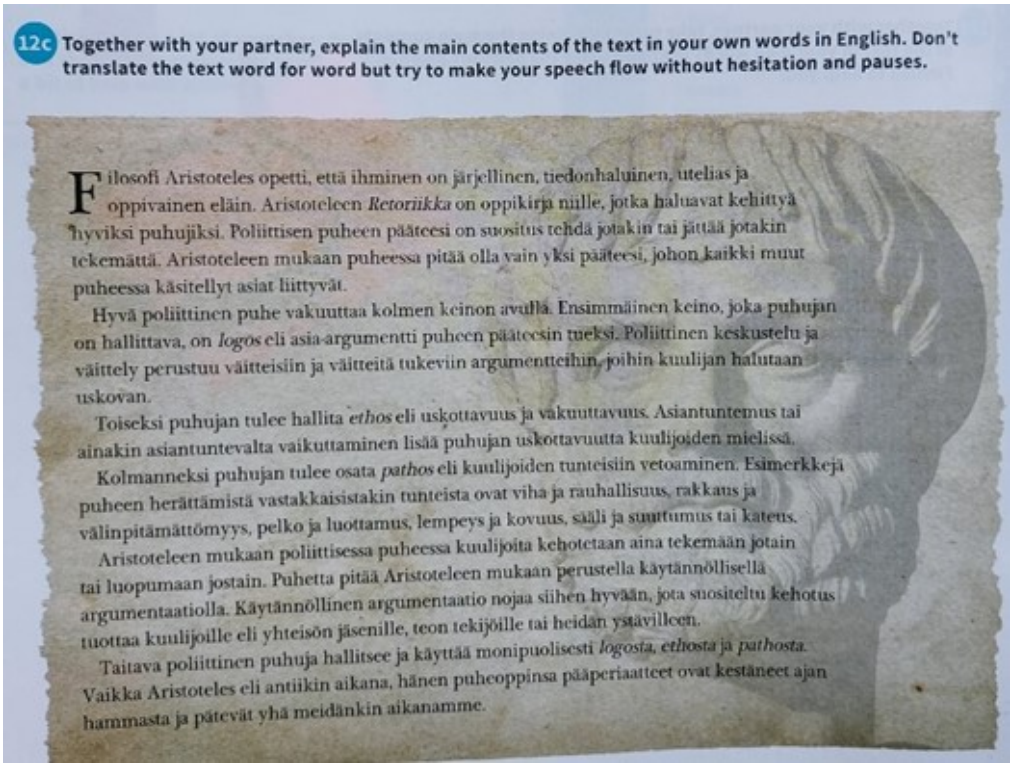


1d **Telling jokes. There is a way to use your voice to really sell a joke. Here are a few "classics". Decide what words to emphasise to make the joke funnier. You can also find your own jokes to practice with, but for the sake of your teacher, keep them clean.**

1. What begins with a P, ends with an E and has a thousand letters? A post office.
2. What do you call a fake noodle? An impasta.
3. What do you call an alligator in a vest? An investigator.

(*Insights 8*: 10)

(Example 23)



12c **Together with your partner, explain the main contents of the text in your own words in English. Don't translate the text word for word but try to make your speech flow without hesitation and pauses.**

Filosofi Aristoteles opetti, että ihminen on järjellinen, tiedonhaluinen, utelias ja oppivainen eläin. Aristoteleen *Retoriikka* on oppikirja niille, jotka haluavat kehittyä hyviksi puhujiksi. Poliittisen puheen pääteesi on suositus tehdä jotakin tai jättää jotakin tekemättä. Aristoteleen mukaan puheessa pitää olla vain yksi pääteesi, johon kaikki muut puheessa käsitellyt asiat liittyvät.

Hyvä poliittinen puhe vakuuttaa kolmen keinon avulla. Ensimmäinen keino, joka puhujan on hallittava, on *logos* eli asia-argumentti puheen pääteesin tueksi. Poliittinen keskustelu ja väittely perustuu väitteisiin ja väitteitä tukeviin argumentteihin, joihin kuulijan halutaan uskovan.

Toiseksi puhujan tulee hallita *ethos* eli uskottavuus ja vakuuttavuus. Asiantuntemus tai ainakin asiantuntevalta vaikuttaminen lisää puhujan uskottavuutta kuulijoiden mielissä.

Kolmanneksi puhujan tulee osata *pathos* eli kuulijoiden tunteisiin vetoaminen. Esimerkkejä puheen herättämistä vastakkaisistakin tunteista ovat viha ja rauhallisuus, rakkaus ja välinpitämättömyys, pelko ja luottamus, lempeys ja kovuus, sääli ja suuttumus tai kateus.

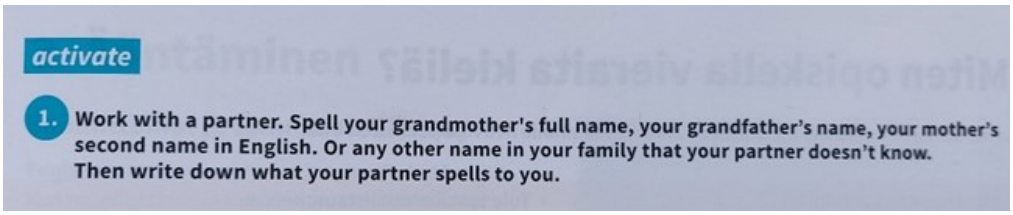
Aristoteleen mukaan poliittisessa puheessa kuulijoita kehotetaan aina tekemään jotain tai luopumaan jostain. Puhetta pitää Aristoteleen mukaan perustella käytännöllisellä argumentaatiolla. Käytännöllinen argumentaatio nojaa siihen hyvään, jota suositeltu kehotus tuottaa kuulijoille eli yhteisön jäsenille, teon tekijöille tai heidän ystävilleen.

Taitava poliittinen puhuja hallitsee ja käyttää monipuolisesti *logosta*, *ethosta* ja *pathosta*. Vaikka Aristoteles eli antiikin aikana, hänen puheoppinsa pääperiaatteet ovat kestäneet ajan hammasta ja pätevät yhä meidänkin aikanamme.

(*Insights 8*: 102)

Some pronunciation activities are very technical. The students are expected to identify words that they hear by their pronunciation alone, to practice what syllable is stressed in certain words, and to clap the rhythm on different sentences. In the first textbook *Insights 1*, the students will learn to read the English alphabet with spelling out different names so that the partner will then write them down (Example 24)

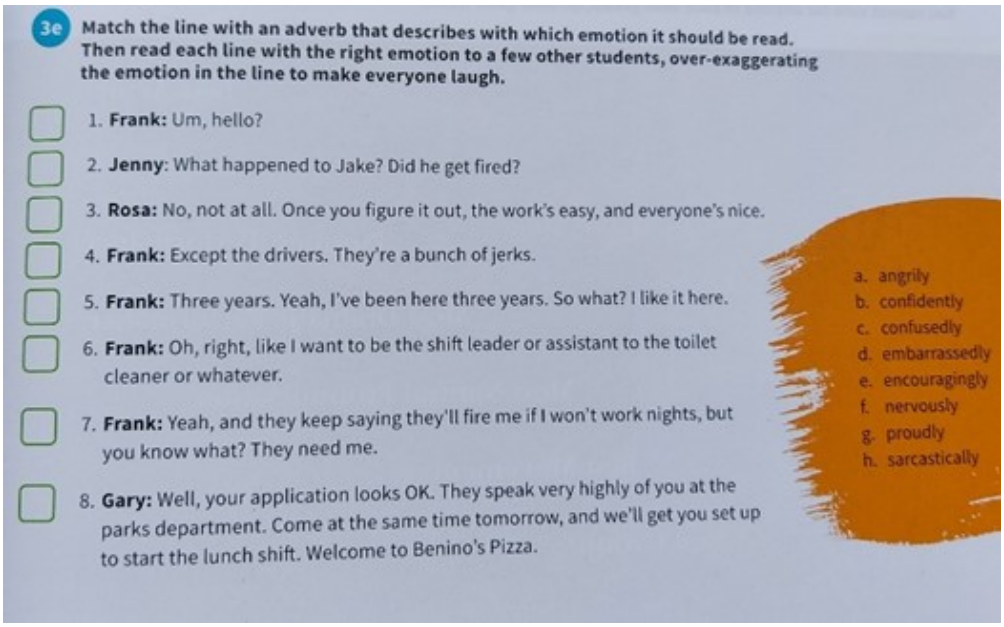
(Example 24)



(*Insights 1*: 93)

There are also pronunciation activities where the students will read a text while reflecting a given emotion. This is done to elicit certain responses from the other students. This is most likely brought up because emotion can affect intonation and rhythm (Example 25).

(Example 25)



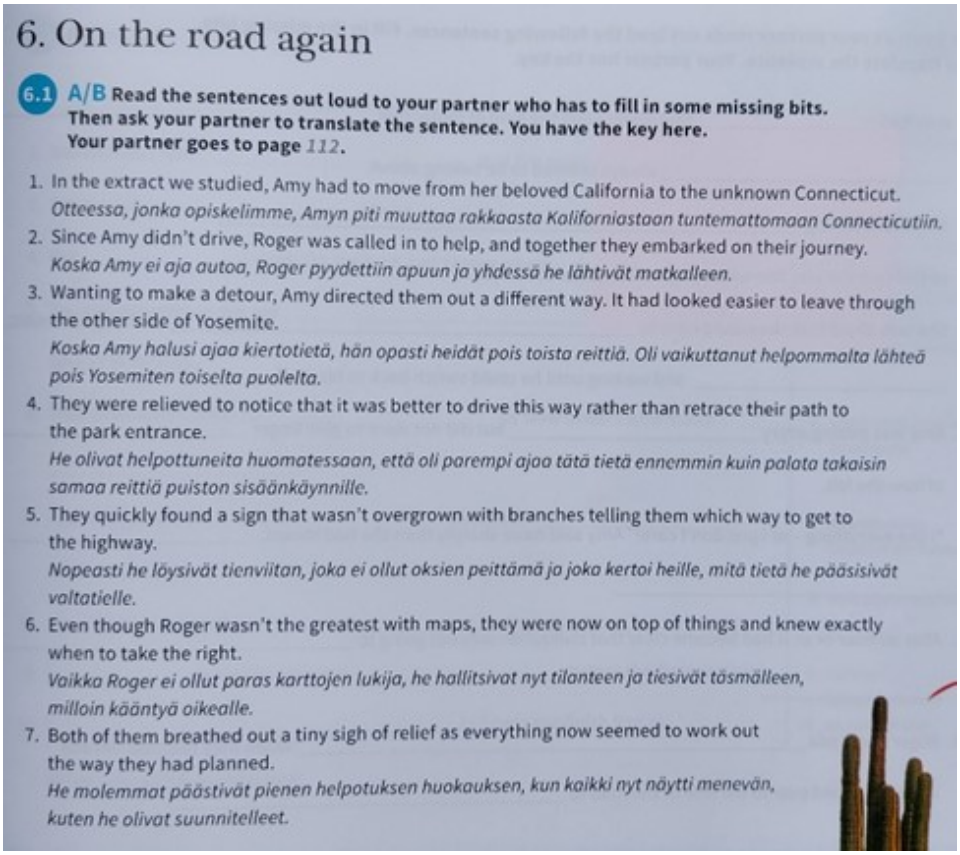
(*Insights 3*: 31)

Read-aloud

Read-aloud activities are similar to pronunciation activities except they lack the focus on pronunciation. It seems that when students are asked to read aloud something, it is only done to have the students get used to speaking in English. In these kinds of activities, the students will not really get a chance to practice their oral skills as they are just reciting what they read, but the activities will give them practice automatizing their spoken English and make them more fluent in speaking.

Read-aloud activities are also used in translation activities, but only when translating into Finnish (Example 26). One student reads a sentence out loud to another, and the other then translates it. This could almost be considered a listening comprehension activity in addition to reading out loud.

(Example 26)



6. On the road again

6.1 A/B Read the sentences out loud to your partner who has to fill in some missing bits. Then ask your partner to translate the sentence. You have the key here. Your partner goes to page 112.

1. In the extract we studied, Amy had to move from her beloved California to the unknown Connecticut.
   Otteessa, jonka opiskelimme, Amyn piti muuttaa rakkaasta Kaliforniastaan tuntemattomaan Connecticutiin.
2. Since Amy didn't drive, Roger was called in to help, and together they embarked on their journey.
   Koska Amy ei aja autoa, Roger pyydettiin apuun ja yhdessä he lähtivät matkalleen.
3. Wanting to make a detour, Amy directed them out a different way. It had looked easier to leave through the other side of Yosemite.
   Koska Amy halusi ajaa kiertotietä, hän opasti heidät pois toista reittiä. Oli vaikuttanut helpommalta lähteä pois Yosemiten toiselta puolelta.
4. They were relieved to notice that it was better to drive this way rather than retrace their path to the park entrance.
   He olivat helpottuneita huomatessaan, että oli parempi ajaa tätä tietä ennemmin kuin palata takaisin samaa reittiä puiston sisäänkäynnille.
5. They quickly found a sign that wasn't overgrown with branches telling them which way to get to the highway.
   Nopeasti he löysivät tienviitan, joka ei ollut oksien peittämä ja joka kertoi heille, mitä tietä he pääsisivät valtatielle.
6. Even though Roger wasn't the greatest with maps, they were now on top of things and knew exactly when to take the right.
   Vaikka Roger ei ollut paras karttojen lukija, he hallitsivat nyt tilanteen ja tiesivät täsmälleen, milloin kääntyä oikealle.
7. Both of them breathed out a tiny sigh of relief as everything now seemed to work out the way they had planned.
   He molemmat päästivät pienen helpotuksen huokauksen, kun kaikki nyt näytti menevän, kuten he olivat suunnitelleet.

(*Insights 2*: 103)

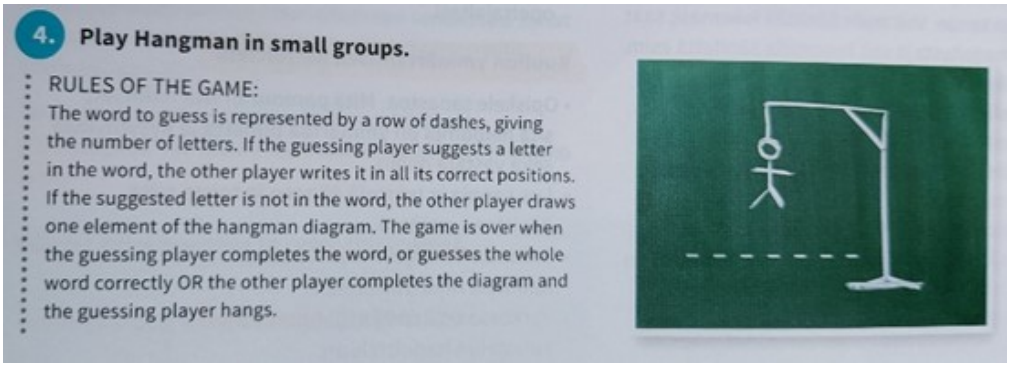
Like reporting activities, reading aloud is used to bring spoken language to writing activities. In some cases, the students will be asked to read their written production out loud to a partner. This increases the diversification in the lesson to silent writing assignments as besides writing, the students will get to read and listen.

Games

Games are supposed to be fun activities where the students will get to apply their knowledge of English in an interactive way. Usually, they will need to use learned vocabulary and structures. The games can be simple like Hangman (Example 27) or extensive like a board game where the students will have to complete some kind of an activity using English (Example 28).

However, the point is in having fun with the other students while still using English and learning.

(Example 27)

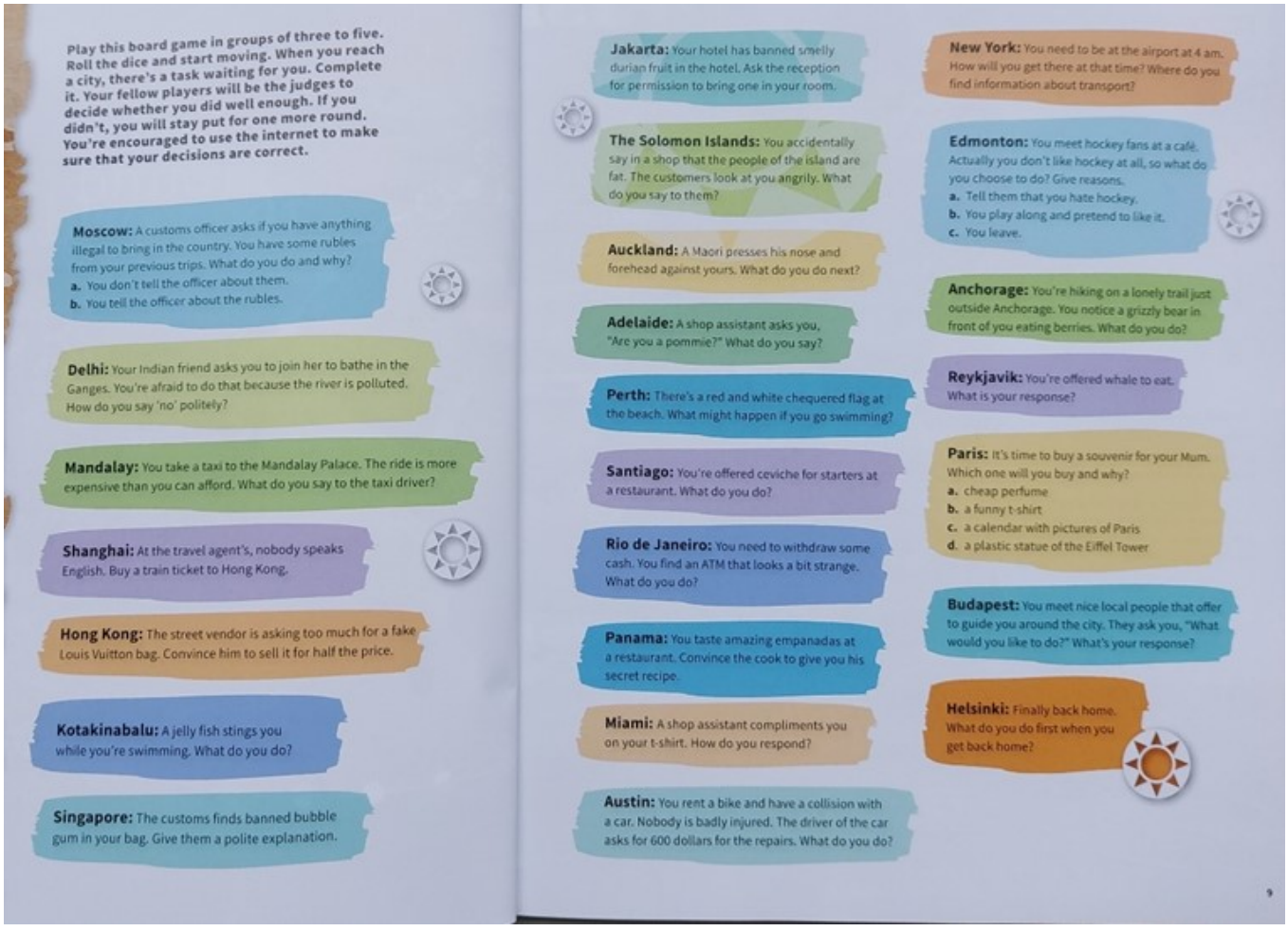


4. Play Hangman in small groups.

RULES OF THE GAME:
The word to guess is represented by a row of dashes, giving the number of letters. If the guessing player suggests a letter in the word, the other player writes it in all its correct positions. If the suggested letter is not in the word, the other player draws one element of the hangman diagram. The game is over when the guessing player completes the word, or guesses the whole word correctly OR the other player completes the diagram and the guessing player hangs.

(*Insights 1*: 93)

(Example 28)



Play this board game in groups of three to five. Roll the dice and start moving. When you reach a city, there's a task waiting for you. Complete it. Your fellow players will be the judges to decide whether you did well enough. If you didn't, you will stay put for one more round. You're encouraged to use the internet to make sure that your decisions are correct.

Moscow: A customs officer asks if you have anything illegal to bring in the country. You have some rubles from your previous trips. What do you do and why?
a. You don't tell the officer about them.
b. You tell the officer about the rubles.

Delhi: Your Indian friend asks you to join her to bathe in the Ganges. You're afraid to do that because the river is polluted. How do you say 'no' politely?

Mandalay: You take a taxi to the Mandalay Palace. The ride is more expensive than you can afford. What do you say to the taxi driver?

Shanghai: At the travel agent's, nobody speaks English. Buy a train ticket to Hong Kong.

Hong Kong: The street vendor is asking too much for a fake Louis Vuitton bag. Convince him to sell it for half the price.

Kotakinabalu: A jelly fish stings you while you're swimming. What do you do?

Singapore: The customs finds banned bubble gum in your bag. Give them a polite explanation.

Jakarta: Your hotel has banned smelly durian fruit in the hotel. Ask the reception for permission to bring one in your room.

The Solomon Islands: You accidentally say in a shop that the people of the island are fat. The customers look at you angrily. What do you say to them?

Auckland: A Maori presses his nose and forehead against yours. What do you do next?

Adelaide: A shop assistant asks you, "Are you a pommie?" What do you say?

Perth: There's a red and white chequered flag at the beach. What might happen if you go swimming?

Santiago: You're offered ceviche for starters at a restaurant. What do you do?

Rio de Janeiro: You need to withdraw some cash. You find an ATM that looks a bit strange. What do you do?

Panama: You taste amazing empanadas at a restaurant. Convince the cook to give you his secret recipe.

Miami: A shop assistant compliments you on your t-shirt. How do you respond?

Austin: You rent a bike and have a collision with a car. Nobody is badly injured. The driver of the car asks for 600 dollars for the repairs. What do you do?

New York: You need to be at the airport at 4 am. How will you get there at that time? Where do you find information about transport?

Edmonton: You meet hockey fans at a café. Actually you don't like hockey at all, so what do you choose to do? Give reasons.
a. Tell them that you hate hockey.
b. You play along and pretend to like it.
c. You leave.

Anchorage: You're hiking on a lonely trail just outside Anchorage. You notice a grizzly bear in front of you eating berries. What do you do?

Reykjavik: You're offered whale to eat. What is your response?

Paris: It's time to buy a souvenir for your Mum. Which one will you buy and why?
a. cheap perfume
b. a funny t-shirt
c. a calendar with pictures of Paris
d. a plastic statue of the Eiffel Tower

Budapest: You meet nice local people that offer to guide you around the city. They ask you, "What would you like to do?" What's your response?

Helsinki: Finally back home. What do you do first when you get back home?

(*Insights 2*: 8-9)

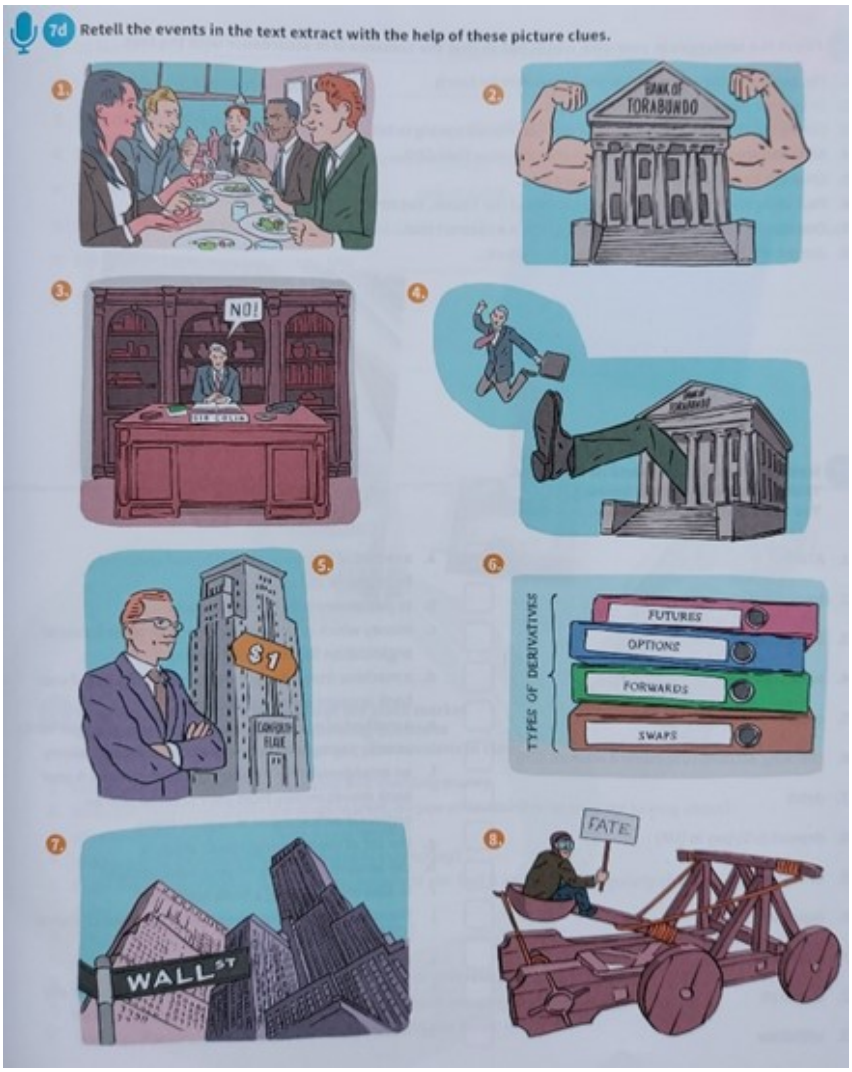
In this game (Example 28), the students will need to practice appropriateness. In each town, there is a task waiting for the student to express appropriate phrases to each situation. The activity takes into account cultural norms and differences by having realistic situations that the students might be expected to encounter while visiting these towns in real-life. The students are also encouraged to use the internet to search if they would act appropriately in the situations.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary and structure activities are the most numerous ones of the oral activities in the *Insight* textbook series. In these kinds of activities, the students will practice the vocabulary introduced in the text of the chapter or grammatical structures in the grammar section. Oral skills are usually secondary to the structure, but there are still a lot of vocabulary and structure activities where the student can use their own words more freely.

Usually, the students are asked to retell the text by giving visual cues or answering questions (Example 29). The visual cues are used to help the students remember the main parts of what happened in the text without needing to read the whole text again. However, the students will most likely frequently consult the given text to find the exact parts that are presented in the pictures or questions.

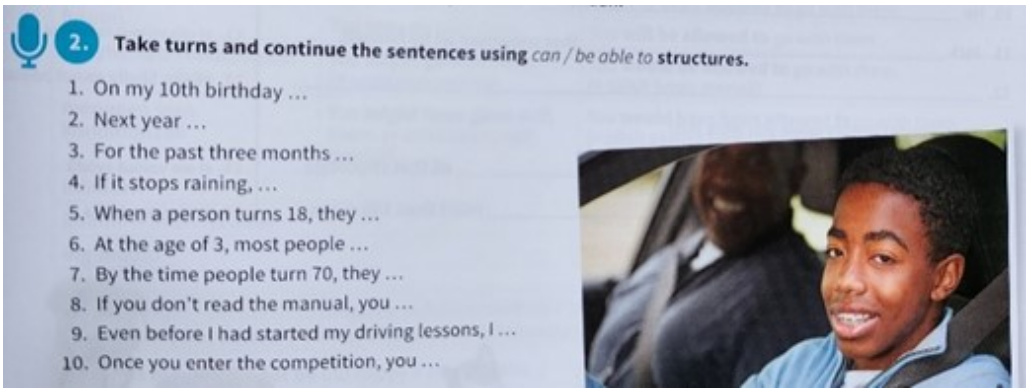
(Example 29)



(*Insights 6*: 69)

As already mentioned, vocabulary and structure activities can usually be found in the grammar section of the textbooks. The grammatical structures are usually practiced by having the students produce the given structure. For example, the students are asked to produce sentences orally with a partner (Example 30), or they will need to describe a picture by using the given grammatical structure.

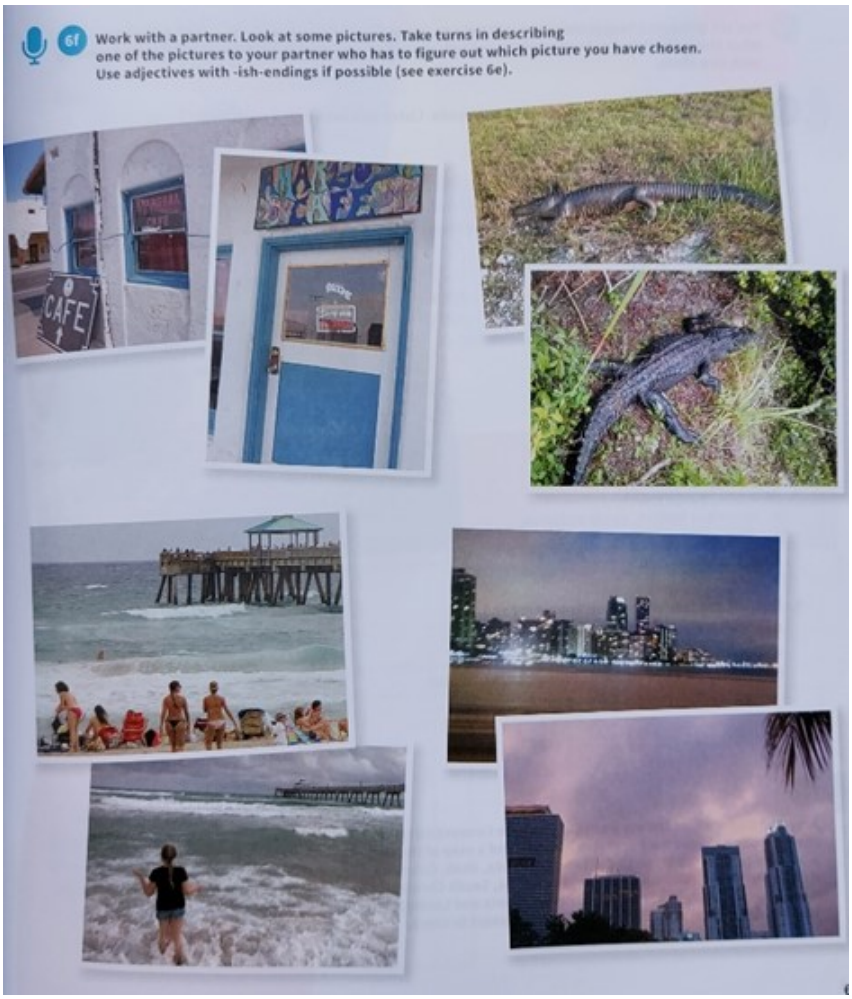
(Example 30)



(*Insights 4*: 139)

Vocabulary and structure activities are also used in word and picture explanation activities, where one student explains a word to the other without saying the word itself, the other then tries to guess the word from the explanation. In the case of picture explanation activities, such as Example 31, one student will describe a picture and the other will guess which picture is being described from two quite similar pictures.

(Example 31)



(*Insights 2*: 65)

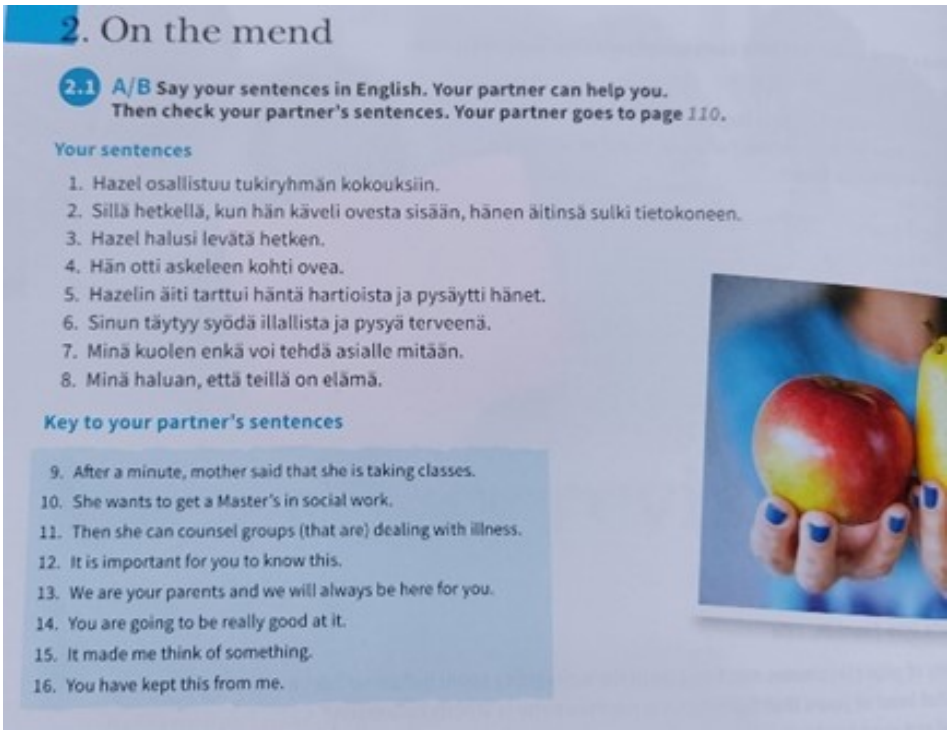
Vocabulary and structure activities give the students some freedom to display their oral language skills, but they are quite restricting with what the students are able to say. It is usually implied that the students should complete the activities using particular vocabulary or grammatical structures, but there is usually a chance that the students would be able to complete them with other means. Returning to Example 31, the instruction asks the students to use adjectives with -ish-endings but there is always a chance that the students would be able to complete the activity by not using said adjectives.

Translation

In translation activities, the students are given a sentence in Finnish that they are supposed to translate exactly and word for word into English. Many of the translation activities in *Insights* textbook series are completed orally with a partner who checks that the sentence is translated

correctly. Just like vocabulary and structure activities, the students are supposed to use the vocabulary learned from the text (Example 32). They are also used to practice grammatical structures.

(Example 32)



2. On the mend

2.1 A/B Say your sentences in English. Your partner can help you. Then check your partner's sentences. Your partner goes to page 110.

Your sentences

1. Hazel osallistuu tukiryhmän kokouksiin.
2. Sillä hetkellä, kun hän käveli ovesta sisään, hänen äitinsä sulki tietokoneen.
3. Hazel halusi levätä hetken.
4. Hän otti askeleen kohti ovea.
5. Hazelin äiti tarttui häntä hartioista ja pysäytti hänet.
6. Sinun täytyy syödä illallista ja pysyä terveenä.
7. Minä kuolen enkä voi tehdä asialle mitään.
8. Minä haluan, että teillä on elämä.

Key to your partner's sentences

9. After a minute, mother said that she is taking classes.
10. She wants to get a Master's in social work.
11. Then she can counsel groups (that are) dealing with illness.
12. It is important for you to know this.
13. We are your parents and we will always be here for you.
14. You are going to be really good at it.
15. It made me think of something.
16. You have kept this from me.

(*Insights 2*: 98)

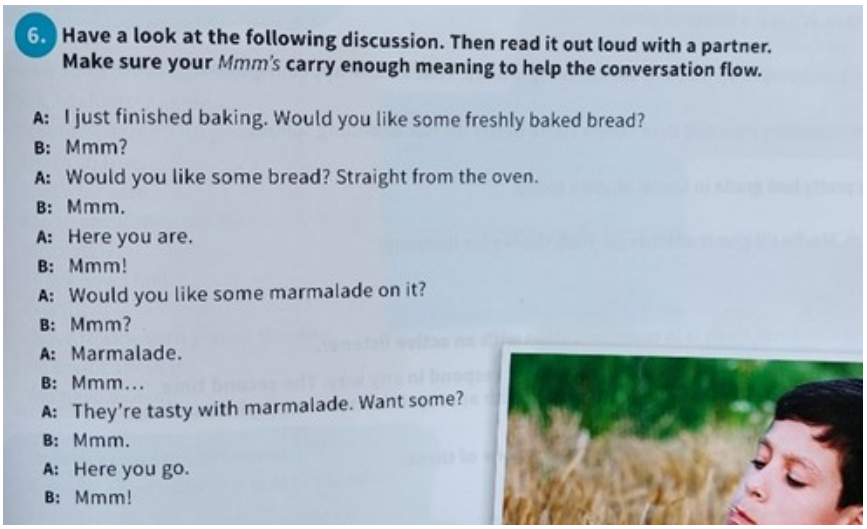
In some cases, the translation does not need to be word for word. In some activities, the students translate idioms that might not be exactly the same in Finnish and in English. Then, the students will use the idioms that can be found in the text to complete the translations. Sometimes the students are expected to first translate questions and then answer them. This gives the students a chance to use their own words and skills in English to provide an answer.

Being able to form phrases is certainly an important part of oral language so translation activities are justified. When they are done orally, they become more interactive as the students will translate the sentences to each other while the other checks that it is done correctly. If the translations would only be done individually in writing, the students would not have the opportunity to say anything out loud in English. Oral translation activities, admittedly, do not have real oral communication as it is just projecting prefabricated written text orally, but at least it benefits oral skills a little.

Conversation strategies

The focus on conversation strategy activities is on practicing how to communicate with other people. Especially in *Insights 8*, there is a section dedicated to conversation strategies covering conversational styles, compensation strategies, how to be an active listener, and how to agree and disagree. Besides these, the section has instructions on giving a speech and how to use inclusive language, but as these two parts do not have activities that focus on conversation strategies. The activities cover, for example, giving feedback to encourage the other student to keep talking (Example 33) and how to compensate when one does not remember or know a certain word.

(Example 33)

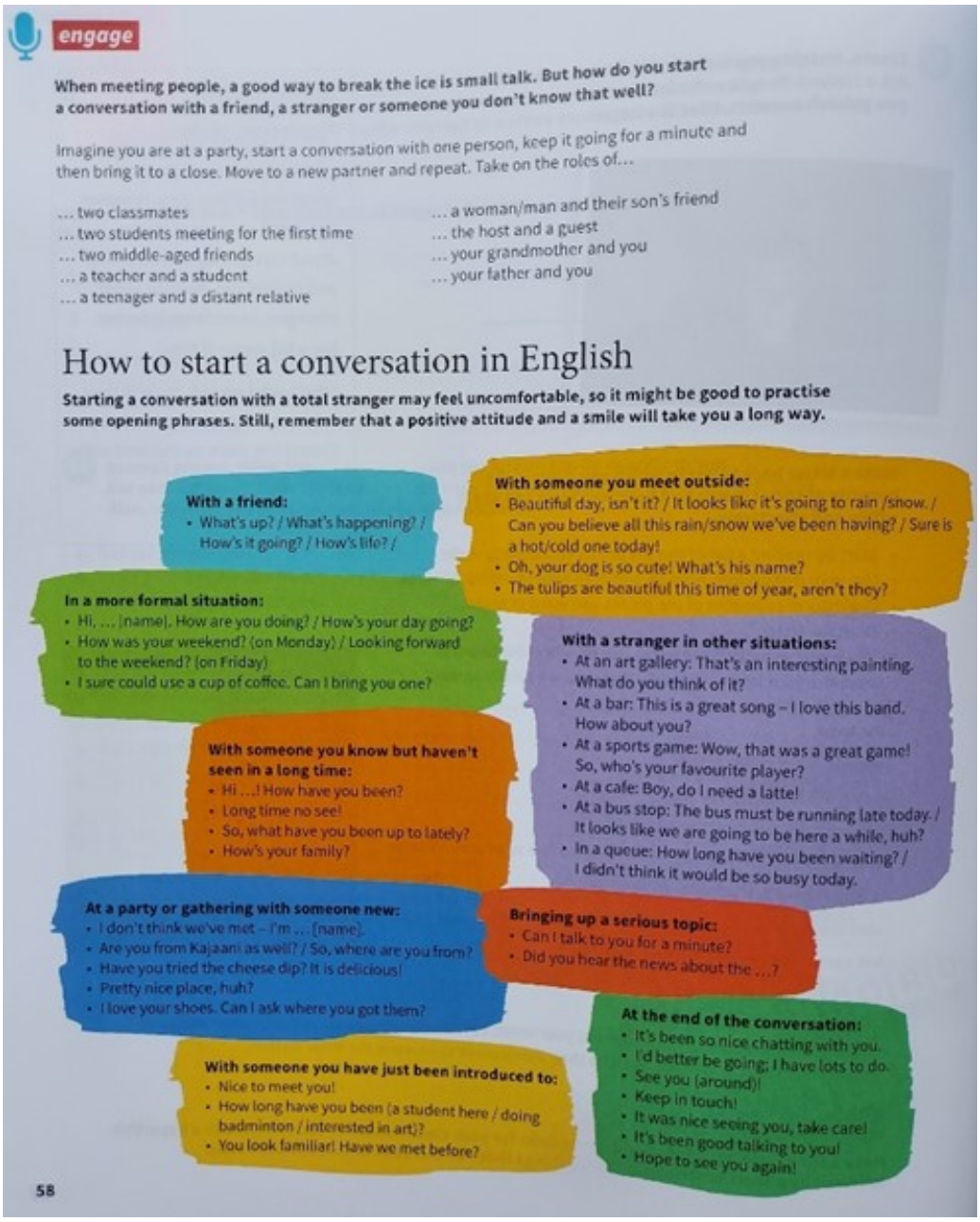


6. **Have a look at the following discussion. Then read it out loud with a partner. Make sure your *Mmm's* carry enough meaning to help the conversation flow.**

A: I just finished baking. Would you like some freshly baked bread?
B: Mmm?
A: Would you like some bread? Straight from the oven.
B: Mmm.
A: Here you are.
B: Mmm!
A: Would you like some marmalade on it?
B: Mmm?
A: Marmalade.
B: Mmm…
A: They're tasty with marmalade. Want some?
B: Mmm.
A: Here you go.
B: Mmm!

(*Insights 8*: 125)

(Example 34)



engage

When meeting people, a good way to break the ice is small talk. But how do you start a conversation with a friend, a stranger or someone you don't know that well?

Imagine you are at a party, start a conversation with one person, keep it going for a minute and then bring it to a close. Move to a new partner and repeat. Take on the roles of…

… two classmates
… two students meeting for the first time
… two middle-aged friends
… a teacher and a student
… a teenager and a distant relative
… a woman/man and their son's friend
… the host and a guest
… your grandmother and you
… your father and you

How to start a conversation in English

Starting a conversation with a total stranger may feel uncomfortable, so it might be good to practise some opening phrases. Still, remember that a positive attitude and a smile will take you a long way.

With a friend:
- What's up? / What's happening? / How's it going? / How's life? /

With someone you meet outside:
- Beautiful day, isn't it? / It looks like it's going to rain /snow. / Can you believe all this rain/snow we've been having? / Sure is a hot/cold one today!
- Oh, your dog is so cute! What's his name?
- The tulips are beautiful this time of year, aren't they?

In a more formal situation:
- Hi, … [name]. How are you doing? / How's your day going?
- How was your weekend? (on Monday) / Looking forward to the weekend? (on Friday)
- I sure could use a cup of coffee. Can I bring you one?

With a stranger in other situations:
- At an art gallery: That's an interesting painting. What do you think of it?
- At a bar: This is a great song – I love this band. How about you?
- At a sports game: Wow, that was a great game! So, who's your favourite player?
- At a cafe: Boy, do I need a latte!
- At a bus stop: The bus must be running late today. / It looks like we are going to be here a while, huh?
- In a queue: How long have you been waiting? / I didn't think it would be so busy today.

With someone you know but haven't seen in a long time:
- Hi …! How have you been?
- Long time no see!
- So, what have you been up to lately?
- How's your family?

At a party or gathering with someone new:
- I don't think we've met – I'm … [name].
- Are you from Kajaani as well? / So, where are you from?
- Have you tried the cheese dip? It is delicious!
- Pretty nice place, huh?
- I love your shoes. Can I ask where you got them?

Bringing up a serious topic:
- Can I talk to you for a minute?
- Did you hear the news about the …?

At the end of the conversation:
- It's been so nice chatting with you.
- I'd better be going; I have lots to do.
- See you (around)!
- Keep in touch!
- It was nice seeing you, take care!
- It's been good talking to you!
- Hope to see you again!

With someone you have just been introduced to:
- Nice to meet you!
- How long have you been (a student here / doing badminton / interested in art)?
- You look familiar! Have we met before?

58

(*Insights 2*: 58)

Formality of the communicative situation is also addressed. In this activity (Example 34), students will practice small talk in different situations that also differ in their formality. The students will have to work out what kind of language is appropriate to be used in the scenarios.

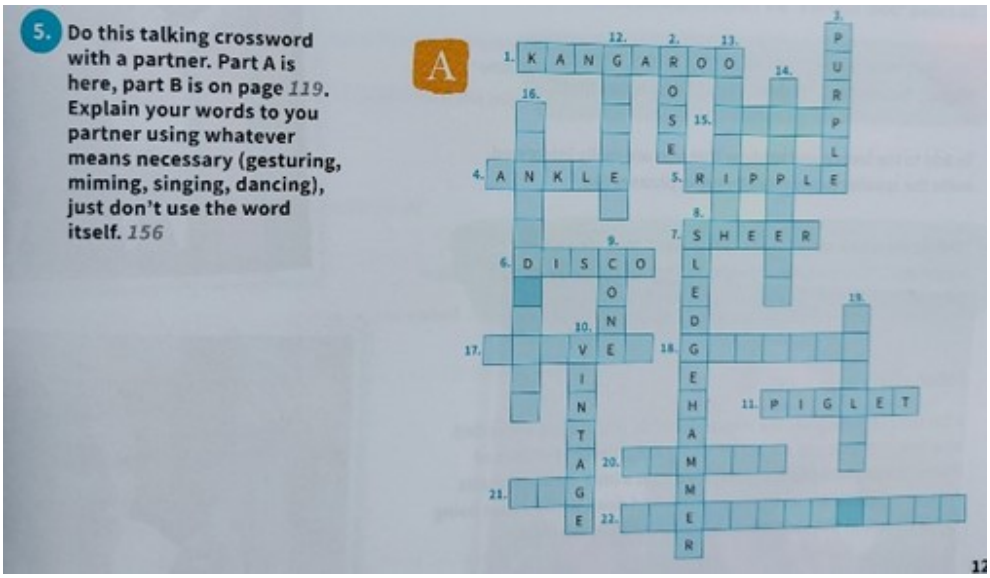
I have also included in this category activities where the student is expected to give oral feedback on another student's work, whether written or spoken. The students will practice phrases such as *In my opinion* and *I think that*. They will most likely also try to be as polite as they can

to not embarrass the other student which will give them practice in how to mellow out their expressions if they interpret that the other student perceives the feedback as too harsh.

Non-verbal communication

Even if there is only one non-verbal activity in the textbook series, the conversation strategy section of *Insights 8* explains briefly how non-verbal communication and gestures can be used as a compensation strategy when one does not remember a certain word, for example. However, the section ignores the other features of non-verbality such as facial expressions, posture, and spatial behaviour. Non-verbality is also mentioned in association with active listening, specifically in giving non-verbal feedback to the speaker. Non-verbal communication is an important part of communication, so it is unfortunate that non-verbal aspects are only brought up in one activity in the whole textbook series. However, gladly, it is brought to attention as part of the conversation strategies. In the task, the student is supposed to explain a word to another student by any means necessary (Example 35). The instructions only state gesturing, miming, singing, and dancing, so the students are most likely to use just that, even if the instructions do not limit the completion of the activity to just non-verbality.

(Example 35)



(*Insights 8*: 123)

4.1.2 The activity types: drills, exercises, and tasks

As described in section 2.4.1, oral activities can be divided into three main types: drills, exercises, and tasks. To sum up the theory, drills are the most mechanical types of activities and they can be further divided into mechanical drills, meaningful drills, and communicative drills. Exercises and tasks are more communicative while having different purposes with exercises being more concerned with the structures of the language, and tasks focusing on the meaning. In tasks, the student uses the language like they would in real-world communication, while in exercises, students have the role of a learner and the learning is purposeful. Next, oral activities that I found in *Insight* textbook series will be categorized according to the definitions of the three activity types.

Table 8. The number of the three main activity types found in *Insights* textbook series.

	Drills	Exercises	Tasks	Total
Insights 1	14	44	37	95
Insights 2	11	35	34	80
Insights 3	11	33	19	63
Insights 4	10	23	44	78
Insights 5	8	13	32	53
Insights 6	9	17	28	54
Insights 7	8	10	27	45
Insights 8	26	27	84	135
Total	97	203	305	605
%	16,0	33,4	50,4	
New Insights 1-3	26	65	51	142
%	18,3	45,8	35,9	

Table 8 represents the numbers and shares of the three activity types of oral activities identified from *Insight* textbook series. As can be seen, the most common activity type is task with just over half of the oral activities belonging to this group. The second most common activity type is exercise, with about the third of the oral activities. Drills are the smallest group of activities with only 16% of the tasks belonging to them. This distribution is quite a delightful find, as tasks are defined as the most communicative activity type, so the students have a more versatile chance to practice their oral skills. When about half of the activities are tasks, the focus of most activities is on the content and use of English, and not in the production of perfect sentences. The number of drills is much lower than the number of exercises and tasks. Taking notice of

the criticism that drills face (see section 2.4.1), it seems appropriate that they are not represented with a higher number in the textbook series.

When comparing the older *Insights 1* and *2* to the new textbook *New Insights 1-2*, it seems that there is an increase in the shares of drills and exercises, while the share of tasks is decreasing from 40,6% to about 36%. As I do not have data from the rest of the textbooks of the newer series, I cannot determine if the increase of drills and exercises to the detriment of tasks will continue as the series progresses. The direction is still worrisome.

Table 9. The number of the three drill types found in *Insights* textbook series,

	Mechanical	Meaningful	Communicative
Insights 1	9	5	-
Insights 2	10	1	-
Insights 3	9	2	-
Insights 4	4	4	2
Insights 5	7	1	-
Insights 6	5	4	-
Insights 7	2	3	3
Insights 8	12	10	4
Total	58	30	9
%	59,8	30,9	9,3
New Insights 1-3	18	6	2
%	69,2	23,1	7,7

Table 9 shows the numbers and shares of the three types of drills found in *Insight* textbooks. Most of the drills are identified as mechanical, with almost 60% of the total number of drills. The next biggest type is meaningful with about third of the drills. Communicative drills are the smallest group of drills, with under 10% of the drills being communicative. Mechanical drills are the most controlled type of drills and there is only one answer to the activity.

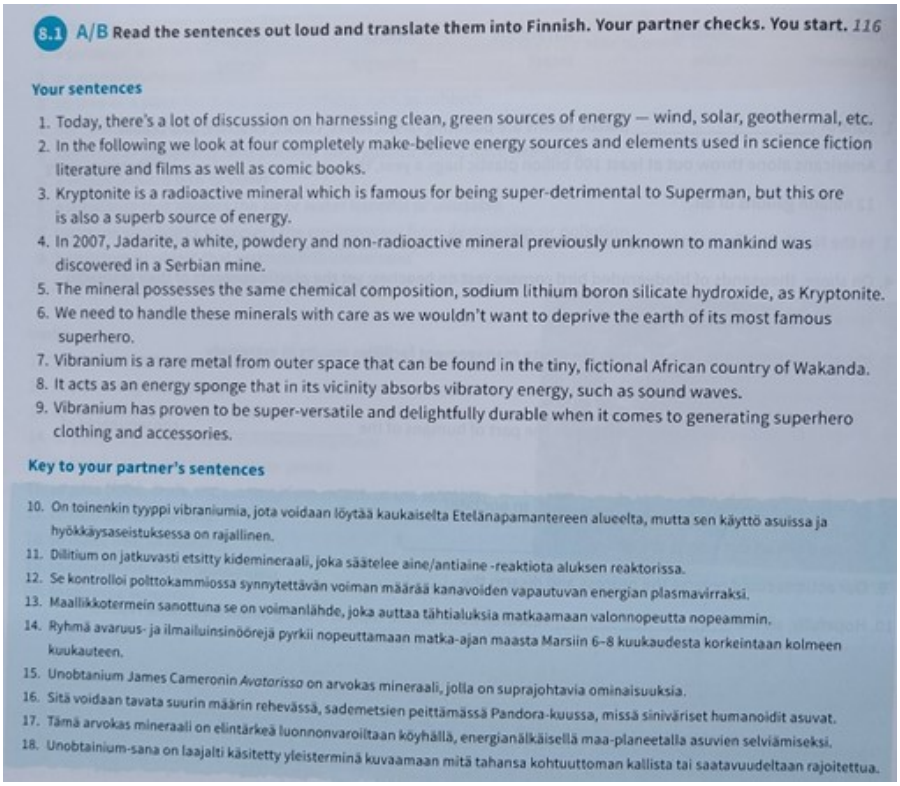
In this category, the direction of *New Insights 1-2* is more positive than when categorizing activities into drills, exercises, and tasks. *New Insights 1*-2 have less mechanical and meaningful drills in comparison to Insights 1 and 2. Mechanical drills drop from 76% to under 70% and meaningful drills decrease only a bit, about 1%. On the other hand, the new textbook has two communicative drill activities, which cannot be found in the older textbooks, so it seems that drills are changing to a more communicative direction.

Next, examples of the three activity types will be presented. The tasks were identified by their content and divided into the three activity types.

Drills

Drills are typically found in activities where the student is asked to read aloud. Mechanical drills are described as activities where almost anyone would be able to complete the task. Read-aloud activities are quite mechanical, anyone who can read Latin alphabet would be able to read English quite well, especially if they have just a bit of understanding how to pronounce English. Read-aloud activities are, thus, mostly mechanical (Example 36).

(Example 36)



8.1 A/B Read the sentences out loud and translate them into Finnish. Your partner checks. You start. *116*

Your sentences

1. Today, there's a lot of discussion on harnessing clean, green sources of energy — wind, solar, geothermal, etc.
2. In the following we look at four completely make-believe energy sources and elements used in science fiction literature and films as well as comic books.
3. Kryptonite is a radioactive mineral which is famous for being super-detrimental to Superman, but this ore is also a superb source of energy.
4. In 2007, Jadarite, a white, powdery and non-radioactive mineral previously unknown to mankind was discovered in a Serbian mine.
5. The mineral possesses the same chemical composition, sodium lithium boron silicate hydroxide, as Kryptonite.
6. We need to handle these minerals with care as we wouldn't want to deprive the earth of its most famous superhero.
7. Vibranium is a rare metal from outer space that can be found in the tiny, fictional African country of Wakanda.
8. It acts as an energy sponge that in its vicinity absorbs vibratory energy, such as sound waves.
9. Vibranium has proven to be super-versatile and delightfully durable when it comes to generating superhero clothing and accessories.

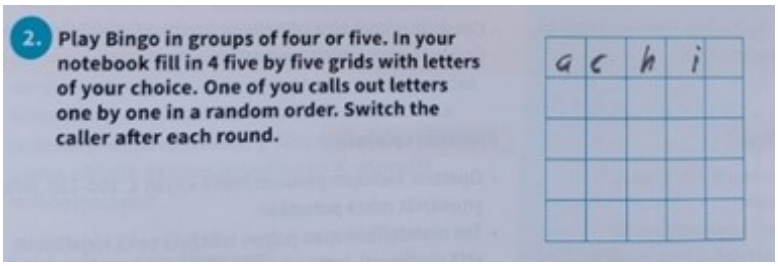
Key to your partner's sentences

10. On toinenkin tyyppi vibraniumia, jota voidaan löytää kaukaiselta Etelänapamantereen alueelta, mutta sen käyttö asuissa ja hyökkäysaseistuksessa on rajallinen.
11. Dilitium on jatkuvasti etsitty kidemineraali, joka säätelee aine/antiaine -reaktiota aluksen reaktorissa.
12. Se kontrolloi polttokammiossa synnytettävän voiman määrää kanavoiden vapautuvan energian plasmavirraksi.
13. Maallikkotermein sanottuna se on voimanlähde, joka auttaa tähtialuksia matkaamaan valonnopeutta nopeammin.
14. Ryhmä avaruus- ja ilmailuinsinöörejä pyrkii nopeuttamaan matka-ajan maasta Marsiin 6–8 kuukaudesta korkeintaan kolmeen kuukauteen.
15. Unobtanium James Cameronin *Avatarissa* on arvokas mineraali, jolla on suprajohtavia ominaisuuksia.
16. Sitä voidaan tavata suurin määrin rehevässä, sademetsien peittämässä Pandora-kuussa, missä siniväriset humanoidit asuvat.
17. Tämä arvokas mineraali on elintärkeä luonnonvaroiltaan köyhällä, energianälkäisellä maa-planeetalla asuvien selviämiseksi.
18. Unobtainium-sana on laajalti käsitetty yleisterminä kuvaamaan mitä tahansa kohtuuttoman kallista tai saatavuudeltaan rajoitettua.

(*Insights 7*: 110)

Other activities that belong to the mechanical drill activities often include pronunciation and spelling (Example 37). Similarly to reading aloud, pronouncing words by letters does not need a great linguistic ability, especially with the English alphabet visible on the previous page with an International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) providing the pronunciation of each letter.

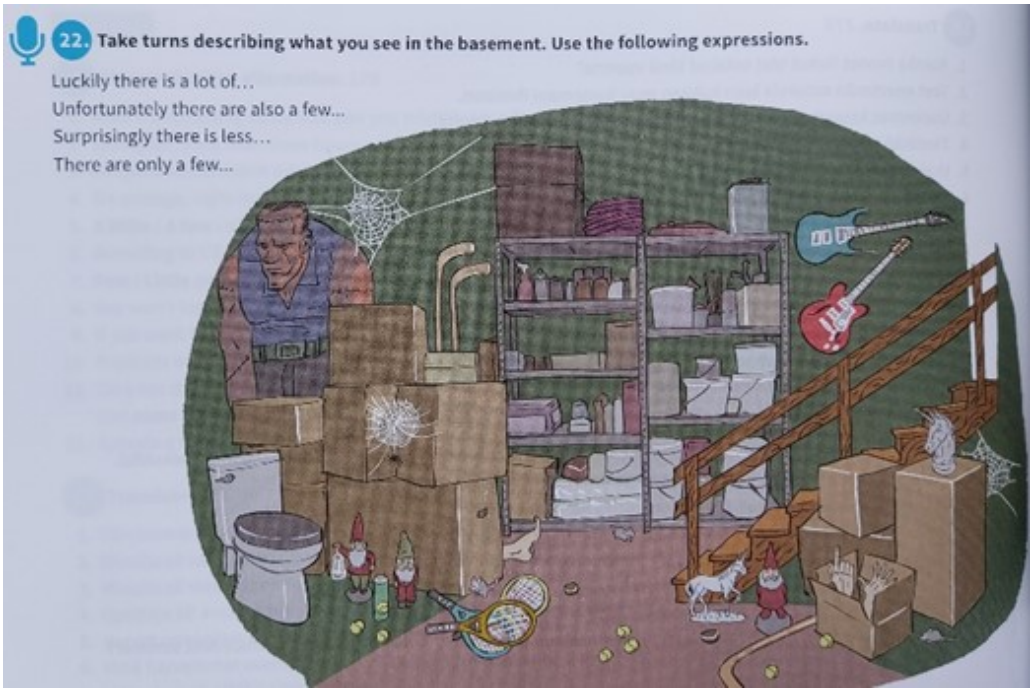
(Example 37)



(*Insights 1*: 93)

While many of the read-aloud activities are considered mechanical drills, there are many that fall into the meaningful drill category. In these kinds of activities, the students read aloud but they need to understand it both semantically and structurally to be able to complete it. The student has to identify the meaning of the sentence to be able to choose a correct word to make the sentence semantically sensible.

(Example 38)



(*Insights 5*: 152)

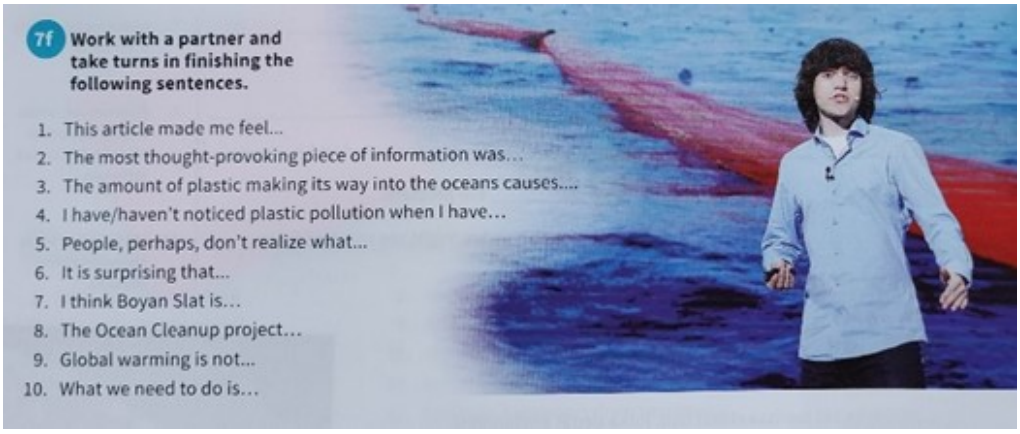
An activity is a meaningful drill also when students are describing the same picture to each other. They are given a list of expressions they are supposed to use and fulfill them with something they can see in the picture, in this particular task (Example 38), with words of quantity, for example, *There are only a few tennis balls*. It does not add any new information as both

students are familiar with the picture, but still, the structure is the same and the student only needs to understand what is meant by *a few* and then describe it from the picture.

Another activity that is often a meaningful drill is an interview. When students walk around the room asking questions from each other, they are only expected to answer yes or no, however they will need to be able to comprehend the meaning of the question they are asked.

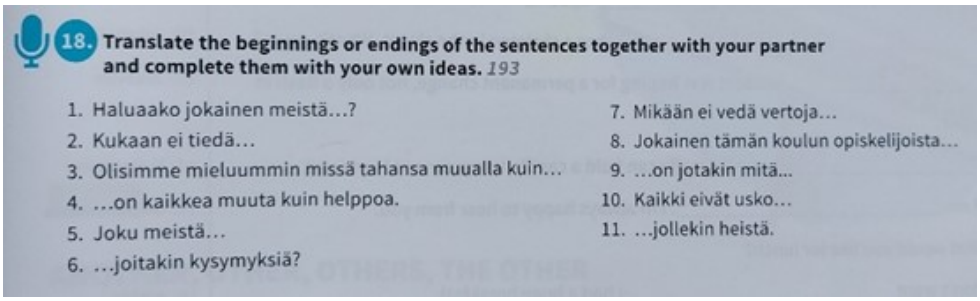
In communicative drills, the student is supposed to add information but still keep the rehearsed structure. They can express their own opinions but very limitedly as the structure determines what they will be able to express (Example 39).

(Example 39)



(*Insights 7*: 76)

(Example 40)



(*Insights 4*: 159)

In this activity (Example 40), the student is supposed to translate the beginnings or endings of the sentences and then complete it however they want. It can be completed very simply or complicatedly as the student wants, but most likely it will end up being the former option. For example, *One of us…is driving*.

Exercises

Exercises give importance to structure and learning while still being communicative. Most of the exercises can be found in working on the vocabulary of the texts in chapters and in the grammar section of the textbook. Translation activities, for example, are exercises where the students will need to translate sentences word from word. The exercise focuses on the structure and vocabulary, so the students are expected to produce grammatically correct sentences. The student's role is a learner, and the purpose is to learn the structures.

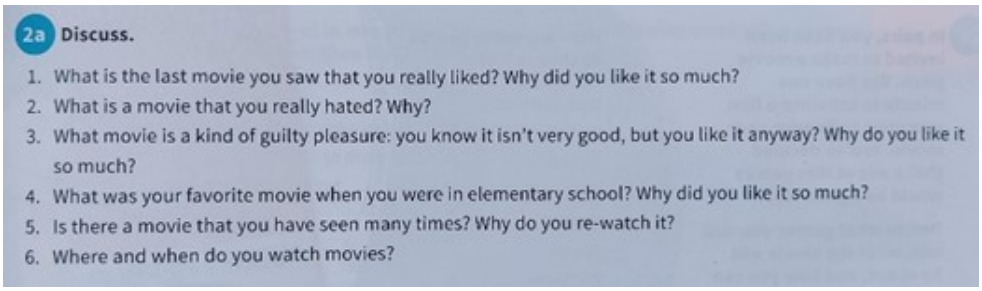
Exercises are utilized in retelling the text of the chapter. The activity gives visual cues such as pictures or questions that the students can use to refresh their memory of the text (Example 41). The events are however clearly stated in the text, so the exercise mostly teaches the associated vocabulary and phrases from the text.

(Example 41)

(*Insights 1*: 22)

Many of the discussion activities of the textbooks are exercises, even if they would be expected to be tasks with the students getting to express their opinions and thoughts on the topic. However, many of the discussion activities have restricting questions that do not encourage the students to talk freely (Example 42). The questions can be answered with only one word and then explaining briefly why. The expectation for the exercise is probably premeditated so that the students would discuss freely, but they will most likely only answer what the question asks.

(Example 42)



2a Discuss.

1. What is the last movie you saw that you really liked? Why did you like it so much?
2. What is a movie that you really hated? Why?
3. What movie is a kind of guilty pleasure: you know it isn't very good, but you like it anyway? Why do you like it so much?
4. What was your favorite movie when you were in elementary school? Why did you like it so much?
5. Is there a movie that you have seen many times? Why do you re-watch it?
6. Where and when do you watch movies?

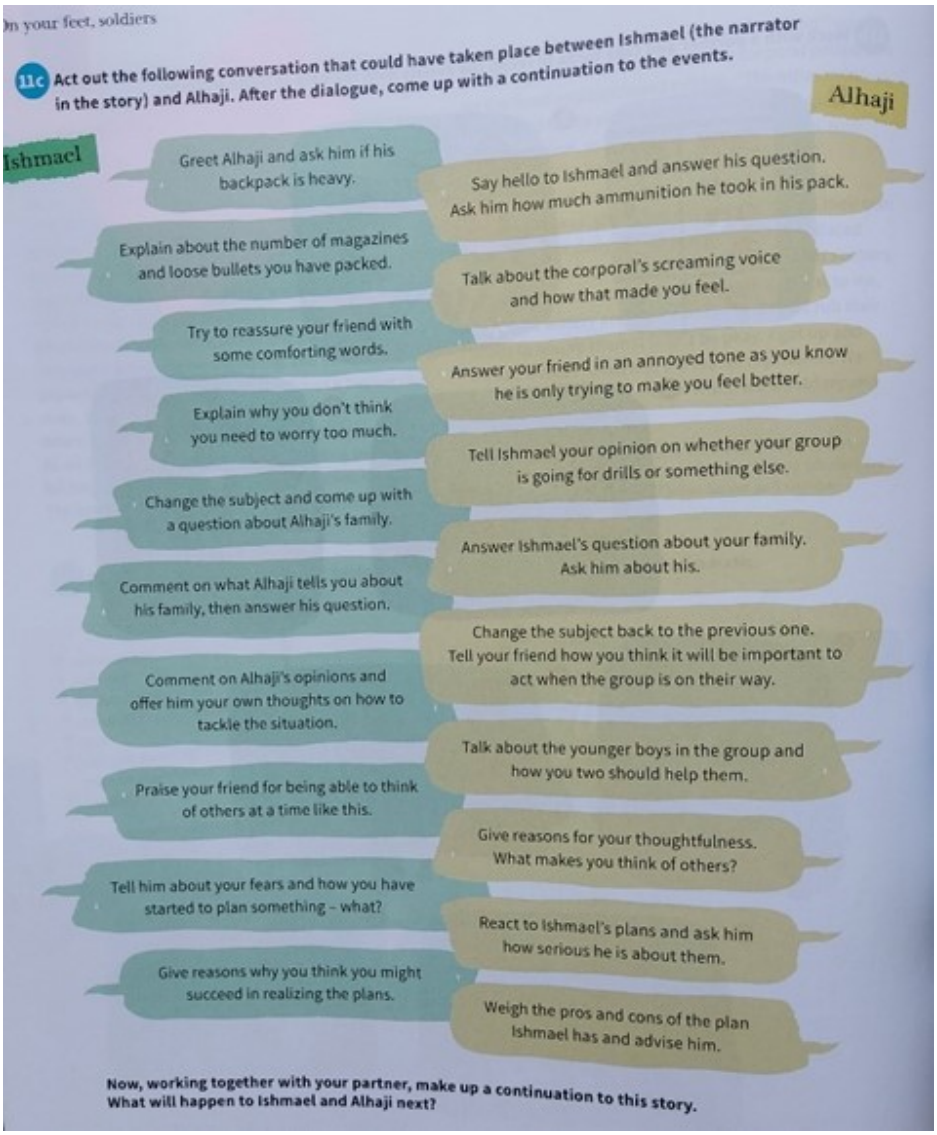
(*Insights 8*: 13)

Tasks

Tasks in the *Insight* textbook series are very versatile. They are found in all activity categories, so the students will get to use their oral language skills quite freely in different situations. For example, tasks are especially plentiful in categories such as problem-solving, presentations, discussions, vocabulary and structure, games, and conversation strategies. In tasks, the students' opinions matter and they are able to express their thoughts freely. The students act as a language user, and they use English like they would in real-world outside the classroom. In tasks, the students are usually given more freedom in deciding how they want to complete the activity.

Mostly, role-play activities found in Insight textbooks are considered tasks. They give a lot of freedom to the students to create the dialogue however they want. Usually, the students are given a script which has Finnish or English cues on what to say (Example 43), but in many cases the students will get to create the dialogues from the start.

(Example 43)



On your feet, soldiers

11c **Act out the following conversation that could have taken place between Ishmael (the narrator in the story) and Alhaji. After the dialogue, come up with a continuation to the events.**

Ishmael

Alhaji

Greet Alhaji and ask him if his backpack is heavy.

Say hello to Ishmael and answer his question. Ask him how much ammunition he took in his pack.

Explain about the number of magazines and loose bullets you have packed.

Talk about the corporal's screaming voice and how that made you feel.

Try to reassure your friend with some comforting words.

Answer your friend in an annoyed tone as you know he is only trying to make you feel better.

Explain why you don't think you need to worry too much.

Tell Ishmael your opinion on whether your group is going for drills or something else.

Change the subject and come up with a question about Alhaji's family.

Answer Ishmael's question about your family. Ask him about his.

Comment on what Alhaji tells you about his family, then answer his question.

Change the subject back to the previous one. Tell your friend how you think it will be important to act when the group is on their way.

Comment on Alhaji's opinions and offer him your own thoughts on how to tackle the situation.

Talk about the younger boys in the group and how you two should help them.

Praise your friend for being able to think of others at a time like this.

Give reasons for your thoughtfulness. What makes you think of others?

Tell him about your fears and how you have started to plan something – what?

React to Ishmael's plans and ask him how serious he is about them.

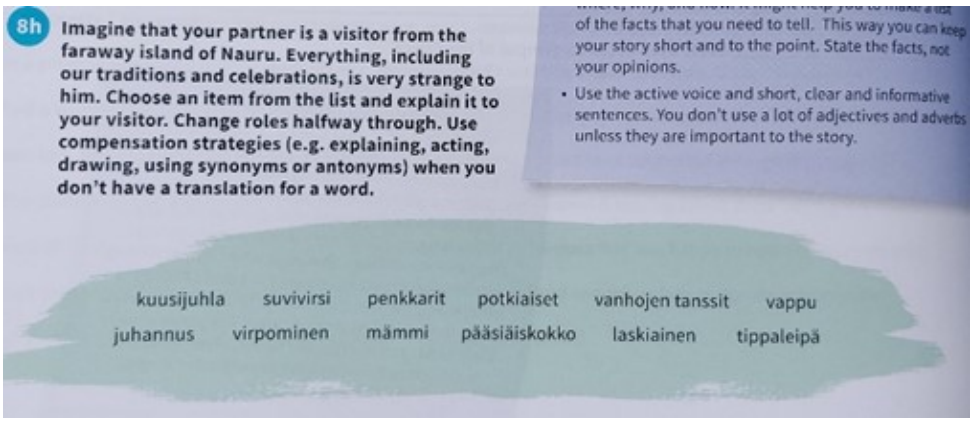
Give reasons why you think you might succeed in realizing the plans.

Weigh the pros and cons of the plan Ishmael has and advise him.

Now, working together with your partner, make up a continuation to this story. What will happen to Ishmael and Alhaji next?

(*Insights 8*: 88)

(Example 44)



8h **Imagine that your partner is a visitor from the faraway island of Nauru. Everything, including our traditions and celebrations, is very strange to him. Choose an item from the list and explain it to your visitor. Change roles halfway through. Use compensation strategies (e.g. explaining, acting, drawing, using synonyms or antonyms) when you don't have a translation for a word.**

of the facts that you need to tell. This way you can keep your story short and to the point. State the facts, not your opinions.

- Use the active voice and short, clear and informative sentences. You don't use a lot of adjectives and adverbs unless they are important to the story.

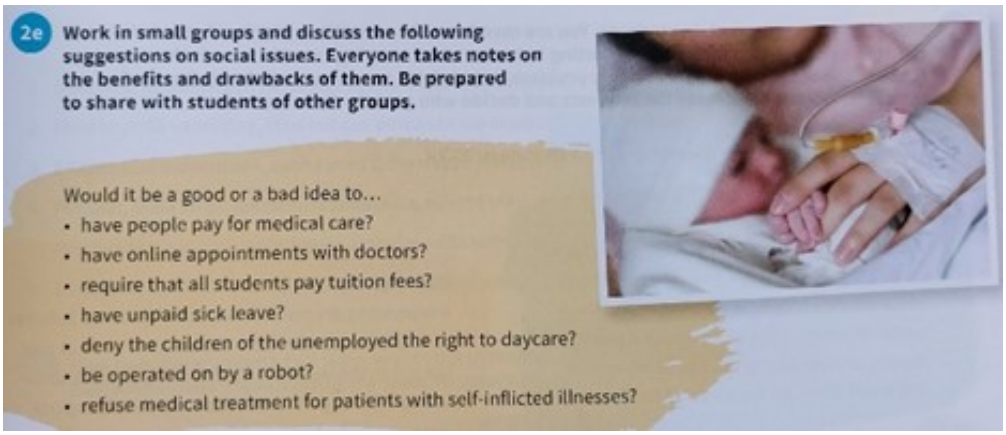
kuusijuhla suvivirsi penkkarit potkiaiset vanhojen tanssit vappu
juhannus virpominen mämmi pääsiäiskokko laskiainen tippaleipä

(*Insights 3*: 76)

In this role-play (Example 44), the students are creating the dialogue from the start. The spoken language will be very free and natural as the students are encouraged to use compensation strategies when they face a problem in explaining something. This likely imitates language use outside the classroom when the students will use English with other people. In the case that they do not remember a word or expression they are likely to use different compensation strategies presented in section 2.3.2.

While many of the discussions in the *Insights* textbooks are exercises, there are still many that can be considered tasks. In these types of discussions (Example 45), the questions are open-ended, and they invite the students to talk more than when they are provided with specific questions. The students have a chance to express their thoughts on the matter while employing their skills in turn-taking and other conversational strategies such as agreement, feedback, and compensation strategies.

(Example 45)



(*Insights 4*: 23)

In short, the total number of oral activities in *Insights* textbook series is 605. The biggest groups of activities were, respectively, vocabulary and structure, discussion, and translation. Vocabulary and structure and translation activities are quite restricted in how much the student gets to practice their oral skills. Discussions, however, are very communicative and the students can talk freely about the topic. Concerning the activity types, tasks are the biggest group with exercises second. The high number of tasks compared to the other two types means that the textbook series is quite communicative as the focus of tasks is on the content of the activity, not structure. The students are, thus, free to produce speech in a way that is natural to them. Drills are the smallest group of the activity types. Most of the drills are mechanical due to the high

number of read-aloud activities. The second biggest group are meaningful drills with communicative drills being the smallest activity type.

4.2 *Ponjatno!*

4.2.1 Activities of oral language

The numbers and shares of the thirteen oral activity categories are compiled in Table 4. As with the English textbook series, the newer textbook *Ponjatno! 1-3* is presented separately as it has been created to cover the first three modules (first three courses in the current NCC and equivalent to *Ponjatno! 1*) in the new NCC and follows the requirements set in in the new NCC. It would skew the shares of oral activity categories in the older textbook series.

Table 10. Activities of oral language found in *Ponjatno!* textbook series.

	Ponjatno! 1	*Ponjatno! 2*	*Ponjatno! 3*	Total	%	*Ponjatno! 1-3*	%
Discussion	-	4	4	8	2,6	1	0,7
Interview	10	9	3	21	6,9	20	14,2
Problem-solving	-	-	-	-	-	2	1,4
Role-play	6	4	4	12	3,9	5	3,5
Presentation	-	2	1	3	1,0	1	0,7
Report	1	-	1	2	0,7	-	-
Pronunciation	21	12	8	42	13,8	23	16,3
Read aloud	55	10	9	71	23,4	51	36,2
Game	-	-	1	1	0,3	-	-
Vocabulary and structure	53	60	18	128	42,1	37	26,2
Translation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Conversation strategies	1	7	-	8	2,6	1	0,7
Non-verbal communication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	147	108	49	304		141	

As can be seen in the table (Table 10), the total number of oral activities in *Ponjatno!* textbooks is 304. The first textbook holds the most activities out of all three. The number of oral activities decreases with about third in each textbook and the last one only has 49 activities that are completed orally. This is because there is a steep decrease of read-aloud activities from the first

textbook. The first textbook has marked all texts with the symbol for listen and repeat, so each text would then be read out loud in class. However, in *Ponjatno! 2* and *3* the symbol has been changed to mean only listen. Thus, the texts are not considered oral activities in *Ponjatno! 2* and *3*.

The most numerous activities are vocabulary and structure with about 42% of the oral activities belonging to this group. Read-aloud activities are the second most plentiful category with a 23,4% share. The third biggest group is pronunciation with almost 14% share. Problem-solving, translation, and non-verbal communication activities could not be found in the *Ponjatno!* textbooks. The smallest category is games with only one activity identified as belonging to that category. The other two with very low shares are presentations and reports.

Again, just like in English, the current NCC 2015 (2015: 117) states that the emphasis of oral production in syllabus B3 languages is at the beginning and written tasks will increase in number in the later courses. This shows in the steady decrease of oral activities and the increase of written assignments, assuming that the total number of activities, written and oral, stays the same throughout the three textbooks.

The total number of oral activities only slightly decreases in the newer textbook *Ponjatno! 1-3*. *Ponjatno! 1* has 147 oral activities while *Ponjatno! 1-3* has 141. The shares of activities increase in categories of discussion, interview, problem-solving, presentation, and pronunciation. Consequently, the number decreases or stays the same in role-plays, reports (none), read-alouds, games (none), vocabulary and structures, translations (none), conversation strategies, and non-verbal communication (none). It seems that while the total number or activities slightly decreases, the quality of the activities is turning more communicative due to the freer speech in activities such as discussions, problem-solving and presentations. Also, the importance of oral production is seen in the higher number of pronunciation activities, the textbooks want the students to have more chances to hone their skills in correct pronunciation of Russian words and sounds. The biggest increase of oral activities can be found in the category of interviews as the share increases from 6,8% to 14,2%. The number of interviews doubles in *Ponjatno! 1-3* compared to *Ponjatno! 1*. On the other hand, the biggest decrease of oral activities is in vocabulary and structure activities where the share decreases from about 36% to just over 26%. This is also a significant change as vocabulary and structure activities are mostly found in association to grammar. This would suggest that the emphasis on structurally correct spoken language (in written norms) is changing to a freer production of oral skills.

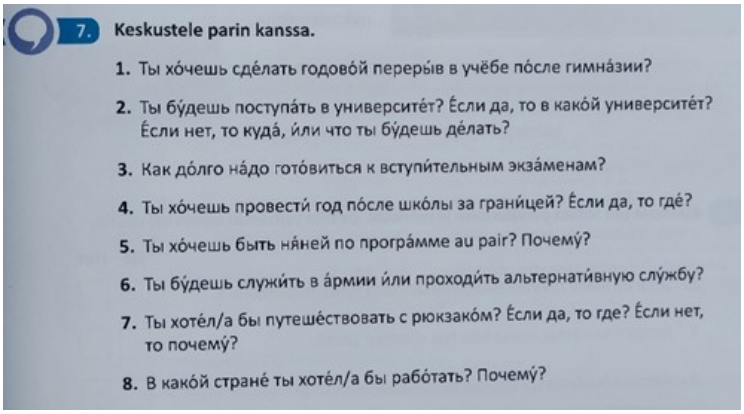
Next, the content of the oral activities found in the *Ponjatno!* textbook series will be presented by providing examples of the different categories of oral activities found in the textbooks. There will also be discussion on how these activities present and teach different features of oral skills. As explained in section 2.3.1 and above in the English section of the analysis, the features of oral skills should be taught but can be difficult as natural communicative situations are hard to recreate in a classroom. The other speakers of Russian in the classroom are the teacher, who will most likely be proficient in Russian, and fellow students, who will all have about the same language skills. There is not much variation in the speakers as there would outside the classroom with native and international speakers of Russian.

Discussion

Discussion activities only appear in the later books of the series, *Ponjatno! 2* and *3*. The discussion questions are very specific and simple, but the students will have a chance to express themselves freely as they need to formulate their answers from their existing vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Usually, the students are expected to answer quite briefly but there are some questions that are more open-ended. In discussions, the students are not expected to use certain grammatical structures, the students will have options in how they want to formulate their answer, with a whole sentence or just a couple of words.

Discussion activities in *Ponjatno! 2* and *3* are not very inviting in practicing conversational strategies, they are in a sense more like interviews where one student asks the questions and the other answers. There might be some agreeing or disagreeing expressions such as *По-моему* (I think) or *Я считаю иначе* (I disagree) to create more conversational tones to the discussion, but this depends on the students.

(Example 46)



7. **Keskustele parin kanssa.**

1. Ты хо́чешь сде́лать годово́й переры́в в учёбе по́сле гимна́зии?
2. Ты бу́дешь поступа́ть в университе́т? Е́сли да, то в како́й университе́т? Е́сли нет, то куда́, и́ли что ты бу́дешь де́лать?
3. Как до́лго на́до гото́виться к вступи́тельным экза́менам?
4. Ты хо́чешь провести́ год по́сле шко́лы за грани́цей? Е́сли да, то где́?
5. Ты хо́чешь быть ня́ней по програ́мме au pair? Почему́?
6. Ты бу́дешь служи́ть в а́рмии и́ли проходи́ть альтернати́вную слу́жбу?
7. Ты хоте́л/а бы путеше́ствовать с рюкзако́м? Е́сли да, то где? Е́сли нет, то почему́?
8. В како́й стране́ ты хоте́л/а бы рабо́тать? Почему́?

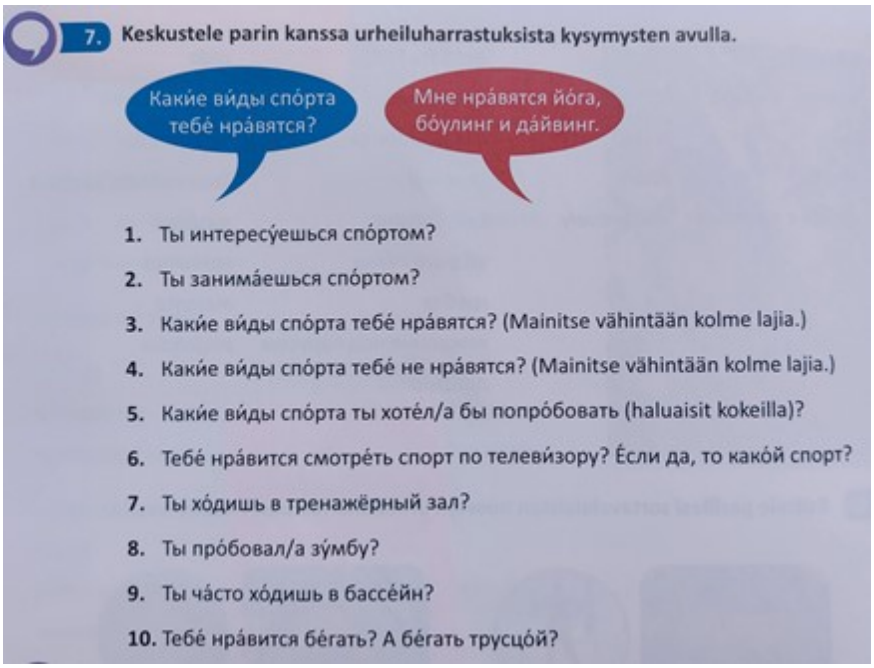
(*Ponjatno! 3*: 31)

In this discussion (Example 46), the questions are specific, but the students can answer to them more comprehensibly than in a couple of words. The questions ensure that the students do not answer just yes or no. In addition, if the student is actually planning to take part in the au pair program, they might want to explain their decision more.

Interviews

In interviewing activities, the students will practice vocabulary and grammatical structures by asking each other questions that should be answered using the certain vocabulary or structures (Example 47). These were not included in the vocabulary and structure activities as the instructions ask to get to know the partner with these questions or they ask for each other's opinions on certain topics. The intention is more communicative. In addition, interviews will be also used in activities where the students walk around the classroom asking questions to their classmates.

(Example 47)



(*Ponjatno! 1*: 218)

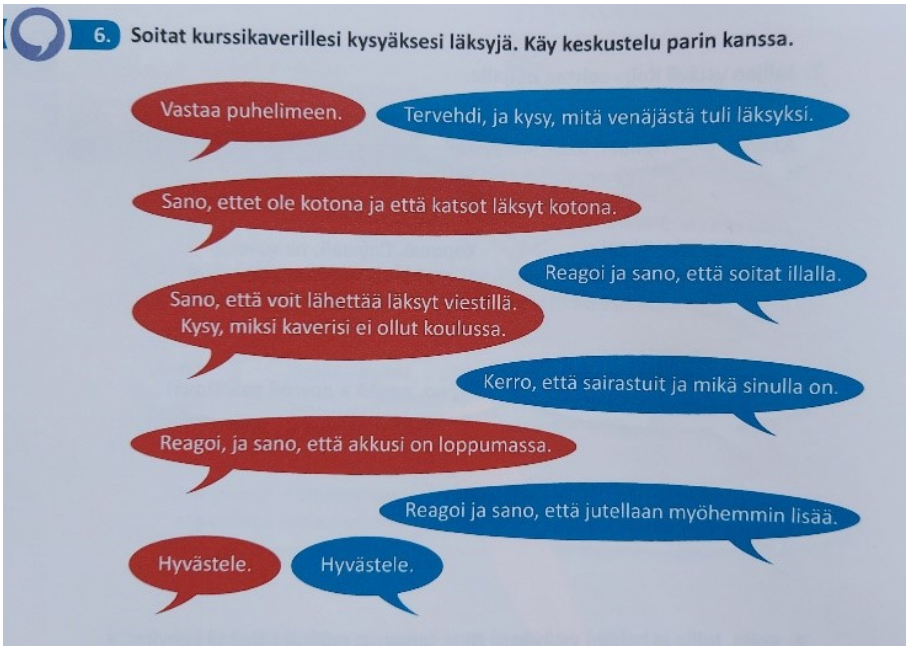
Problem-solving

None of the oral activities found in *Ponjatno!* textbooks could be identified as a problem-solving activity.

Role-plays

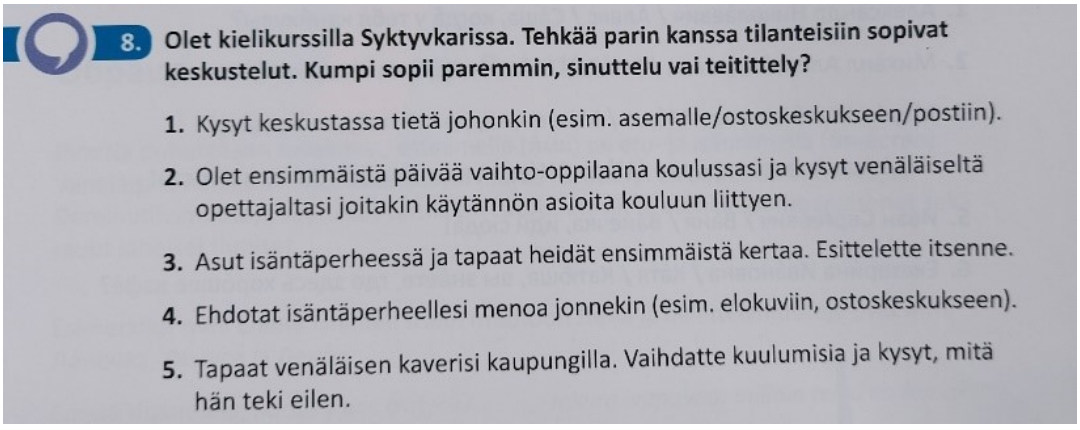
Role-plays in *Ponjatno!* textbooks consist mostly of A-B dialogues. The students will either take turns in asking each other questions or they will follow a provided script. In the case of provided scripts, the scripts have only Finnish ques on what to say, the students are able to create the phrases themselves. The scripts always ask the students to properly greet the other and say goodbyes at the end of the dialogue (Example 48).

(Example 48)



(*Ponjatno! 2*: 218)

(Example 49)



(*Ponjatno! 2*: 84)

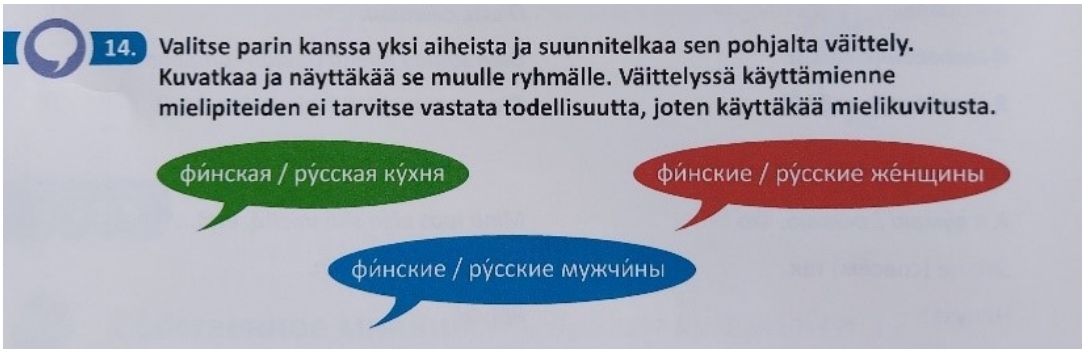
In this role-play (Example 49), the students are free to create a dialogue however they want. It also takes into account the appropriate form of addressing others, informal or formal, in

different situations. The rules on how to address others are quite strict in Russian, for example, when talking to an older stranger, Russian never use the second person singular form. The language should be formal in these situations. With family and friends, however, the language can be more informal.

Presentation

The presentation found in *Ponjatno! 2* and *3* are all activities that will be filmed. They will, thus, not be performed to a live audience but rather, the activities will be filmed and then shown to the class (Example 50). It could be assumed that the students would still be very timid in producing spoken language in front of the whole class, so filming the performances can alleviate the embarrassment. The students will be able to film the performance as many times until they feel comfortable with the result.

(Example 50)



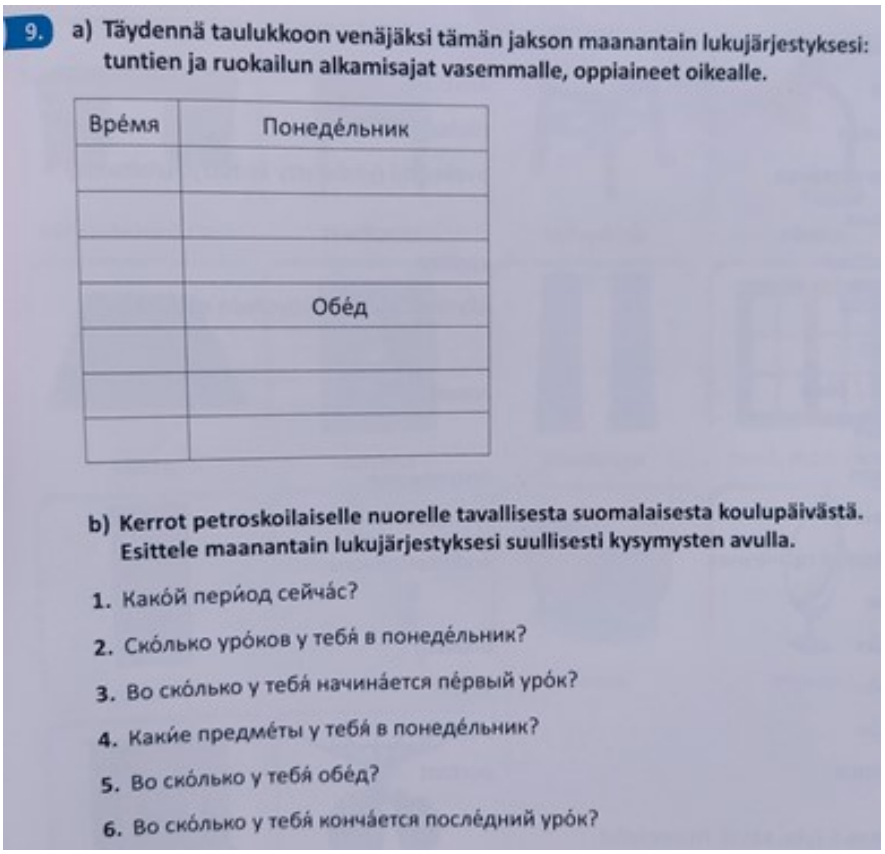
(*Ponjatno! 2*: 174)

While in *Insights* textbooks the students will get the chance to practice monologues, in *Ponjatno!* textbooks they do not have many chances for it. In only one of the activities the students will have to produce spoken Russian for a sustained period of time. In this activity, the students will create a job application video where they talk about themselves as they would in a real CV.

Reports

In *Ponjatno!* textbooks there were only two reporting activities. In reports, the students tell their partner orally what they have done in an individual assignment. In Example 51, the students are asked to tell their partner about their Monday's schedule according to the questions provided.

(Example 51)



9. **a) Täydennä taulukkoon venäjäksi tämän jakson maanantain lukujärjestyksesi: tuntien ja ruokailun alkamisajat vasemmalle, oppiaineet oikealle.**

Врéмя	Понедéльник
	Обéд

b) Kerrot petroskoilaiselle nuorelle tavallisesta suomalaisesta koulupäivästä. Esittele maanantain lukujärjestyksesi suullisesti kysymysten avulla.

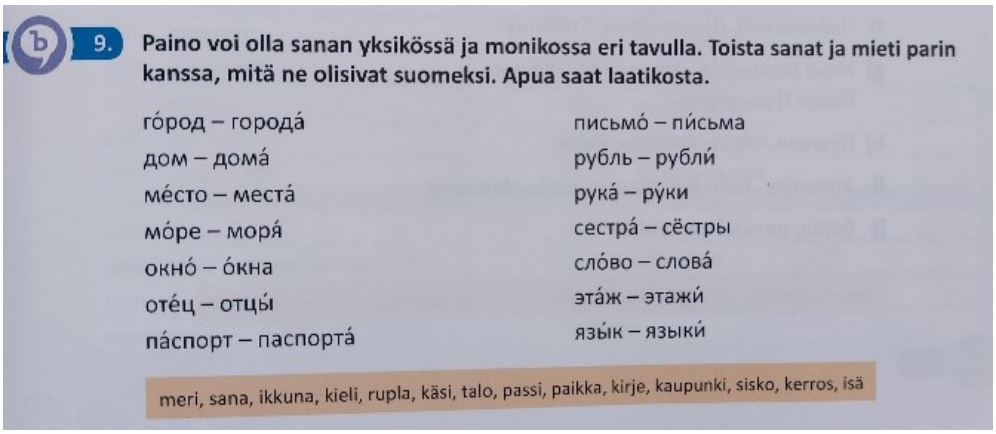
1. Какóй периóд сейчáс?
2. Скóлько урóков у тебя́ в понедéльник?
3. Во скóлько у тебя́ начинáется пéрвый урóк?
4. Какúе предмéты у тебя́ в понедéльник?
5. Во скóлько у тебя́ обéд?
6. Во скóлько у тебя́ кончáется послéдний урóк?

(*Ponjatno! 1*: 239)

Pronunciation

Pronunciation activities are marked with a symbol, so they are easy to recognize in the textbooks. The students will listen and repeat different letters to learn the alphabet and practice how individual letters are produced. Intonation and stress are also included in the pronunciation activities. These kinds of activities are especially numerous in *Ponjatno! 1* as the students are just starting to learn Russian so they will need to be able to learn how the letters are pronounced in Russian compared to Finnish sounds. There is special attention given to stress in all words because the stress affects how vowels sound (Example 52). All texts are provided with marks on what vowel is the stressed one in each word. As *Ponjatno! 1* progresses, the students are provided with activities to practice the different features of Russian pronunciation. The pronunciation activities in *Ponjatno! 2* and *3* only consist of practicing the pronunciation of selected words from text vocabulary that are considered tricky to pronounce. *Ponjatno! 2* has a section at the end of the textbook where features of Russian pronunciation are collected for the students to check the theory.

(Example 52)



9. **Paino voi olla sanan yksikössä ja monikossa eri tavulla. Toista sanat ja mieti parin kanssa, mitä ne olisivat suomeksi. Apua saat laatikosta.**

го́род – города́
дом – дома́
ме́сто – места́
мо́ре – моря́
окно́ – о́кна
оте́ц – отцы́
па́спорт – паспорта́
письмо́ – пи́сьма
рубль – рубли́
рука́ – ру́ки
сестра́ – сёстры
сло́во – слова́
эта́ж – этажи́
язы́к – языки́

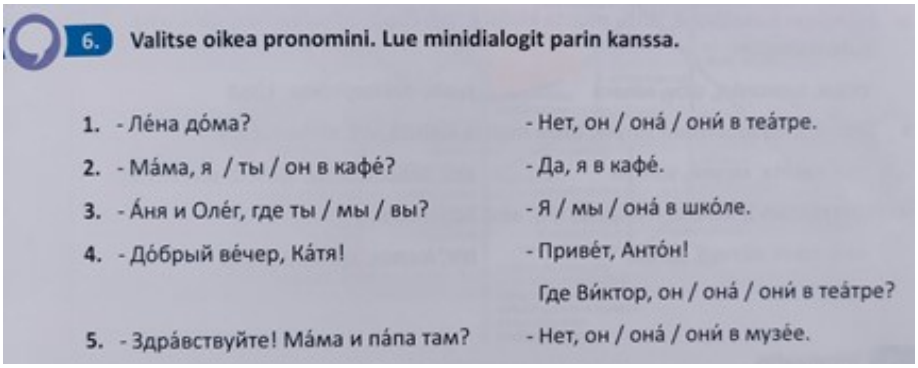
meri, sana, ikkuna, kieli, rupla, käsi, talo, passi, paikka, kirje, kaupunki, sisko, kerros, isä

(*Ponjatno! 1*: 81)

Read-aloud

As mentioned above, *Ponjatno! 1* has the biggest number of read-aloud activities due to the symbol that means that each text is supposed to be read aloud. In addition, all theme vocabularies are also marked with the same symbol. Otherwise, read-aloud activities consist of reading aloud two sentence dialogues, written tasks, and sentences where certain grammatical structures are used (Example 53).

(Example 53)



6. **Valitse oikea pronomini. Lue minidialogit parin kanssa.**

1. - Ле́на до́ма? - Нет, он / она́ / они́ в теа́тре.
2. - Ма́ма, я / ты / он в кафе́? - Да, я в кафе́.
3. - А́ня и Оле́г, где ты / мы / вы? - Я / мы / она́ в шко́ле.
4. - До́брый ве́чер, Ка́тя! - Приве́т, Анто́н!
   Где Ви́ктор, он / она́ / они́ в теа́тре?
5. - Здра́вствуйте! Ма́ма и па́па там? - Нет, он / она́ / они́ в музе́е.

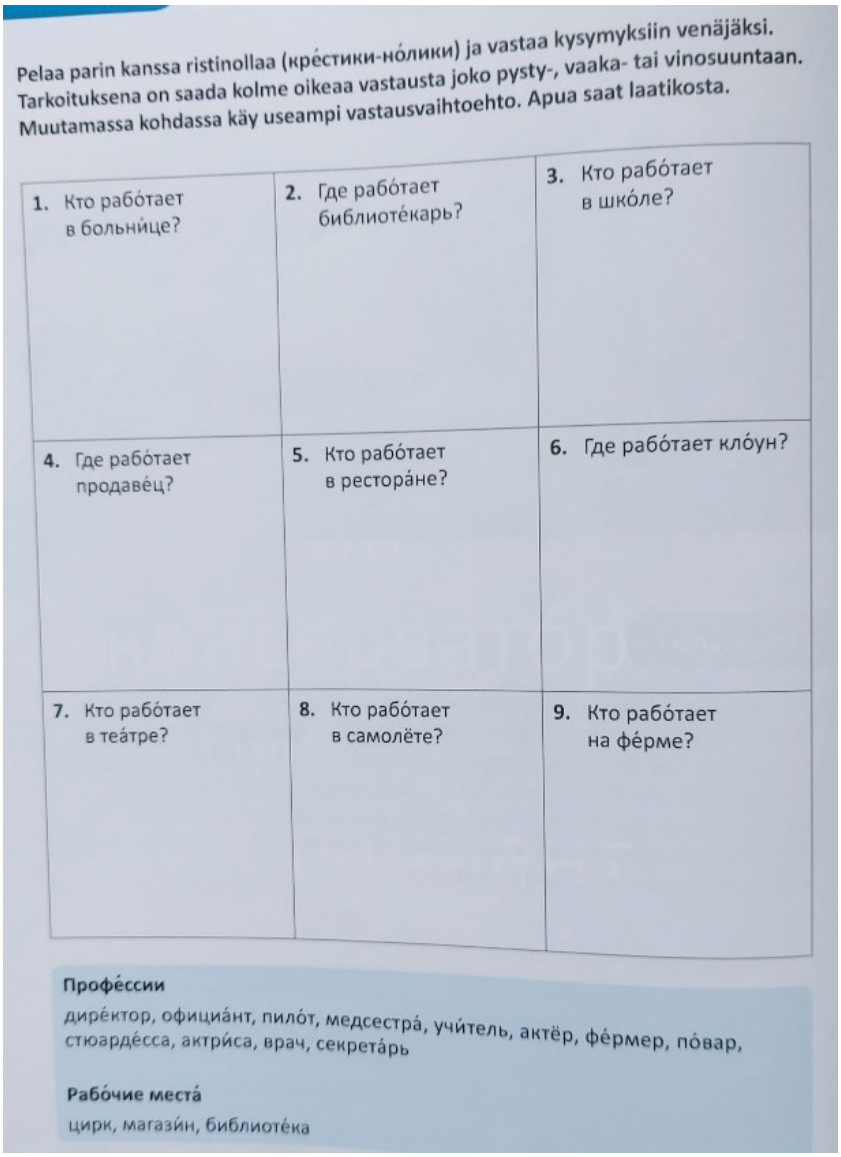
(*Ponjatno! 1*: 25)

It is important that the students recognize what letter corresponds to what sound because they are learning a new language with different alphabet. Reading aloud will help them getting their tongue around the pronunciation of Russian without paying too much attention to the pronunciation of the language like in pronunciation activities. Reading aloud will automatize and make the production of Russian more fluent.

Games

There is only one game in the *Ponjatno!* textbook series. It is a bit of a change from the routine like organization of activities and the students can have a small competition to see who wins. The activity is used as an introduction to a chapter that discusses professions. The students will need to use their pre-existing knowledge of Russian language to be able to connect the provided answers to the question. The game is a Tic-Tac-Toe kind of game where the students will answer questions to get to mark the box for themselves (Example 54).

(Example 54)



Pelaa parin kanssa ristinollaa (кре́стики-но́лики) ja vastaa kysymyksiin venäjäksi. Tarkoituksena on saada kolme oikeaa vastausta joko pysty-, vaaka- tai vinosuuntaan. Muutamassa kohdassa käy useampi vastausvaihtoehto. Apua saat laatikosta.

1. Кто рабо́тает в больни́це?	2. Где рабо́тает библиоте́карь?	3. Кто рабо́тает в шко́ле?
4. Где рабо́тает продаве́ц?	5. Кто рабо́тает в рестора́не?	6. Где рабо́тает кло́ун?
7. Кто рабо́тает в теа́тре?	8. Кто рабо́тает в самолёте?	9. Кто рабо́тает на фе́рме?

Профе́ссии

дире́ктор, официа́нт, пило́т, медсестра́, учи́тель, актёр, фе́рмер, по́вар, стюарде́сса, актри́са, врач, секрета́рь

Рабо́чие места́

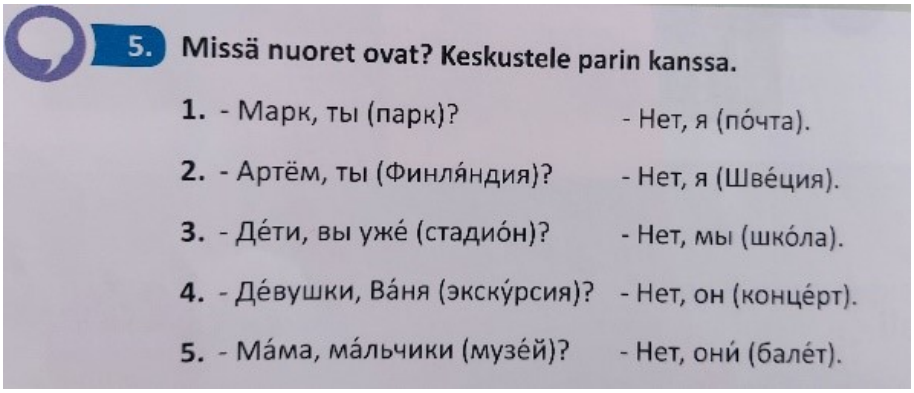
цирк, магази́н, библиоте́ка

(*Ponjatno! 3*: 84)

Vocabulary and structures

Vocabulary and structure activities are clearly the most numerous activity category in *Ponjatno!* textbooks. Most of the activities are used to practice grammar and vocabulary presented in the text and theme vocabularies. In Example 55, the purpose is to practice conjugation by choosing the right form of the prepositional case in the question and answer.

(Example 55)



(*Ponjatno! 1*: 62)

(Example 56)

(*Ponjatno! 2*: 163)

In vocabulary and structure activities the students are sometimes asked to describe a picture that the other student will then identify from a group of pictures (Example 56). In this case, for example, the other student will describe one person in a picture using vocabulary about appearance. The other will then guess which person was described.

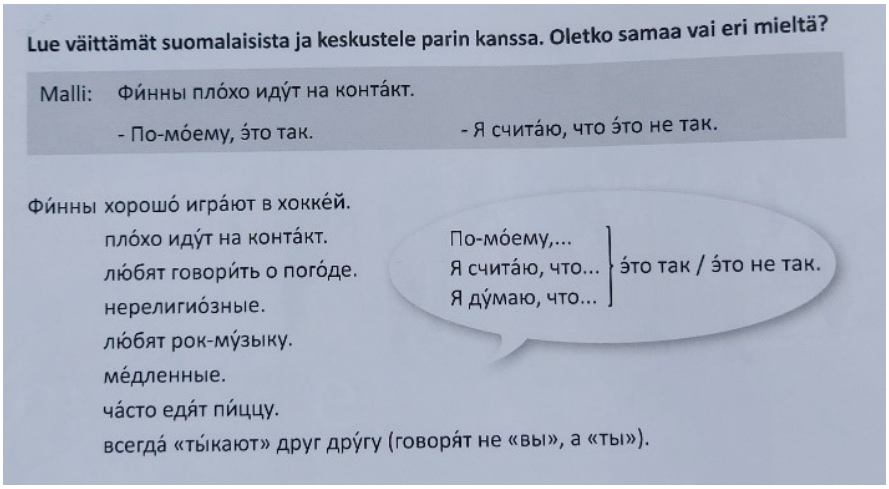
Translation

None of the oral activities found in *Ponjatno!* textbooks could be identified as a translation activity.

Conversation strategies

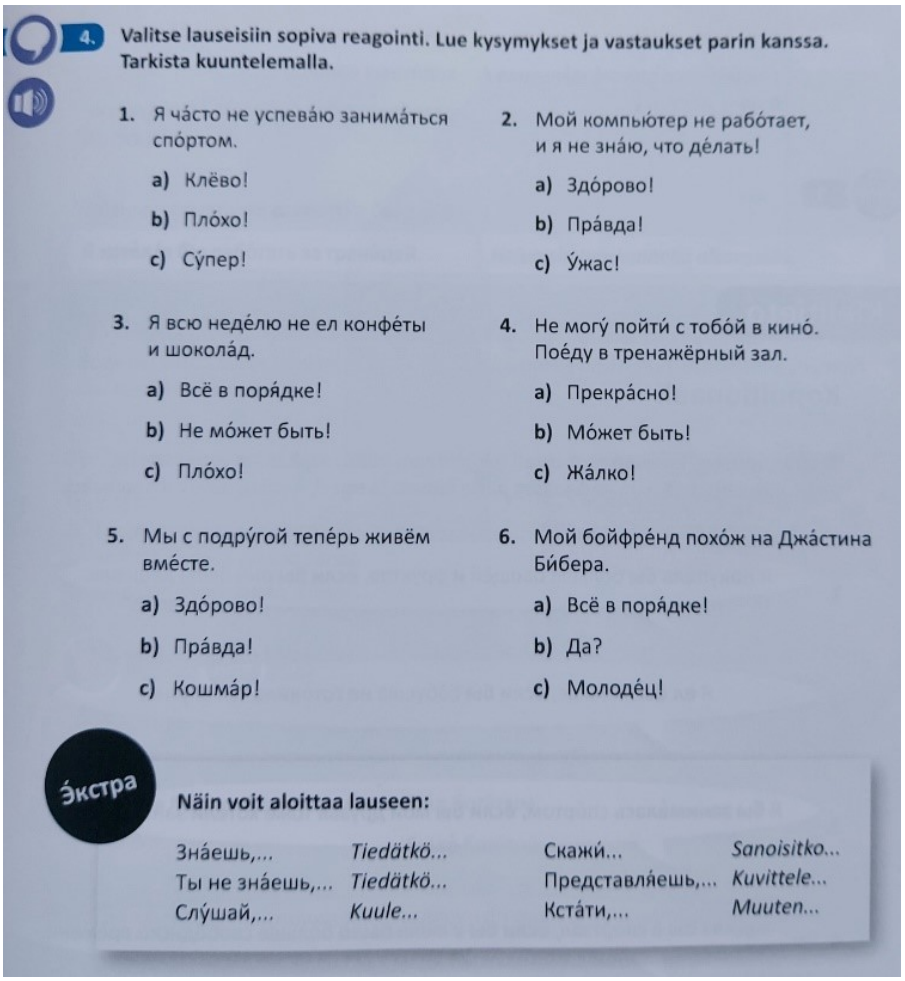
Conversation strategies are an important part of oral communication. In conversation strategy activities, the students will get to practice elements of natural communication which is full of giving feedback and other reciprocal features. These kinds of activities are used to practice expressing opinions and appropriate feedback to encourage the speaker to keep talking. They can also be used to practice how to express the want to have a turn in speaking. *Ponjatno! 2* has a theme vocabulary for different kinds of feedback reactions that the students may use in conversations. Example 57 illustrates an activity where the students practice agreement and disagreement. They are given a set of statements and they will give their opinion whether they agree with it or not.

(Example 57)



(*Ponjatno! 2*: 185)

(Example 58)



4. Valitse lauseisiin sopiva reagointi. Lue kysymykset ja vastaukset parin kanssa. Tarkista kuuntelemalla.

1. Я ча́сто не успева́ю занима́ться спо́ртом.
   a) Клёво!
   b) Пло́хо!
   c) Су́пер!

2. Мой компью́тер не рабо́тает, и я не зна́ю, что де́лать!
   a) Здо́рово!
   b) Пра́вда!
   c) У́жас!

3. Я всю неде́лю не ел конфе́ты и шокола́д.
   a) Всё в поря́дке!
   b) Не мо́жет быть!
   c) Пло́хо!

4. Не могу́ пойти́ с тобо́й в кино́. Пое́ду в тренажёрный зал.
   a) Прекра́сно!
   b) Мо́жет быть!
   c) Жа́лко!

5. Мы с подру́гой тепе́рь живём вме́сте.
   a) Здо́рово!
   b) Пра́вда!
   c) Кошма́р!

6. Мой бойфре́нд похо́ж на Джа́стина Би́бера.
   a) Всё в поря́дке!
   b) Да?
   c) Молоде́ц!

Э́кстра

Näin voit aloittaa lauseen:

Зна́ешь,...	*Tiedätkö...*	Скажи́...	*Sanoisitko...*
Ты не зна́ешь,...	*Tiedätkö...*	Представля́ешь,...	*Kuvittele...*
Слу́шай,...	*Kuule...*	Кста́ти,...	*Muuten...*

(*Ponjatno! 2*: 70)

In Example 58, the students are expected to choose an appropriate reaction to the sentence. The students will need to discuss which of the option would be the most appropriate to the situation.

Non-verbal communication

None of the oral activities found in *Ponjatno!* textbooks could be identified as a non-verbal communication activity.

4.2.2 The activity types: drills, exercises, and tasks

Just like above, in the section concerning *Insights* textbooks, the oral activities found in *Ponjatno!* textbook series were identified in the three main activity types: drills, exercises, and

tasks. The activities perceived as drills were also divided into mechanical drills, meaningful drills, and communicative drills.

Table 11. The number of the three main activity types found in *Ponjatno!* textbook series.

	Drills	Exercises	Tasks	Total
Ponjatno! 1	103	44	-	147
Ponjatno! 2	63	38	7	108
Ponjatno! 3	25	21	3	49
Total	191	103	10	304
%	62,8	33,9	3,3	
Ponjatno! 1-3	102	34	5	141
%	72,3	24,1	3,5	

Table 11 shows the numbers and shares of each main activity types. Drills are clearly the biggest group out of all three activity types with over 62% share. The next biggest group is exercises with about third of the activities belonging to this group. Tasks are the smallest group with only about 3% of the activities. This shows that most of the activities are very technical and focused on drilling the structures into the memory. There is not much free production of speech. In addition, the students are seen as learners of Russian, not as users of the language. The large number of drills and exercises most likely stem from the high number of activities such as read-aloud and vocabulary and structure since in *Ponjatno!* textbooks, read-aloud activities fall into the drill type, and vocabulary and structure activities usually fall into either drills or exercise type of activity.

The share of drills decreases towards the end of the series. At first, in *Ponjatno! 1*, the share of drills is about 70%, while in the last textbook, *Ponjatno! 3*, the share is about 51%. The share of exercises, however, is rising from about 30% in the first textbook to almost 43% in the last. The first book does not have any tasks, so the activities emphasize the importance of structure on behalf of expressing thoughts. *Ponjatno! 2* has the biggest number of tasks with a 6,5% share, while *Ponjatno! 3* has only slightly smaller share of about 6%. This implies that as the students' language skills progress, they will get more chances at communicating with spoken language as the focus is not so much on the drilling of structures.

To compare the new textbook *Ponjatno! 1-3* with its equivalent *Ponjatno! 1*, it can be seen that the shares of drills and tasks increases while the share of exercises decreases. Drills rise from about 70% to about 72%, and tasks raise from none to 3,5%. The exercises fall from about 30% to about 24%. In actuality, the changes are not very significant. The tasks seem to replace some

of the exercises, so it seems like a positive change. The slight increase of drills does not seem all that important as the students are still learning the basics of Russian and, therefore, the higher number of drills is natural as they seem to be frequently utilized when teaching the basics of any language.

Table 12. The number of the three drill types found in *Ponjatno!* textbook series.

	Mechanical	Meaningful	Communicative
Ponjatno! 1	91	9	3
Ponjatno! 2	41	22	-
Ponjatno! 3	22	3	-
Total	154	34	3
%	80,6	17,8	1,6
Ponjatno! 1-3	78	23	1
%	76,5	22,5	1,0

Table 12 shows the numbers and shares of the three drill types in *Ponjatno!* textbooks. The highest share can be found in mechanical drills with about 81%. Meaningful drills have the second highest share of about 18%. Communicative drills have the lowest share of about 2% of all drills. This means that the drills are very technical, and the students will need to practice structures very mechanically. All of the communicative drills can be found in *Ponjatno! 1,* which is surprising as the general view of drills is that communicative drills would come only after mechanical and meaningful drills. *Ponjatno! 2* has the highest share of meaningful drills. *Ponjatno! 1* and *Ponjatno! 3* have almost the same share of mechanical drills, 88,3% and 88% respectively.

In comparison, *Ponjatno! 1-3* has less mechanical and communicative drills compared to *Ponjatno! 1*. On the other hand, the share of meaningful drills has a significant increase from about 9% to 22,5%. It seems that previous mechanical drills give way to meaningful drills which is a positive change as the students will need to think a bit more to get to the right answer.

Next, I will provide explanations of the content of the three main activity types. I will also give examples of each of the activity types found in *Ponjatno!* textbooks.

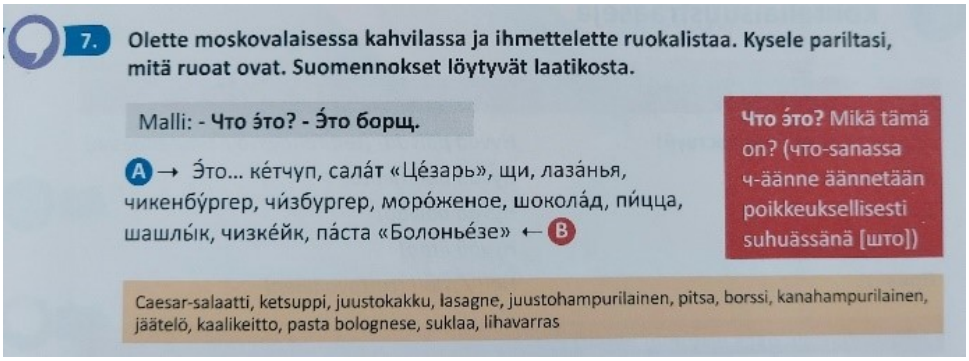
Drills

Starting with the mechanical drills, they can be found in activities such as read-aloud, pronunciation, and vocabulary and structures. Reading aloud and pronunciation are especially

technical, it does not take much skill repeating after a recording when the textbook provides an explanation of how to pronounce individual letters and sounds with IPA.

In vocabulary and structure activities, the structures are sometimes practiced very mechanically, especially in *Ponjatno! 1*. In this task (Example 59), the students will mechanically practice the structure according to the model provided.

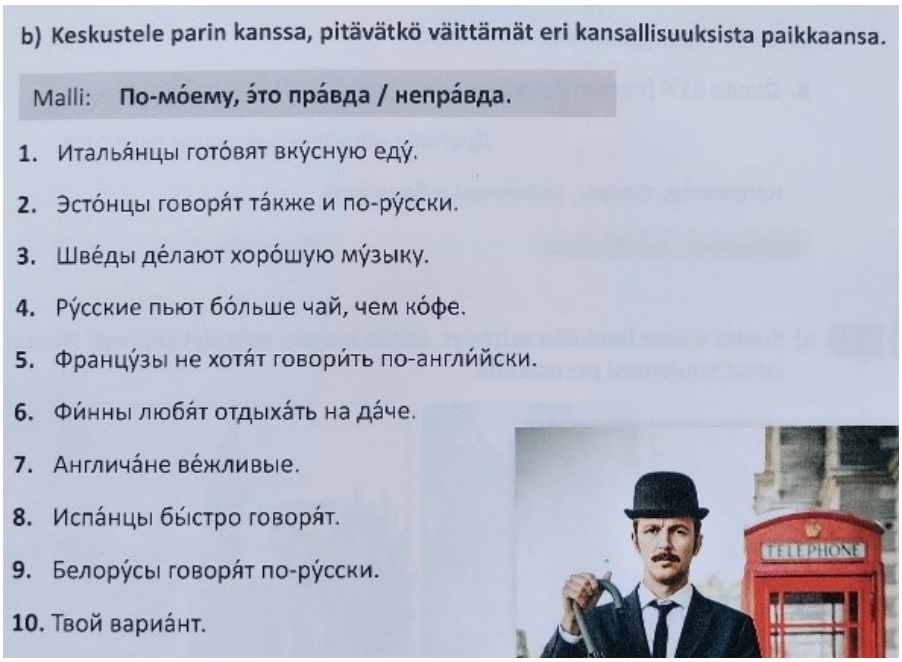
(Example 59)



(*Ponjatno! 1*: 31)

In meaningful drills, on the other hand, the input needs to be understood in order to complete the activity. A meaningful drill is also very technical because the right answer is somehow perceivable in the activity. A typical meaningful drill can be found in Example 60 where the instructions provide a model for the answer. However, the students need to be able to understand the sentence before being able to provide an opinion about it. They are not expected to produce mor than either agreeing or disagreeing with the sentence.

(Example 60)



b) Keskustele parin kanssa, pitävätkö väittämät eri kansallisuuksista paikkaansa.

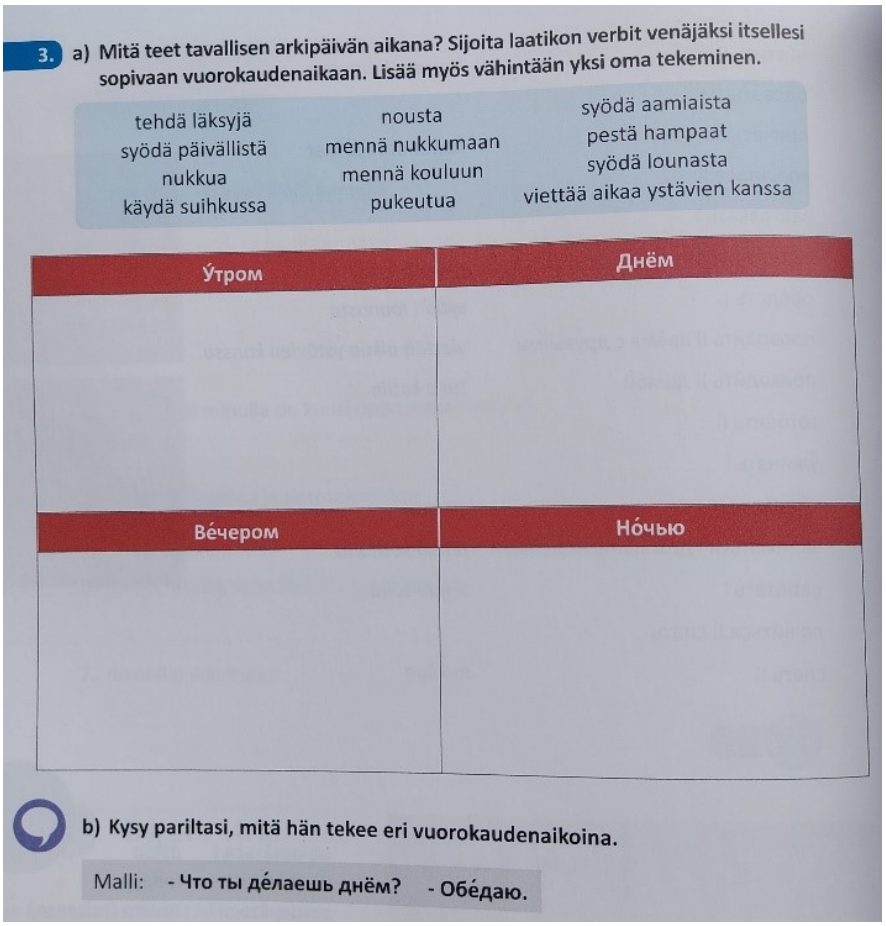
Malli: **По-мо́ему, э́то пра́вда / непра́вда.**

1. Италья́нцы гото́вят вку́сную еду́.
2. Эсто́нцы говоря́т та́кже и по-ру́сски.
3. Шве́ды де́лают хоро́шую му́зыку.
4. Ру́сские пьют бо́льше чай, чем ко́фе.
5. Францу́зы не хотя́т говори́ть по-англи́йски.
6. Фи́нны люба́т отдыха́ть на да́че.
7. Англича́не ве́жливые.
8. Испа́нцы бы́стро говоря́т.
9. Белору́сы говоря́т по-ру́сски.
10. Твой вариа́нт.

(*Ponjatno! 2*: 27)

As mentioned earlier in section 2.4.1, communicative drills expect the student to give information that is not known before. An example of a communicative drill can be found in Example 61. In this activity, the students ask each other questions about their day schedule that they have fulfilled in the previous part of the activity. The model is given but the student who answers needs to understand the time of day and provide an answer according to the model.

(Example 61)



3. a) Mitä teet tavallisen arkipäivän aikana? Sijoita laatikon verbit venäjäksi itsellesi sopivaan vuorokaudenaikaan. Lisää myös vähintään yksi oma tekeminen.

tehdä läksyjä	nousta	syödä aamiaista
syödä päivällistä	mennä nukkumaan	pestä hampaat
nukkua	mennä kouluun	syödä lounasta
käydä suihkussa	pukeutua	viettää aikaa ystävien kanssa

У́тром	Днём
Ве́чером	**Но́чью**

b) Kysy pariltasi, mitä hän tekee eri vuorokaudenaikoina.

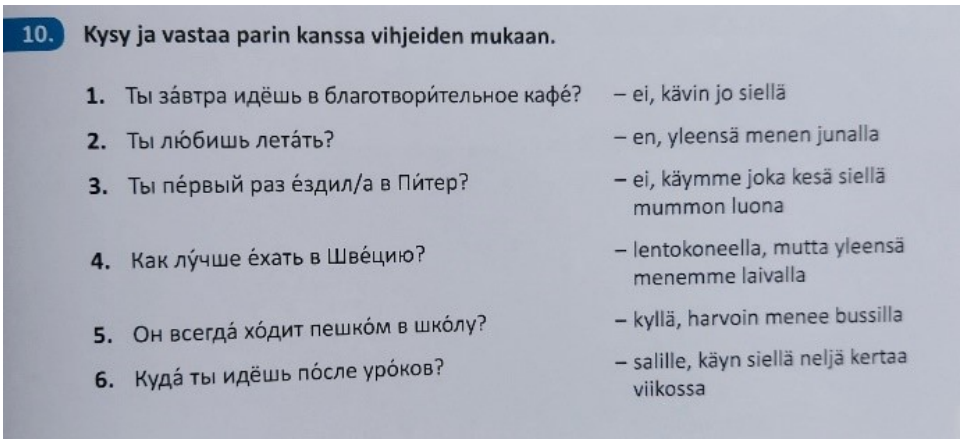
Malli: - Что ты де́лаешь днём? - Обе́даю.

(*Ponjatno! 1*: 232)

Exercises

As exercises give emphasis on structure rather than students' thoughts and opinions, they frequent activities such as vocabulary and structure and interviews. While many discussion activities were considered tasks in *Insights* textbooks, in *Ponjatno!* textbooks they are all exercises because the questions are very specific and restricting. Grammatical structures are usually practiced with exercises. In Example 62, the students ask each other questions and they need to answer using the verbs of motion according to the cue.

(Example 62)



10. **Kysy ja vastaa parin kanssa vihjeiden mukaan.**

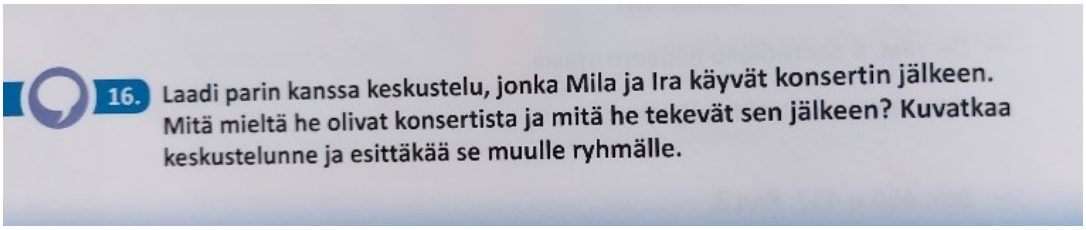
1. Ты за́втра идёшь в благотвори́тельное кафе́?	– ei, kävin jo siellä
2. Ты лю́бишь лета́ть?	– en, yleensä menen junalla
3. Ты пе́рвый раз е́здил/а в Пи́тер?	– ei, käymme joka kesä siellä mummon luona
4. Как лу́чше е́хать в Шве́цию?	– lentokoneella, mutta yleensä menemme laivalla
5. Он всегда́ хо́дит пешко́м в шко́лу?	– kyllä, harvoin menee bussilla
6. Куда́ ты идёшь по́сле уро́ков?	– salille, käyn siellä neljä kertaa viikossa

(*Ponjatno! 3*: 219)

Tasks

Tasks give the students a chance to express their own thoughts and ideas. The language use is freer than in exercises as the content is seen as more important. In *Ponjatno!* textbooks, tasks are either role-plays or presentations. In Example 63, the students are given freedom to make a dialogue between the characters however they want. They can use complicated language or make it simpler. Moreover, they can express their own ideas in creating the dialogue and have the characters discuss like they would after a concert.

(Example 63)



16. **Laadi parin kanssa keskustelu, jonka Mila ja Ira käyvät konsertin jälkeen. Mitä mieltä he olivat konsertista ja mitä he tekevät sen jälkeen? Kuvatkaa keskustelunne ja esittäkää se muulle ryhmälle.**

(*Ponjatno! 2*: 292)

To summarize the findings of the *Ponjatno!* textbook series, there is a total of 304 activities that can be considered oral. Some of the oral activities give the students better chances at practicing oral skills as many of the activities, while completed orally, do not give a lot of freedom for natural speech taking place. The biggest activity categories are vocabulary and structure, read-aloud, and pronunciation. In all of these categories, most of the activities are quite strict in what the student is able to produce. Drills are the most numerous types of oral activities, so the production of oral skills is quite mechanical as the distribution of the three drill types leans

towards mechanical drills with only three communicative drills found in the textbook series. The other biggest group is exercises. They are more communicative than drills due to the free production of speech while the focus is on the form of the utterances. Tasks are in the minority of the activity types with the total of only 10 activities found belonging to this group. The mechanical nature of the activities is caused by the textbooks design being directed towards syllabus B3 language, so the activities are designed for beginner lever learners who start from the basics.

The analysis of the two textbook series and this thesis is now complete. I have answered the research questions that consider the textbooks of English and Russian. Next, I will discuss the similarities and differences between the two textbook series to answer the third research question.

4.3 Similarities and differences in *Insights* and *Ponjatno!*

I will now conclude the analysis by discussing the similarities and differences between *Insights* textbooks and *Ponjatno!* textbooks. This discussion will answer the third research question of whether oral activities differ in English and Russian textbooks, and if they do, in what ways.

The highest number of oral activities can be found in *Insights 8*. *Insight 8* covers the course 8 which is dedicated to spoken language, so it is not surprising that it would hold the highest number of oral activities. When considering only the obligatory courses, courses 1-6 or *Insights 1-6*, the highest number of oral activities is found in *Insights 1*. This coincides with the requirements of the current NCC 2015 which emphasizes the importance of oral skills at the beginning of the studies. The number of oral activities steadily decreases towards the end of the *Insights* textbook series. Similarly, in *Ponjatno!* textbooks, the first textbook has the highest number of oral activities. This also coincides with the requirements of the current NCC 2015 as syllabus B3 languages also emphasize the development of oral skills at the beginning.

Both textbook series have vocabulary and structure activities as the biggest category of oral activities. In *Ponjatno!* textbooks, the next biggest groups are read-aloud and pronunciation activities. However, in *Insights* textbooks, discussions are the next biggest group of activities. This indicates that *Insights* focuses more on the communicative aspects of oral skills while *Ponjatno!* wants the students to be able to pronounce Russian correctly. In discussions, the

students are able to express their thoughts and opinions on the topic together, so they will get to practice conversational skills in the target language. In read-aloud and pronunciation activities, the focus is more on the form. The activities are completed quite mechanically by repeating after a recording. It should be noted, however, that *Ponjatno!* textbooks are designed for beginner level students while *Insights* textbooks are used by students who are considered independent in their language skills. In independent stage, the students do not need to practice mechanical repetition as much as in the beginning. They will have chances to apply their language knowledge in more uncontrolled communicative situations. At the start of new language studies, the students most likely do not yet even know how to pronounce certain sounds, so it could be assumed that their linguistic knowledge is not proficient enough to produce free speech yet.

Conversational strategies and non-verbal communication are an essential part of face-to-face communication. As the data shows, neither is taught systematically in either textbook series, in the case of *Ponjatno!*, non-verbal communication is not taught at all. The total number of conversational strategy activities in *Insights* textbooks is 20 and there is one non-verbal communication activity. *Ponjatno!* textbooks have 8 conversational strategy activities. As section 2.3.2 explains, aspects of conversational strategies, such as feedback and politeness, and non-verbal communication usually cause more misunderstandings in intercultural situations than a lack of linguistic knowledge. A foreign speaker is expected to have less linguistic knowledge than a native speaker, but they will be judged harsher when they do not act according to the target language's cultural norms. Therefore, both language textbook series could dedicate more time to raise awareness of the importance of conversational strategies.

There were a couple of activity categories in *Insights* textbooks that were not found in *Ponjatno!* textbooks. These categories are problem-solving, translation, and non-verbal communication. In problem-solving and non-verbal communication activities the students are able to practice their conversational skills as, in the case of problem-solving activities, they will need to discuss and negotiate to reach a compromise as to how to complete the activity. Non-verbal communication is also part of oral skills as, in face-to-face communication, the participants give and receive a lot of information about the other interlocutor from their non-verbal gestures and facial expressions. These are important skills in intercultural communicative situation, so it is unfortunate that the *Ponjatno!* textbook series lacks these particular activity categories. Oral translation activities, on the other hand, do not much benefit oral skills. The students just translate prefabricated text out loud. Of course, any activity where the students

need to produce the target language orally is somewhat beneficial but in these kinds of activities, the focus is on the correct translation, not the production of spoken language. Thus, *Ponjatno!* textbook series does not miss an opportunity in lacking oral translation activities as the series already has a numerous amount of read-aloud tasks where the students will get a chance to speak Russian without having to formulate the sentences.

The biggest activity type in *Insights* textbooks is task. Exercises are the next biggest group and drills are the smallest. In *Ponjatno!* textbooks, the order is the opposite with drills being the biggest group, exercises second, and tasks being the smallest. The focus on *Insights* textbooks is also in this sense more communicative than *Ponjatno!* textbook series. Insight textbooks certainly also hold a lot of exercises and drills, but the share of tasks indicate that the focus is on self-expression rather than reciting structures. Tasks imitate the real-world better that exercises or drills. In these types of activities, the students will use the target language as they would outside the classroom. When the focus is on structures, the students are seen as learners of the language and the production of speech is restricted to the structures required to complete the activity. In this light, *Ponjatno!* does not give the students many chances to produce Russian freely. The focus is on correct pronunciation, automatization of reciting Russian (in the case of read-aloud activities), and the drilling of basic grammatical structures into the mind.

To compare the new textbooks that follow the new NCC 2019, it was shown that both textbooks will bring changes to the spoken language learning. In the case of *Insights*, the direction is towards less communicative because the share of some more communicative activities such as discussions, conversation strategies and non-verbal communication is decreasing. In addition, the share of tasks is decreasing giving way to more exercises and drills, which affects the communicativeness of the activities. There will also be less focus on different genres of spoken language as the share of the more formal activity, presentation, is decreasing as well. In *Ponjatno!*, however, the change is more positive. *Ponjatno! 1-3* has more communicative activities compare to *Ponjatno! 1* as the share of discussions and problem-solving activities increases. The teaching of more formal genres of spoken language is just like in the older textbook, there are no formal situations given for the students to practice formal Russian other than the use of either second person singular or plural form. In the case of the activity types, the newer textbook has more tasks and only slightly more drills than the older one, and consequently, the share of exercises decreases. Thus, the students are given more chances to express themselves and the newer textbook seems more communicative than the older textbook.

All of the research questions have now been answered. Next, I will discuss the results and implications of this thesis further. Next chapter will also conclude the study.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine how oral skills are taught in English and Russian textbooks. The current NCC for general upper secondary school and the CEFR both emphasize communication and interaction. Oral skills are part of both, so it would be expected that when a textbook series claims to follow the requirements of the NCC, oral skills would be emphasized to develop skills in interaction using the target language. Communicative proficiency includes both knowledge of the language and how to use the knowledge in different communicative situations. This means that the students should not be given only grammatical rules and vocabulary to practice, rather, they should also be given opportunities to apply their knowledge in different kinds of communicative situations.

The aim of this thesis was to find out how oral skills are presented in language textbooks, so there were two languages chosen: English and Russian. English is typically a syllabus A1 language, so by the time of upper secondary school, the students are expected to have quite proficient skill in the language. On the other hand, Russian is normally a syllabus B3 language so the students at upper secondary school will start from the basics. It was decided that as the languages are generally taught at different levels, it would be interesting to see how oral activities differ at these different levels when the students themselves are roughly the same age.

Both languages have a textbook series that has been designed according to the current NCC. *Insights* is an English textbook series and *Ponjatno!* is used in teaching Russian. These two textbooks were then analyzed using content analysis method to answer the research questions. There were thirteen activity categories identified in the *Insights* textbook series that were examined by their content and what kind of language they expected the students to produce to complete the activity. The activities were also divided into the three activity types. In the case of *Ponjatno!*, there were only ten categories identified. However, one of these categories was then found in the new version of the textbook series. The activities in *Ponjatno!* were also divided into three activity types.

The findings indicate the first textbooks have a greater emphasis on oral skills. The number of oral activities steadily decrease towards the later courses. However, *Insights* has a textbook that is used in the spoken language course, so naturally it has more oral activities than the rest. It was also discovered that some activity categories give the students a better opportunity to

practice their oral skills. For example, activities such as discussions, problem-solving, and conversation strategy expected the students to produce free speech and to interact freely in the target language with other students compared to activities such as translations, interviews or read-alouds.

Insights textbook series was noted to be quite communicative. Most of the activities were found to be tasks, with drill being the smallest group of activity types. The biggest categories of oral activities were vocabulary and structure, discussions, and translations. Discussions were generally judged to be very communicative where the students could practice different conversational strategies and produce English freely, but this depends on how willing the student is in expressing themselves. Vocabulary and structure and translation activities, on the other hand were quite mechanical but were usually evaluated to be exercises which are more communicative than drills. It was unfortunately noted that conversation strategies and nonverbal communication were not taught systematically. They are both extremely important in everyday conversations so the students should be given more chances to be aware of them. These pragmatic skills are usually more important in intercultural communication than knowledge or grammar or vocabulary as a foreigner is not expected to be able to speak a foreign language perfectly but mishaps in conversational strategies are judged more harshly than grammatical errors.

In the case of Russian and *Ponjatno!*, the findings revealed that the oral activities are mostly mechanical and there are not many opportunities for free production of spoken Russian. This most likely stems from the thought that at the beginning of language studies the students should first learn the grammatical structures before moving on to applying their knowledge of the language in communication. Most of the activities were judged to be drills. Exercises were the second biggest type of activity. There were only a few tasks in the whole textbook series. Most of the activities were either vocabulary and structure activities, read-alouds, or pronunciation activities. It could be deduced that *Ponjatno!* wants the students to have a steady base for Russian pronunciation and automatization of speaking in Russian out loud because of the great number of pronunciation activities and read-alouds found in the textbooks. It should be noted that pronunciation is important in Russian as stress and intonation affect understanding of an utterance greatly. Of the thirteen categories of oral activities, *Ponjatno!* lacked problem-solving activities, translations, and non-verbal communication activities. The findings indicate that conversation strategies are given less attention than the structure of Russian. Communicative

norms differ culturally, so when the students are not made aware of these differences, they might unwittingly cause misunderstandings.

The findings also indicate that the newer versions of the textbooks series that follow the upcoming NCC 2019 will have slightly fewer oral activities. *New Insights 1-2* has fewer discussions and activities that practice conversational strategies and non-verbal communication. The direction is to a less communicative with the increase of vocabulary and structure activities, translations, and pronunciation activities. The activity types also seem to be less communicative since there will be less tasks and more drills and exercises. However, there is also an increase of problem-solving activities, role-plays, and games, which are usually considered to be quite communicative, the direction is not wholly towards less interactive. In *Ponjatno! 1-3*, similarly to *New Insights 1-2*, the total number of oral activities slightly decreases. The new textbook is moving to a more communicative and interactive directions with the increase in oral activities such as discussions and problem-solving. In addition, the share of tasks increase compared to the older textbook series.

When comparing the results to earlier studies with a similar aim, it can be said that at least the English textbooks have clearly increased the number of oral activities. For example, Hietala (2013) found that both English textbooks she analyzed had about 200 oral activities in the textbook series. *Insights* has over 600 oral activities. She also found that most of the activities were considered exercises. So, compared with *Insights* that has tasks as the biggest activity type group, the activities give the students more chances to practice their oral skills in situation where the focus is not on producing structurally correct sentences. It could be concluded that the textbooks have clearly been developed to include a greater emphasis on practicing spoken language. English textbooks are also more communicative with the opportunities for freer production of speech with the increase in tasks.

It should be noted that the analysis and categorization was conducted by only one person. Someone else might categorize some of the activities differently as both textbook series had activities that could partly belong to several categories. However, the instructions of the activities were a great help in indicating what category a particular activity belongs. The instructions asked, for example, to translate orally, to discuss in small groups, or to compare answers with a partner. What is more, in *Ponjatno!*, the pronunciation activities were always marked with a symbol to indicate that the particular activity focuses on pronunciation. There were, however, some cases that I needed to examine more closely to determine what category it would belong

to. I have given a lot of examples of the tasks to give justification and evidence to the categorization, and to indicate that the categorization is valid. In order to ensure reliability, the textbook series were examined with the same categorization of oral activities, so that the textbook series could be compared. Furthermore, I reflected the categorization of previous research to ensure that the findings could be comparable to previous studies as well.

Much of the use of textbooks depends on its users. As discussed in section 2.4, while textbooks are very widely used in language teaching, the teachers and students might use them differently to how they were intended to be used. There is a chance that the reality of classroom oral language use is much more diverse than indicated in the textbooks. I do not see why some of the written activities could not be completed orally or in interaction with fellow classmates. The teacher is also able to deviate from the textbooks by using other materials to give the students more opportunities to practice and become aware of conversational strategies and cultural differences in international communication.

It is obvious that there could be made improvements on textbooks to make them more diverse in how oral skills are taught and presented. The textbook series analyzed in this thesis follow the requirements of the NCC and the CEFR concerning spoken language reasonably well, but they could give more of a greater emphasis on conversational strategies that are a crucial part of oral communication.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Table A. Sustained monologue: Describing experience. (CEFR 2001: 59)

C2	Can give clear, smoothly flowing, elaborate and often memorable descriptions.
C1	Can give clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects. Can give elaborate descriptions and narratives, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
B2	Can give clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest.
B1	Can give straightforward descriptions on a variety of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest. Can reasonably fluently relate a straightforward narrative or description as a linear sequence of points. Can give detailed accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions. B1 Can relate details of unpredictable occurrences, e.g. an accident. Can relate the plot of a book or film and describe his/her reactions. Can describe dreams, hopes and ambitions. Can describe events, real or imagined. Can narrate a story.
A2	Can tell a story or describe something in a simple list of points. Can describe everyday aspects of his/her environment e.g. people, places, a job or study experience. Can give short, basic descriptions of events and activities. Can describe plans and arrangements, habits and routines, past activities and personal experiences. A2 Can use simple descriptive language to make brief statements about and compare objects and possessions. Can explain what he/she likes or dislikes about something.
	Can describe his/her family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job. Can describe people, places and possessions in simple terms.
A1	Can describe him/herself, what he/she does and where he/she lives.

Table B. Sustained monologue: Putting a case (e.g. in a debate). (CEFR 2001: 59)

C2	No descriptor available
C1	No descriptor available
B2	Can develop an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.
	Can develop a clear argument, expanding and supporting his/her points of view at some length with subsidiary points and relevant examples. Can construct a chain of reasoned argument: Can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	Can develop an argument well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time.

	Can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions.
A2	No descriptor available
A1	No descriptor available

Table C. Public announcements. (CEFR 2001: 60)

C2	No descriptor available
C1	Can deliver announcements fluently, almost effortlessly, using stress and intonation to convey finer shades of meaning precisely.
B2	Can deliver announcements on most general topics with a degree of clarity, fluency and spontaneity which causes no strain or inconvenience to the listener.
B1	Can deliver short, rehearsed announcements on a topic pertinent to everyday occurrences in his/her field which, despite possibly very foreign stress and intonation, are nevertheless clearly intelligible.
A2	Can deliver very short, rehearsed announcements of predictable, learnt content which are intelligible to listeners who are prepared to concentrate.
A1	No descriptor available

Table D. Addressing audiences. (CEFR 2001: 60)

C2	Can present a complex topic confidently and articulately to an audience unfamiliar with it, structuring and adapting the talk flexibly to meet the audience's needs. Can handle difficult and even hostile questioning.
C1	Can give a clear, well-structured presentation of a complex subject, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples. Can handle interjections well, responding spontaneously and almost effortlessly.
B2	Can give a clear, systematically developed presentation, with highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail. Can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and follow up interesting points raised by members of the audience, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression.
	Can give a clear, prepared presentation, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can take a series of follow up questions with a degree of fluency and spontaneity which poses no strain for either him/herself or the audience.
B1	Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within his/her field which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision. Can take follow up questions, but may have to ask for repetition if the speech was rapid.
	Can give a short, rehearsed presentation on a topic pertinent to his/her everyday life, briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions. Can cope with a limited number of straightforward follow up questions.

A2	Can give a short, rehearsed, basic presentation on a familiar subject. Can answer straightforward follow up questions if he/she can ask for repetition and if some help with the formulation of his/her reply is possible.
A1	Can read a very short, rehearsed statement – e.g. to introduce a speaker, propose a toast.

APPENDIX 2

Table A. Understanding a native speaker interlocutor. (CEFR 2001: 75)

C2	Can understand any native speaker interlocutor, even on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond his/her own field, given an opportunity to adjust to a non-standard accent or dialect.
C1	Can understand in detail speech on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond his/her own field, though he/she may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar.
B2	Can understand in detail what is said to him/her in the standard spoken language even in a noisy environment.
B1	Can follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversation, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases.
A2	Can understand enough to manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort. Can generally understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters directed at him/her, provided he/she can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time.
	Can understand what is said clearly, slowly and directly to him/her in simple everyday conversation; can be made to understand, if the speaker can take the trouble.
A1	Can understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs of a concrete type, delivered directly to him/her in clear, slow and repeated speech by a sympathetic speaker. Can understand questions and instructions addressed carefully and slowly to him/her and follow short, simple directions.

Table B. Conversation. (CEFR 2001: 76)

C2	Can converse comfortably and appropriately, unhampered by any linguistic limitations in conducting a full social and personal life.
C1	Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage.
B2	Can engage in extended conversation on most general topics in a clearly participatory fashion, even in a noisy environment. Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker. Can convey degrees of emotion and highlight the personal significance of events and experiences.
B1	Can enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics. Can follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversation, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases.

	Can maintain a conversation or discussion but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what he/she would like to. Can express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference.
A2	Can establish social contact: greetings and farewells; introductions; giving thanks. Can generally understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters directed at him/her, provided he/she can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time. Can participate in short conversations in routine contexts on topics of interest. Can express how he/she feels in simple terms, and express thanks.
	Can handle very short social exchanges but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord, though he/she can be made to understand if the speaker will take the trouble. Can use simple everyday polite forms of greeting and address. Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions and apologies. Can say what he/she likes and dislikes.
A1	Can make an introduction and use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions. A1 Can ask how people are and react to news. Can understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs of a concrete type, delivered directly to him/her in clear, slow and repeated speech by a sympathetic speaker.

Table C. Informal discussion (with friends). (CEFR 2001: 77)

C2	As C1
C1	Can easily follow and contribute to complex interactions between third parties in group discussion even on abstract, complex unfamiliar topics.
	Can keep up with an animated discussion between native speakers. Can express his/her ideas and opinions with precision, and present and respond to complex lines of argument convincingly.
B2	Can take an active part in informal discussion in familiar contexts, commenting, putting point of view B2 clearly, evaluating alternative proposals and making and responding to hypotheses. Can with some effort catch much of what is said around him/her in discussion, but may find it difficult to participate effectively in discussion with several native speakers who do not modify their language in any way. Can account for and sustain his/her opinions in discussion by providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments.
	Can follow much of what is said around him/her on general topics provided interlocutors avoid very idiomatic usage and articulate clearly. Can express his/her thoughts about abstract or cultural topics such as music, films. Can explain why something is a problem. Can give brief comments on the views of others.
B1	Can compare and contrast alternatives, discussing what to do, where to go, who or which to choose, etc.

	Can generally follow the main points in an informal discussion with friends provided speech is clearly articulated in standard dialect. Can give or seek personal views and opinions in discussing topics of interest. Can make his/her opinions and reactions understood as regards solutions to problems or practical questions of where to go, what to do, how to organise an event (e.g. an outing). Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely.
A2	Can generally identify the topic of discussion around him/her when it is conducted slowly and clearly. Can discuss what to do in the evening, at the weekend. Can make and respond to suggestions. Can agree and disagree with others.
	Can discuss everyday practical issues in a simple way when addressed clearly, slowly and directly. Can discuss what to do, where to go and make arrangements to meet.
A1	No descriptors available

Table D. Formal discussion and meetings. (CEFR 2001: 78)

C2	Can hold his/her own in formal discussion of complex issues, putting an articulate and persuasive argument, at no disadvantage to native speakers.
C1	Can easily keep up with the debate, even on abstract, complex unfamiliar topics. Can argue a formal position convincingly, responding to questions and comments and answering complex lines of counter argument fluently, spontaneously and appropriately.
B2	Can keep up with an animated discussion, identifying accurately arguments supporting and opposing points of view. Can express his/her ideas and opinions with precision, present and respond to complex lines of argument convincingly.
	Can participate actively in routine and non-routine formal discussion. Can follow the discussion on matters related to his/her field, understand in detail the points given prominence by the speaker. Can contribute, account for and sustain his/her opinion, evaluate alternative proposals and make and respond to hypotheses.
B1	Can follow much of what is said that is related to his/her field, provided interlocutors avoid very idiomatic usage and articulate clearly. Can put over a point of view clearly, but has difficulty engaging in debate. B1 Can take part in routine formal discussion of familiar subjects which is conducted in clearly articulated speech in the standard dialect and which involves the exchange of factual information, receiving instructions or the discussion of solutions to practical problems.
A2	Can generally follow changes of topic in formal discussion related to his/her field which is conducted slowly and clearly. Can exchange relevant information and give his/her opinion on practical problems when asked directly, provided he/she receives some help with formulation and can ask for repetition of key points if necessary.
	Can say what he/she thinks about things when addressed directly in a formal meeting, provided he/she

	can ask for repetition of key points if necessary.
A1	No descriptor available

Table E. Goal oriented co-operation (e.g. repairing a car, discussing a document, organising an event). (CEFR 2001: 79)

C2	As B2
C1	As B2
B2	Can understand detailed instructions reliably. B2 Can help along the progress of the work by inviting others to join in, say what they think, etc. Can outline an issue or a problem clearly, speculating about causes or consequences, and weighing advantages and disadvantages of different approaches.
B1	Can follow what is said, though he/she may occasionally have to ask for repetition or clarification if the other people's talk is rapid or extended. Can explain why something is a problem, discuss what to do next, compare and contrast alternatives. Can give brief comments on the views of others.
	Can generally follow what is said and, when necessary, can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding. Can make his/her opinions and reactions understood as regards possible solutions or the question of what to do next, giving brief reasons and explanations. Can invite others to give their views on how to proceed.
A2	Can understand enough to manage simple, routine tasks without undue effort, asking very simply for repetition when he/she does not understand. Can discuss what to do next, making and responding to suggestions, asking for and giving directions
	Can indicate when he/she is following and can be made to understand what is necessary, if the speaker takes the trouble. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks using simple phrases to ask for and provide things, to get simple information and to discuss what to do next.
A1	Can understand questions and instructions addressed carefully and slowly to him/her and follow short, simple directions. Can ask people for things, and give people things.

Table F. Transactions to obtain goods and services. (CEFR 2001: 80)

C2	As B2
C1	As B2
B2	Can cope linguistically to negotiate a solution to a dispute like an undeserved traffic ticket, financial responsibility for damage in a flat, for blame regarding an accident. Can outline a case for compensation, using persuasive language to demand satisfaction and state clearly the limits to any concession he/she is prepared to make
	Can explain a problem which has arisen and make it clear that the provider of the service/customer must make a concession.

B1	Can deal with most transactions likely to arise whilst travelling, arranging travel or accommodation, or dealing with authorities during a foreign visit. Can cope with less routine situations in shops, post offices, banks, e.g. returning an unsatisfactory purchase. Can make a complaint. Can deal with most situations likely to arise when making travel arrangements through an agent or when actually travelling, e.g. asking passenger where to get off for an unfamiliar destination.
A2	Can deal with common aspects of everyday living such as travel, lodgings, eating and shopping. Can get all the information needed from a tourist office, as long as it is of a straightforward, nonspecialised nature.
	Can ask for and provide everyday goods and services. Can get simple information about travel, use public transport: buses, trains, and taxis, ask and give directions, and buy tickets. Can ask about things and make simple transactions in shops, post offices or banks. Can give and receive information about quantities, numbers, prices, etc. Can make simple purchases by stating what is wanted and asking the price. Can order a meal.
A1	Can ask people for things and give people things. Can handle numbers, quantities, cost and time.

Table G. Information exchange. (CEFR 2001: 81)

C2	As B2
C1	As B2
B2	Can understand and exchange complex information and advice on the full range of matters related to his/her occupational role.
	Can pass on detailed information reliably. Can give a clear, detailed description of how to carry out a procedure. Can synthesise and report information and arguments from a number of sources.
B1	Can exchange, check and confirm accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within his/her field with some confidence. Can describe how to do something, giving detailed instructions. Can summarise and give his or her opinion about a short story, article, talk, discussion, interview, or documentary and answer further questions of detail.
	Can find out and pass on straightforward factual information. Can ask for and follow detailed directions. Can obtain more detailed information
A2	Can understand enough to manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort. Can deal with practical everyday demands: finding out and passing on straightforward factual information. Can ask and answer questions about habits and routines. Can ask and answer questions about pastimes and past activities. Can give and follow simple directions and instructions, e.g. explain how to get somewhere.

	Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information. Can exchange limited information on familiar and routine operational matters. Can ask and answer questions about what they do at work and in free time. Can ask for and give directions referring to a map or plan. Can ask for and provide personal information.
A1	Can understand questions and instructions addressed carefully and slowly to him/her and follow short, simple directions. Can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics. Can ask and answer questions about themselves and other people, where they live, people they know, things they have. Can indicate time by such phrases as next week, last Friday, in November, three o'clock

Table H. Interviewing and being interviewed. (CEFR 2001: 82)

C2	Can keep up his/her side of the dialogue extremely well, structuring the talk and interacting authoritatively with complete fluency as interviewer or interviewee, at no disadvantage to a native speaker.
C1	Can participate fully in an interview, as either interviewer or interviewee, expanding and developing the point being discussed fluently without any support, and handling interjections well.
B2	Can carry out an effective, fluent interview, departing spontaneously from prepared questions, following up and probing interesting replies.
	Can take initiatives in an interview, expand and develop ideas with little help or prodding from an interviewer.
B1	Can provide concrete information required in an interview/consultation (e.g. describe symptoms to a doctor) but does so with limited precision. Can carry out a prepared interview, checking and confirming information, though he/she may occasionally have to ask for repetition if the other person's response is rapid or extended.
	Can take some initiatives in an interview/consultation (e.g. to bring up a new subject) but is very dependent on interviewer in the interaction. Can use a prepared questionnaire to carry out a structured interview, with some spontaneous follow up questions.
A2	Can make him/herself understood in an interview and communicate ideas and information on familiar topics, provided he/she can ask for clarification occasionally, and is given some help to express what he/she wants to.
	Can answer simple questions and respond to simple statements in an interview
A1	Can reply in an interview to simple direct questions spoken very slowly and clearly in direct nonidiomatic speech about personal details.