

WRITTEN STORIES OF UNSCRIPTED THEATRE
Understanding the voice of improvisation theatre literature

Master's thesis

Veera Kenttälä

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Language and
Communication Studies

English

May 2018

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta - Faculty Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen tiedekunta	Laitos - Department Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä - Author Veera Kenttälä	
Työn nimi - Title Written stories of unscripted theatre: Understanding the voice of improvisation theatre literature	
Oppiaine - Subject Englanti	Työn laji - Level Pro Gradu tutkielma
Aika - Month and year Toukokuu 2018	Sivumäärä - Number of pages 81
<p>Tiivistelmä - Abstract</p> <p>Tässä työssä tarkastellaan improvisoidun teatterin kirjallisia kuvauksia analysoimalla improvisaatiokirjallisuutta. Yhdysvaltalainen, brittiläinen ja suomalainen improvisaatiokirjallisuus on valittu tarkemman analyysin kohteeksi ja työn kautta pyritään lisäämään ymmärrystä näiden improvisaatiokulttuurien kirjallisten kuvausten eroista ja yhtäläisyyksistä. Kirjallisuutta tarkastellaan kolmella tasolla: kulttuuriset tekijät, genre ja kirjailijakohtaiset ominaispiirteet. Tutkimuksen avulla pyritään selvittämään, onko improvisaatiokirjallisuus universaalialue, kulttuurikontekstin tai kirjallisen genren rajamaa vai kirjoittajakohtaisesti muotoutuvaa. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnettiin menetelmänä laadullista sisältöanalyysia, jonka avulla analysoiduista kirjoista etsittiin keskeiset teemat, joita tutkimuksessa lähemmin tarkastellaan. Jokaisesta kirjasta koottiin jokaiseen yksittäiseen teemaan liittyvät tekstikatkelmat, joiden pohjalta tehdyt havainnot yhdistettiin teemakohtaiseen kaikki kirjat kattavaan analyysiin. Tehdyn analyysin perusteella voitiin havaita joitain merkkejä kulttuurikontekstin ja genren vaikutuksesta kirjoittajan tyylillisiin valintoihin. Analysoidut kirjat osoittivat myös merkkejä siitä, että kirjoittajan oma tapa jäsentää improvisaatiota saattoi vaikuttaa kulttuurikontekstia enemmän tehtyihin tyylillisiin valintoihin kirjassa. Samoin huomattavaa oli se, että eri improvisaatiokulttuureita edustavilla kirjoittajilla oli yhteisiä kirjallisia innoittajia ja lähteitä. Näin ollen havaittavissa oli kulttuurikontekstit ylittäviä universaalimpia improvisaatiokulttuurisia tyylikeinoja ja ratkaisuja.</p>	
<p>Asiasanat - Keywords</p> <p>Improvisaatioteatteri, improvisointi, kirjallisuudentutkimus, tyylintutkimus, genret</p>	
Säilytyspaikka - Depository	
Muita tietoja - Additional information	

Content

1	Introduction	1
2	Background.....	6
2.1	Theatre	9
2.2	Theatre improvisation	11
2.3	Improvisation as an independent art form.....	12
2.4	Improv education / training.....	16
2.5	Applied improvisation	18
3	Improvisation literature as a genre.....	20
3.1	Mixture of nonfiction genres.....	20
3.2	Categories of improvisation literature	22
4	Methods and Data	24
4.1	Methods	24
4.2	Improv literature from the United States.....	27
4.3	Improv literature from Britain	29
4.4	Improv literature from Finland	30
5	Analysis of the improv books.....	34
5.1	“The Secret Code Club for Cool Kids” - Structure and organisation of material.....	36
5.2	“I will forget all rules” - The rules of improvisation.....	44
5.3	“Misbehave in all sorts of ingenious ways” - Approach to improvisation.....	48
5.4	“But honey, what about the children?” - Use of personal examples and humour.....	53
5.5	“What are you doing?” - Games and their rules	62
6	Conclusion	70

7 References 74

List of tables

Table 1 Analysed improv literature.....34

1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on creating understanding of improvisation (henceforth 'improv') literature as a genre by analysing nine literary works from three cultural contexts. The three cultural contexts are United States more specifically Chicago based improv tradition, Britain and Finland. In this thesis culture is understood in a limited way to consist of the national state culture of the chosen countries, however, this very limited view of culture does not represent the complexity of culture as it is understood currently (Minkov, 2013). Culture as it is understood in modern cultural studies gives more emphasis on for example the shared ideas and practices in human groups, which is not necessarily limited by the borders of national states (Allen, 2017).

Definitions of what can be considered as a unified culture also vary in the approach to how commonly the members of the culture share similar values. On the one hand Fischer (2009) defines culture as a collective phenomenon that is approximately shared amongst the people belonging to that culture. On the other hand Inglehart (1997) provides a definition of culture where culture is seen as system pertaining attitudes, values and knowledge that is widely shared among the members of the culture. Here the terminological difference in the definitions can be seen in the use of 'approximately' (Fischer, 2009) and 'widely' (Inglehart, 1997) that suggests that defining how deeply members of a certain culture must share, for example, the same values that they can be defined as belonging to the same culture. In addition it is understood, even though not in detail addressed in this study, that within a nation state there can be several large subcultures and therefore the whole nation state does not necessarily share one unified culture (Gray, 2003; House & Javidan, 2004). For the context of this study from the wealth of cultural features that in many cases cross the national borders (Rodman, 2013; Allen 2017) is looked at from the perspective of understanding whether something in the literary works connects

the author from the same country or whether the language of improv is more universal or limited to author specific choices.

The limited scope on culture provides a starting point for the analysis, but it is understood that the view on culture utilised to categorise and analyse improv literature in this study represents an outdated view on culture that is limited by the borders of a country. When looking at improv literature, culture can also be seen as something relevant to a particular improvisation subculture for example Chicago style of improvising (Halpern, Close & Johnson, 1994) and is not necessarily representative of the whole improv culture in that country. Furthermore each author's individual self and style of writing is also formed within the cultural context and therefore it is difficult to completely separate the individual and cultural features, as these may overlap (Couldry, 2000). In addition as Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) point out also combining elements of different discourses the use of language can affect individual discourses and also the cultural world. Therefore it is necessary to acknowledge that culture, the literature a person has read and individuals literary and language choices are at least partially interwoven into each other and dividing them into two completely separate categories is in part artificial.

This work provides critical description and comparison between improv books from three improv cultures. The selection made is based on the knowledge gained from currently available Finnish improv literature about what styles of improvisation created in other cultural contexts have affected their authors the most. As such it is necessary to analyse these improvisation traditions to understand whether the literary styles and voices of Finnish authors bear similar traits or is improvisation literature culturally dependant on the country of origin.

The analysis has been furthered by adding not only the originally used source materials for Finnish improvisation theatre literature, but also later literary works that expand the work of their predecessors. This is done to further

understand whether the Finnish improvisation literature has taken similar paths to the styles that have influenced them or are there signs of improvisation cultures creating and taking separate and differing directions. This is also done to understand whether the voice of improvisation theatre literature has matured or changed over the years in each culture and whether is it more adapted to the culture where it was written or is improvisation literature similar regardless of the cultural origins or the writer. How does the national cultural context the author improvises in, affect their style of writing and understanding of the basic nature of improvised theatre? Can cultural similarities be found between individual writers, or are the books always more influenced by the personal style of the writer than what culture they write in and for?

As such from each cultural context a selection has been made to include literary works created by pioneers in that particular improv tradition and their successors, who have either been taught by these pioneers or have worked with them. This selection was done to understand both the literary origins of that improvisation tradition and how practitioners have later shaped and directed the form of improvisation literature. This work provides understanding whether improv literature from each of the three improvisation cultures abides similar devices within the culture or is improvisation literature more author specific or universal in style.

This work is divided into six main chapters that build the understanding of the origins of improv and improv literature in the chosen cultural contexts, then further analysing the literary works from three perspectives: culture, literary genre and author. Chapter 2 elaborates on the background and history of improvisation by defining the term improvisation and looking how it has been utilised in history and what is the current understanding of improv in fields relevant to theatrically based improvisation tradition. Section 2.1 focuses on the origins of improvisation theatre tradition by discussing its European origins related to *Commedia Dell'Arte*. This knowledge is then deepened in Section 2.2

where the history of improv is looked through the lens of theatrical improvisation. Then the focus is shifted towards improv as independent art form in Section 2.3, where the origins of improv as it is understood as a separate discipline and art form are explored. Moreover Section 2.4 builds further understanding of how of improv education and training have been and currently are being organised. Lastly Section 2.5 provides a view to applying improv to other contexts and fields.

After looking at what are the origins of improv this study moves to discover the nature of improv literature as a genre in Chapter 3. Moreover improv literature is explored in Section 3.1 by looking established literary nonfiction genres that utilise similar strategies and stylistic choices as improv literature. Through looking at these genres further the understanding of what are the characteristics they share and whether improv literature is a genre on its own, or belongs to an already established nonfiction genre. Furthermore in Section 3.2 already existing categorisation given to books written about improv is discussed and further developed through comparing it to the literature chosen for this study. These categorisations offer a way of dividing improv books based on the type of content they provide about improvisation. These categories are also used in Chapter 5 in the analysis of the improv books chosen to understand their general content type.

Then in Chapter 4 the data and methods used in this study are presented and discussed. In the three sections the different improv literature cultures are presented and further elaborated to shed light on the selection of literature for each context. Section 4.1 focuses on improv literature selections for the United States and discusses in general the wide variety of improv literature available and gives reasons why these particular works have been chosen for this study. Similarly in Section 4.2 the focus is placed on British improv literature to further the understanding of its origins and what was the rationale behind the selection of books to represent the British improv literature. Finally in Section 4.3 Finnish improv literature is presented and discussed to elaborate on what is currently

available and what other written materials are available in the Finnish improv culture.

In Chapter 5 the analysis of the chosen improv literature is presented to provide a detailed description and dissemination of the characteristics of each improv book chosen for the analysis. The analysis is divided into five sections that deal with different aspects identified from the literary works as features that they share or where they differ from with each other. Firstly in Section 5.1 the overall structure and organisation of materials in the improv books is analysed and discussed to provide a concrete understanding of what are the structural strategies used to categorise and present content in improv literature. Section 5.2 focuses on understanding what in the different literary works is understood to be the core skills and rules that guide improvisation. Then in Section 5.3 the analysis is furthered by looking at the various approaches to improvisation visible in improv literature. In Section 5.4 the commonly used personal examples and humour are discussed to elaborate on what are the common features in the narrative styles of improv literature. Lastly in the analysis in Section 5.5 the rules of improv games and exercises provided in the books are analysed to understand the strategies used and whether similarities or differences can be found between approaches to providing this type of content.

2 Background

“Anyone can improvise, but like any game, if the players don’t learn and obey the rules, no one will play with them.” (Halpern, Close & Johnson, 1994, p. 34)

Improvisation can be defined in several ways and this section will elaborate on some of them, not to evaluate or decide which one is the most apt definition, but to create understanding of the varied nature of how improvisation is and has been defined. On a general level improvisation can be seen as the skill of using bodies and imagination to respond to stimuli from one’s environment spontaneously (Frost & Yarrow, 2015). Usually human interaction is at least partially improvised in the sense that there is no prewritten script for common everyday interactions between human beings (Robbins Dudeck & McClure 2016). How the other person reacts and replies affects your next turn in the dialogue and vice versa (Routarinne, 2004). When narrowing the focus down to the contexts of improvisation as it is understood in field of theatre, improvisation can be used in many ways: in rehearsal to prepare for a scripted play, to develop a script, to enhance the acting of actors and also as an independent form of theatre (Frost & Yarrow, 2015). Improv literature offers several definitions for improvisation. Del Close offers the idea that “Improvisation is about being in the moment and moving forward.” (Griggs, 2005).

General impression of improvisation theatre is that it is the terrifying art of being on in the spotlight in front of an audience not knowing what you are about to do (Stiles, 2017). As such improvisation is something that generally terrifies many people both on the stage and in everyday life situations such as giving a presentation at work (Stiles, 2017; Räsänen, 2017). Routarinne (2004) classifies improvisation as a “dangerous” word as it causes many people to feel anxiety as they understand it to mean that they need to produce a performance that is verbally brilliant, witty and unique on the top of their minds. However,

Routarinne (2004) clarifies that this is not what improvisation is really about and that everyone actually knows how to improvise. Most people improvise all conversations they have in their everyday life, since no one has a script for each and every encounter they have that day (Routarinne, 2004).

Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994, p. 13) define improvisation in its true form as “getting on-stage and performing without any preparation and planning.” Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) approach improvisation as an art form that aims to produce improvised comedy performances. Routarinne (2004) offers two definitions firstly he describes everyday life improvisation as telling a shared story with other people, where everyone plays the starring role in their own story and simultaneously a minor role in the story of all the people they encounter. Secondly Routarinne (2004) defines theatre improvisation as the attempt to find a shared flow and collective mind by accepting fully all ideas and offers made by others.

Improvisation as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* can be described as an act that is conducted without premeditation or planning. The first definition given also promotes the idea that improvisation is necessarily a performance of the act.

“The action or fact of composing or performing music, poetry, drama, etc., spontaneously, or without preparation; this method of performance.” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018)

As according to this definition something improvised, would be something that creates a performance but nothing more tangible than that. Therefore defining improvisation as pertaining only to performances, this in turn could suggest, that there would be a need for an audience for the performance. However this definition does not provide any clear indication of the nature of improvisation, whether it is something only an individual artistic performer can do.

The second definition for improvisation by the *Oxford English Dictionary* also recognises the products that have been created through improvisation as something that is improvised.

“The action or fact of doing anything spontaneously, without preparation, or on the spur of the moment; the action of responding to circumstances or making do with what is available; an instance of this. Also: the result of this; something produced or created in this manner” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018)

As such this latter definition provides more understanding of the nature of improvisation as relevant to the context of this study, which is improvisation theatre. This definition offers a broader view of improvisation as not only a performed piece, but also a method for creating something in the moment, from what is currently available. So it includes the idea of not creating from nothing, but through the use of what happens or what materials are available.

Improvisation in the context of improvised theatre can be seen as a combination of these both definitions. As such improvisation can be either used as a method that is aimed for performance onstage, but it can also be a method for training and interaction offstage. It can be either the process or include also the product of that process. Napier (2004/2015) addresses the performance side of improv and defines improvisation as “getting on a stage and making stuff up as you go along.” However, as Courtney (1973) points out improvised theatre is often wrongly understood as being completely free from rules or restrictions, but as a style it can be considered to be somewhere between formal and spontaneous theatre. Courtney (1973) adds that even though improvised theatre has impromptu aspects the freedom is restricted by selected use of improvisational conventions where the improvisations fit in.

There are several ways improvisation is used. Napier (2004/2015, p. 1) identifies four uses for improvisation: a tool for training actors, means for writing material and a performance product in and of itself. Moreover improvisation has also applied uses and can be utilised in, for example,

interaction and disaster readiness training (Routarinne, 2007; Tint, McWaters & van Driel, 2015). In this work the focus will be on understanding the theatrical origins of improv, the performance use, training and applied use of improv. As such, however, the uses of improvisation as tool for other creative arts (e.g. music) will not be addressed in detail in this work, but the focus will be on improv as it is understood in the theatre and human interaction contexts. This selection was made to narrow down the field of improvisation to fit the scope and purpose of this study. Also this was done to create a shared basis for the work so that the literary works analysed would in general share a similar view on what improv is.

2.1 Theatre

The commonly accepted view of modern improvisation states Commedia Dell'Arte as the original improvised theatre (Salinsky and Frances-White, 2017). Commedia Dell'Arte companies, who improvised their lines based crude scripts on a chosen topic, were commonly found in European courts during the 17th and 18th century (Wickham, 1992). These Commedia Dell'Arte companies consisted mainly of professional actors (Balme, Vescovo & Vianello, 2018). However, as Salinsky and Frances-White (2017) point out there has been improvised plays prior to Commedia Dell'Arte as many classical theatres did not utilize written scripts. Moreover they also attribute the origins of improvisation to Commedia Dell'Arte tradition, since this was the first form, where the players could have utilized prescribed plays, but chose not to do so. After the period of Commedia Dell'Arte there was a long period of waiting for the next big influence to modern improvisation and this influencer according to Salinsky and Frances-White (2017) was Viola Spolin.

Improvisation has long been used in different ways in theatre. One early Western tradition in Commedia Dell'Arte, which is based on certain archetypal characters that are used in semi- or completely unscripted plays. Commedia

dell'Arte is heavily based on the use of masks that to convey each character. One key difference between modern improvised theatre, as opposed to Commedia dell'Arte or text based theatre, is the moment when the character is finalised for performance use. In Commedia dell'Arte the characters are predetermined and their qualities are known to the actor and audience prior to the performance. In text based theatre the characters are developed and examined during the rehearsal period. Even though in a performance there might be differences between different nights, the basic qualities of each character are known and fixed prior to the actor entering the stage. (Rudlin, 2002; Henke, 2016; Balme, Vescovo & Vianello, 2018)

In improv there might be some preconception of the characters, but their qualities are ideally not fixed fully prior to the improviser entering the stage. The characters are developed over the course of the performance in dialogue with other improvisers on the stage. Therefore, in the crudest form division between improvised characters and those in text based theatre can be seen in the way the characters are developed. For the most part even in dialogue driven processes the characters in text based theatre is the creation of individuals, whereas in improv the characters are always moving and flowing. In text based theatre the characters are usually based on the actor's own guided and/or unguided work on their own character. However, this does not mean that creating an improvised character would mean that there is nothing fixed in the character. There is also a need to anchor the reality of the character and keep the performance true to the character, while being open to be affected and changed by the other characters on stage.

'Acting is reacting' is a common phrase in several acting schools and also in improv. However, the reactions of a text based characters can be based on a known path for the actor and they can understand and analyse the characters' past and future beyond the script (Mamet, 1997). An improvised characters' background and future are not prefixed but created and negotiated in dialogue with other characters on stage (Leep, 2008). The element of the unknown is

ideally always a part of an improvised character, however, this rule is not necessarily abided by at all times and some improvisers may create characters and their backstories prior to entering the stage and stick to their premade choices (Napier, 2004/2015). Even though this is possible and can happen, it is not a vital part or indeed even always accepted in improvisation. Having too strong preconceptions and notions of what their character is, may negatively affect the group's performance as one might not be open to accepting offers made by other improvisers, when trying to protect a preconceived notion of what their character is (Salinsky & Frances-White 2017).

2.2 Theatre improvisation

Koponen (2004) also mentions the use of improvisation in actor's work, where improvisation can be defined as a tool and one rehearsal method that is used to increase actor's readiness to provide material, solve problems, react on stage and to create their character. Directors can also use improvisation as a method to increase group morale and to create a more realistic presence (Koponen, 2004). When using the definition (see Section 2.1) of improv that defines it as product that is presented and not a process discovered on stage improv has also been used as a tool for inspiring writers. The Second City in Chicago is one example of an improvised theatre group where improv is seen as a tool to find and inspire the writing process of a show (Libera, 2004; Salinsky & Frances White, 2017).

One key influencer in the development of modern improvisation theatre tradition has been Viola Spolin, whose work has been pivotal in the creation of synthesis between with improvisation and actor training. Viola Spolin the mother of Paul Sills, whose influence on the early development of the Second City improv theatre was essential has influenced and inspired many improvisers through her work in the field and also through her books (Spolin, 1963/1999; Spolin, 1986; Spolin, 2001). Spolin's literary works aim to provide a

complete training system for actor training and classrooms, but also to find and free the improvisational qualities and skills in each individual (Spolin, 1963/1999; Spolin, 1986). Even though it is acknowledged that Spolin's literary works have influenced modern improvisers her books were not chosen for the analysis in this study, due to limited amount of later practitioner written improv literature that clearly link to her pioneer work and view on improvisation. Also as the works of Spolin are for the most part collections of exercises and do not have such clear narrative structure as other styles of improv books, they can be seen as different genre of books and indeed intended perhaps for a different audience of readers.

As Koponen (2004) points out, a majority of active Finnish improvisers in the beginning of 21st century had not received their theoretical understanding about improvisation from Spolin, but instead from the works of Johnstone (1979/2015). Therefore this study also, while acknowledging the role of Viola Spolin in the development of modern improvisation, as a literature based study will in the analysis section not address Spolin's literary work. However, Spolin offers pivotal ideas about improvisation and deserves to be addressed in the background to understand how modern improv has developed. The section will move on to discuss improvisation or improv as an independent art form, which is how improv is in this is mainly addressed.

2.3 Improvisation as an independent art form

"A good improviser is someone who is awake, not entirely self-focused, and moved by a desire to do something useful and give something back and who acts upon this impulse" (Madson, 2005, p.15)

Improvisation as an independent art form has been developed in several origins and therefore there are several improv cultures and traditions that could be examined further. In this work the focus is on the western traditions that have

influenced the Finnish improvisation tradition. Improvisation, as an independent art form is a rather young addition to the stages and applied contexts with its most prominent developments having happened during the latter half of the 20th century (Salinsky & Frances-White, 2017). The methods used in improvisation are used in several other art forms but systematic development of improvisers has not been established in many places. There are several places where education in improvisation theatre is given based on a curriculum, for example, iO and Second City theatres in Chicago (see Libera 2004; Napier, 2004/2015). Mainly the development of individual improvisers is still scattered and organic as knowledge and skills are developed on short courses and workshops.

Improvisation as a performative art can be crudely divided into three main categories: short form, long form and sketch based improvisation (Leep, 2008). Short form improvisation, which has also been utilized in TV shows all over the world, is based on short techniques and games. Commonly, but not necessarily, short form improvisation techniques are utilized mainly to create comedies and humorous content (Leep, 2008; Wasson, 2017). However, that is not a requirement, but a common trait that appears in many improvised shows (Wasson, 2017). Long form improvisation on the other hand can also consist of smaller units of performance techniques and games that make up a long form improvisation show, but it can also be used to create a complete play without a script (Adams, 2007; Hauck, 2012).

Improvisation troupes commonly utilize suggestions from the audience in some form as a starting point for some part of the improvised scene or story (Napier, 2015). Improvisations can also be performed completely without audience suggestions. Improvisation as an art form does not commonly use physical objects or clothing or masks in performance (Yarrow & Frost, 2015). Some techniques do use additional clothing or other items, but these are not a requirement in improvised theatre and improvised sceneries are most commonly built through mime and use of imaginary objects (Leep, 2008). One

main physical object that can be commonly found on improvisation stages is a chair to enable actors sitting down at some scenes; sitting down could also be accomplished to some degree by physically assuming the sitting position, but in longer scenes such static positions may become arduous to play and therefore the chair is a common feature (Salinsky & Frances-White, 2017).

There are several degrees of freedom that can be applied to improvisation. Removing all rules from improvisation techniques and games might not be possible, as humans commonly abide by several rules even without consciously being aware of them. Therefore it is safe to assume that some basic interactional traditions and/or language related conventions are commonly present even when other rules are not set. In the other end of the spectrum as far improvisation goes, there can be very strictly set rules for techniques or games. In performance the strictest rule could be using a pre-established format such as Theatresports™ (Johnstone, 1999/2014; International Theatresports™ Institute, 2017), which utilize a set structure. Through its name the format establishes that 'play', which is a term used both in theatre and in sports, is interconnected as playing in both fields involves abiding or is at least to some degree guided by a set of rules that all players agree on (Prigge-Pienaar, 2018). However, even within a structure the contents and interactions between individuals are free (International Theatresports™ Institute, 2017). Therefore, even performances with a set structure or plotline alter from show to show, as there is no script.

When examining the traditions of improvised theatre and early theatre forms utilising improvisation such as Commedia dell'Arte, it can be observed that the level of characterisation is different. In many older forms of improvised theatre the characters and their attributes are known to the audience and players. With a fixed set of characters the content of the play is then improvised. This type of improvisation can be created, but commonly the characters are not set before the show, but created on the stage. Of course each player brings their own knowledge, experiences and skills to the characters they embody, but in general the characters are not fully developed prior to entering the stage. Obviously

reoccurring characters can show up on stage as players may become more familiar in playing certain type of characters within their respective improv troupe.

Even though the art of improv is by nature relatively free in respect to the content of the improvisations. However, there are rules that apply to improv in general and also each game or technique has its own set of boundaries or guidelines that can be adhered to or at times broken. When thinking of beginning improvisers there are several sets of rules that can be offered to them. One version is based on the three do nots "The big three": do not talk about the past or present, do not say no and do not ask questions (Libera, 2004, p. 11).

Napier (2004/2015, p. 3) explains that there are several rules to improv and lists ten that are most commonly identified by improvisers:

1. Don't deny.
2. Don't ask questions.
3. Don't dictate action.
4. Don't talk about past or future events.
5. Establish who, what, where.
6. Don't negotiate.
7. Don't do teaching scenes.
8. Show, don't tell.
9. Say "yes", and then say "and."
10. Don't talk about what you are doing.

These rules presented by Napier (2004/2015) also include the big three mentioned by Libera (2004) as rules 1, 2 and 4. As such many of rules are presented in a negative form as forbidden actions. However, there are three rules, rules 5, 8 and 9, in the list by Napier (2004/2015) that break the structure and provide an active or positive form. As Napier (2004/2015) explains there is a difficulty with providing rules of improv to beginners as they may prohibit their actions and keep them in their minds instead of releasing their creativity.

Another example of how the rules of improv presented can be found in Jagodowski, Pasquesi and Victor (2015). The rules they provide are:

1. Always say, "Yes, and..." Never say, "No."
2. Know one another.
3. Never ask questions.
4. Don't talk about the past.
5. Get out the "who, what, and where" as quickly as possible.
6. Don't do transaction or teaching scenes.
7. Show, don't tell.

There are a lot of similarities between the rules provided by Jagodowski, Pasquesi and Victor (2015) and Napier (2004/2015) that would indicate that, at least to some degree, there is a consensus among improvisers about what some of the key rules that improvisers should know are. However almost all improvisers including Jagodowski, Pasquesi and Victor (2015) and Napier (2015) later say that the rules are not significant, when improvising, but work as a platform for understanding the basic nature of improv. Jagodowski, Pasquesi and Victor (2015) go further and say that the rules are basically just observations made about what the shared characteristics of good improvised scenes are.

2.4 Improv education / training

There are several schools focusing on teaching improvisation all over the world. However, as improvisation is commonly practiced by non-professionals there are not unified classifications or schools that individual improvisers could be categorised under. There are several schools that have influenced many improvisers all over the world for example the Improv Olympic (now iO) in Chicago (Halpern, Close & Johnson, 1994; Wasson, 2017), but also each local community might have their own way of doing improvisation, and how they pass on the knowledge. Most of improv teaching could be classified as non-curriculum based training and many improvisers piece their own education

from short courses and workshops offered, based on their own individual interests.

A lot of improv training is more or less given by nonprofessional practitioners and one common way to learn new skills is by attending short courses and workshops. Longer training programs are also available and they usually have a certain curriculum. In the following sections some of the more formal improv education programs from mainly cultures relevant to this study's context are further explored. Additionally some consideration will be given to world traditions in improv training and how improv has been taught in the past in different regions.

Common way new improvisers get involved with improvisation theatre is attending a short course or workshop organised in their local community (Routarinne, 2004). There are no clear formal requirements for improvisation teachers and these courses are commonly taught by people with varied backgrounds on the fields of art, theatre and improvisation. New improv instructors can even have a very short personal history with improvisation theatre and in extreme cases new instructor generations are created over short weekend courses (Routarinne, 2004). Due to this rapid evolution of improviser generation of trainers and students a lack of unified view of even the basic rules of improvisation may arise (Routarinne, 2004). As such there is some common understanding of that the so-called rules of improvisation may be a part of each course, but even so there is a large variation in how these concepts are understood among improvisers and improv teachers (see e.g. Napier, 2004/2015; Libera, 2004).

Improvisers can be found all over the world and communities practicing and/or performing improvisation can be found on several continents. Through the use of online means of communication the improvising communities can also easily be in contact with improvisers from all over the world. A common way to pass and gain knowledge about improvisation is to attend one of the

many improvisation festivals organised by local improviser communities. In Europe there are several long established improv festivals, for example, Berlin Improv festival held first in 2001 (IMPRO, 2018) in mainland Europe and also in the Nordic countries,, for example, Swedish improv Festival (SWIMP) which was first organised in 2015 (SWIMP, 2018) and the Finland International Improvisation Festival (FIIF) which was first held in 2011 (Finland International Improv Festival, 2018).

2.5 Applied improvisation

Applied improvisation is an umbrella term that is used to cover the vast variety of context beyond theatre spaces where theatre improvisation theories games and techniques have been used (Robbins Dudeck & McClure, 2018). Improvisation has been applied to many fields, expanding the view on improvisation as something done in front of audiences or for entertainment purposes. Interaction training is one field that improv is often applied to, which can happen for example in form of working on creating understanding of the ways in which status is expressed in interaction (Routarinne, 2007) or to enhance understanding of dialogical thinking (Selman, 2015). Interactional training uses of improvisation also expand to strengthening social skills on autistic people (Alana & Ansaldo, 2018). However, when utilising improvisation as a tool to present actual personal stories of participants, concerns have been raised, and certain risks need to be taken into account, and such endeavours should not be taken on lightly, and therefore using fiction and fictive stories also in applied improvisation is one often used strategy (Baim, 2017). Improvisation is also a commonly used tool for leadership development (McClure, 2018; Norton, 2018) and workplace communication training focusing on increasing collaboration between workers and team work (Koppett, 2013; Cole, 2016), knowledge transfer (Krylova, Vera & Crossan, 2016) or giving professional presentations to various audiences (Hoffmann-Longtin & Rossing, 2016).

Traditional teaching and other forms of training are fields to which improvisation has been applied to over the past years. Applications of improv based training for teaching staff can be found, for example, in higher education (Rossing & Hoffmann-Longtin, 2016) and for students in STEM subjects (Hu, Lefton & Ludovice, 2017). Improvisation has also been applied to training on various other topics such as disaster and crisis management. One such example is training humanitarian workers on how to approach disaster management by providing opportunities for experiential learning related to utilising geoinformation in their work, for example, in saving children from flooded areas (Suarez, 2015). Similarly Tint, McWaters & van Driel (2015) have applied improvisation in disaster readiness and response training for humanitarian workers.

It is important to understand the field of improv on a larger scale to promote understanding of what is the nature of the content provided in literary works about improv. However, this is not enough to explain the literature related to improv and therefore in the next chapter the topic will be further explored through explaining the different non-fiction genres that may have an impact on improv literature and also the categorisations used to describe different types of improv literature.

3 Improvisation literature as a genre

Improvisation literature has been available for several decades. One of the first books written in English on modern improvisation was Viola Spolin *Improvisation for the theater: A handbook of teaching and directing techniques* first published in 1963. The second major influencer of modern improvisation and improv literature was Keith Johnstone, whose book *Impro: Improvisation and the theatre* (Johnstone, 1979/2015) is one of basic improv books that is read by many improvisers even today. After these early English literary works the tradition of improvisation literature has been flourishing and there are numerous books written about improvisation from different viewpoints.

When looking at improv literature as a genre there are several already existing genres that match to some degree with different improv books. This chapter delves more deeply into presenting some of the key genres identified having some shared qualities with improv literature analysed in this study, but also with the additional improv literature used as secondary sources in the background section of this work. This is done to further understand whether improv literature can be categorised in one of the pre-existing genres (Section 3.1) or whether books about improv would require a new genre label to be added to better describe their qualities. After looking into some pre-existing nonfiction genres this study moves on to look at how improvisation literature has been previously labelled (Section 3.2) in terms of the type of content they provide about improvisation.

3.1 Mixture of nonfiction genres

Improv literature even though it can be factual and historical usually also includes portions of the authors own storytelling or at least exercises that use fictional settings and stories as their basis. However, as these are only small

portions in the books and books mainly rely on either on previously known ideas about improv or the authors own experiences with improv the works could be classified as mainly nonfiction. Therefore, in this study the focus is on understanding what nonfiction genres share similar features as improv literature researched for this study.

There are several nonfiction genres that could be utilised when labelling different literary works written about improvisation. Identification of a literary works genre requires some form of classification and defining a literary work as belonging to a certain genre may create certain expectations in reader based on their knowledge of the genre and literary culture (Beghtol, 2001). Several nonfiction genres that share similar stylistic traits to the improv books analysed in this study can be identified. These genres include:

- Autobiography / Memoir
- Creative nonfiction
- Guides and manuals
- Handbook
- Popular science
- Self-help
- Textbook

(Johns, 2015; Culham, 2016).

These genre labels are mainly used in this study to establish what other literature genres the improv books may have been influenced. However, as it is seen shown the following section (Section 3.2) attempts have also been made to create categories especially suited for improv books and therefore this study will mainly focus on deepening the genre related knowledge in regard to improv literature genres. However, the traditional nonfiction genres will also be addressed in the analysis (Chapter 5) when there are indications in the literary works of stylistic traits and features resembling other nonfiction genres. On a general level the literary works analysed in this can for the most part be

classified as creative nonfiction that combines both factual and creative elements in their style.

3.2 Categories of improvisation literature

Attempts have also been made to categorise improv literature based on the type of content, books provide to the reader. Literature about improvised theatre according to Leep (2008) can be divided into three, sometimes overlapping, categories:

- how to improvise
- what is improvisation
- history of improvisation

In this work the categories suggested by Leep (2008) are expanded with the category of “applied to”. This category includes the literature that applies the principles and understanding from improvised theatre to other contexts. The application of improv training to other contexts has been a strong part of many improv groups from early on. The practical applications are then a natural progression also in the written tradition of improv.

The focus in this study is on the categories of how to and what is. Also added is the category on “applied to”, to better understand the more practical aspects of improvisation that have always been a part in improvisation group’s work and are becoming more and more visible in the international improv community or practitioners. As much as there are those who use improv for mainly performance purposes, there is also a growing network of applied improvisation practitioners all over the world (Applied Improvisation Network, 2018).

Apart from the genre aspect discussed in this section the analysis in this study takes into account also other aspects that may influence the stylistic choices in improv literature namely cultural context and author specific choices. In the

following chapter (Chapter 4) the methods and data used in this study are described in further detail. This elaboration will illustrate how the literature was chosen and how it was analysed.

4 Methods and Data

This work will focus on literature about improvisation theatre from select countries. The selection has been made firstly based on the commonly acknowledged origins of modern improvisation theatre and styles taught today. Secondly case examples were chosen to illustrate the evolution and further non-performance oriented uses of improvisation theatre methods and techniques.

This study covers literary works from early influences on the current modern improvisation culture: Keith Johnstone, Del Close and Charna Halpern. However, as was already discovered in Section 2.3 there are also other literary works that have contributed to the development of modern western improv cultures (e.g. Spolin 1963/1999) that due to the sampling and limited scope of this study have been excluded from the analysis, even though their status as pioneering work in the field of improv is acknowledged. Out of these early improv influencers, different communities of practice and play have been created all over the world. This study concentrates on written improv cultures where there is a clear connection stated between one, or more, of these original schools (Johnstone and “Chicago style”) of improv. Both of these influences have also affected greatly how improv is practiced today in Finland and also have, at least to some degree also affected the improv literature written by Finnish authors. For the purposes of this study Finland was chosen as a case example of a culture of practice in improv where original written material has been created in the Finnish instead of English to see whether the language of improv is universal or if there is something lost in translation.

4.1 Methods

This study utilizes content analysis to further the understanding of

1. What are the common features and differences between written descriptions of improvisation theatre traditions and core concepts?

2. What stylistic and narrative choices are used in improv literature?
3. Is the language of improvisation universal or are there national / regional variations?

As the knowledge about improvisation is commonly shared via face to face training there is not necessarily a shared view of how techniques are used or how they are taught. There is, however, a plethora of improvisation literature written over the past decades with different foci. Written accounts about a topic that is based on interaction and team work might not capture all the aspects of improv. This work aims to analyse how does written material define improv and what aspects are addressed in the books selected for this study.

Primary sources for this study consist of three books from each of the chosen cultural areas. The selection was based on firstly finding books that are acknowledged to be the first generation improvisation books written by a first generation improvisation teacher or practitioner in that style of improv. This divide was created to firstly understand the first generation practitioner view of improvisation. Secondly to understand how their influence has continued to affect improvisation literature genre in the turn of the century. Thirdly to analyse what directions improvisation literature has taken in their respective cultures in the current decade (2010 onwards).

Cultural context	1st generation author written books	Books published in the turn of the century that are influenced or authored by 1st generation authors	Books related to the improv tradition published from 2010 onwards
United States	Halpern, Close, & Johnson, (1994). Truth in comedy:	Gwinn, & Halpern, (2003/2007). Group improvisation: The	Napier, (2015). Behind the Scenes: Improvising Long

	The manual of improvisation.	manual of ensemble improv games	Form
Britain	Johnstone, (1979/2015). <i>Impro: Improvisation and the theatre</i>	Johnstone, (1999/2014). <i>Impro for storytellers.</i>	Goldie, (2015). <i>The Improv Book: Improvisation for Theatre, Comedy, Education and Life</i>
Finland	Routarinne, (2004). <i>Improvisoi!</i>	Koponen, (2004). <i>Improkirja</i>	Koponen, (2017). <i>Lupa mokata - Improvisointi arjessa</i>

The main method used in this study is content analysis. Content analysis is a flexible analysis method that can be used with qualitative and quantitative data to create understanding of the researched phenomenon (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The term ‘content analysis’ was first used in a paper by Douglas Waples and Bernard Berelson in 1941 and it was later in 1961 added to the Webster’s dictionary (Salkind, 2010). However, as Salkind (2010) points out the act of analysing media matter surpasses this timeline, but as a defined term for research contexts content analysis was first defined by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Bernard Berelson in 1948. Content analysis is used for examining messages in written, spoken or visual communication (Neundorf, 2002; Cole, 1988). In content analysis the analysed texts are divided into categories (e.g. words, sentences or themes), that are then labelled (Mathison, 2005).

Content analysis was originally developed as quantitative way of evaluating written texts and later on applied to, for example, literature, films and photography, which also shifted the focus from quantitative priorities to a more qualitative approach including subjective meaning and interpretation (Payne & Payne, 2004). Any text can be interpreted and read in various ways, providing different information to readers; therefore the contextualization of the research

through research questions that relate to the analysed texts in a transparent way is important when using content analysis as a research method (Salkind, 2010). One key issue identified with using content analysis in research is finding representative samples, previous research has shown that in some convenience samples may be selected and therefore some relevant data may be overlooked (Allen, 2017).

Culture in this study, as is discussed in the following three sections, is defined by nation states and the improv literature written by authors that originate from that nation state. This division may be partially artificial as will be discussed in the following sections. It is apparent that the first generation improviser written improv literature from the United States and Britain has had at least some impact on both, the later improv literature in that cultural context but also the improv literature from Finland. However, as there are also distinctive histories and separate subcultures that have formed in each of these nation states it is relevant to further understand whether the cultural context of the authors have an impact on their stylistic choices. The following section will shed some light on the improv literature chosen from each of the nation states to further elaborate the rationale for selecting particular literary works from that cultural context for the analysis.

4.2 Improv literature from the United States

When considering the improvisation literature culture of the United States there could be several points of origin and tradition found. In this study the focus will be on the so-called Chicago-style improvisation (Halpern, Close & Johnson, 1994), which has been long established and is practiced widely all over the world. There is a lot of improvisation literature available written in the United States. Therefore several other sources could also have been chosen for this analysis. However, as the book by Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) has been referenced by both Koponen (2004) and Routarinne (2004), it is clearly relevant

background knowledge also to the Finnish improv literature and therefore has been chosen as the style of improv to be further explored.

Charna Halpern and Del Close are commonly attributed as the creators and developers of Chicago-style of improvisation. However, this is a more open and widely taught tradition. There is no clear lineage or protégé idea involved in passing down the knowledge of Chicago-style improvisation. There is structure education provided on this style of improvisation by iO theatre that passes on the style of improvisation. However, out of the styles of improv this is probably one of the more open-access minded systems on improvisation teaching and learning. There are several identifiable formats and techniques created by and for Chicago-style improvisation (e.g. Harold and Armando) that can be freely modified as they are not trademarked or copyrighted. However, they are often universally recognised as Chicago-style improvisation, since this style of improvisation focuses on long form improvisation. Long form improvisation is one key difference between the Chicago-style improvisation and other forms of improvisation that focus more on shorter techniques.

To represent the Chicago-style improvisation from the United States three literary works were chosen as they represent different modes and phases of the development of this improvisation style. Firstly the book by Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) was a self-evident choice as it is the first published book about the Chicago-style improvisation. Secondly as an illustration of how the Chicago-style is passed on and developed Gwinn and Halpern (2007) was chosen as the second edition of the book used for this analysis illustrates the teaching and passing on of knowledge from Halpern to Gwinn. This is interesting and relevant in understanding how the Chicago-style of improvisation has developed. Thirdly one book by Mick Napier (Napier, 2015) was chosen as an illustration of a different point of view on Chicago-style improvisation and as such is probably the clearest example of a 'What is' book for this style of improvisation. Napier (2015) was also added as it may pertain

to understanding how the literary style and voice relevant to this style of improvisation have developed over the past decade.

4.3 Improv literature from Britain

One of the key developers of modern western improv tradition is Keith Johnstone, who began his improv career in England, but later has worked in Canada to further the knowledge and training of improv skills. Johnstone (2015) is considered by many as one of the key literary works affecting the development of modern improvisation tradition (Koponen, 2004; Salinsky & Frances-White, 2017). Johnstone himself was, at least to some degree, also influenced by the works of Viola Spolin, whose games for example 'Yes, but...' he presents also in his work book *Impro* (Johnstone, 1979/2015) and acknowledges the source for that game to be the works of Viola Spolin.

As such Johnstone's legacy can also be seen in one form or another in several other literary works, including the Finnish improv literature further discussed in chapter 4.4. As such Johnstone's ideas are not necessarily only confined in the cultural context of Britain, but as much of his work in developing his method of improvisation is motivated by his dissatisfaction with the education he received in England, it is appropriate to connect even his later work to this particular cultural context. However, it must be noted that at the time of publishing of his literary works he had already worked and lived for several years in Canada. Therefore his literary works could also be culturally considered as Canadian in origin. However, as much of the ground work for developing his style of improvisation was based on work done in Britain, in this analysis his literary works have been categorised as being British in their cultural origin. As part of the Commonwealth there is also connection still existing between Canada and Britain and therefore some cultural exchange and sufficient amount of similarities could probably still be found in both cultures. Later book *Impro* for

Storytellers (Johnstone, 1999/2014) will be analysed also under the category of British improv literature.

4.4 Improv literature from Finland

Finnish improvisation theatre literature does not have a very long history or indeed very many authors. There are several online sources and also academic papers related to improvisation available, but as the focus of this thesis is on printed books, there are not many to choose from. There are two main authors who have influenced the Finnish published improv literature scene: Pia Koponen and Simo Routarinne. Both have published two books about improvisation on- and offstage. For this study out the four possible improv related books three were chosen. The second book by Simo Routarinne (Routarinne, 2007) was not included in this analysis as it is not a general book about improv. It is a relevant piece of literature for improv practitioner, but as its scope is narrowed to applying the knowledge of one aspect relevant to improv to a more general human interaction viewpoint it cannot be classified as a general book about improvisation.

Besides these two authors there are online content available, but other than scholarly works there are no other formally published literature about improv in the sense that it is used in the context of theatre improvisation. Many drama education materials utilise improvisation as one method in creating and exploring drama related topics and skills. However, the skills of improvisation as such are not necessarily addressed and the authors are not necessarily experienced in the theoretical and practical sides of improvisation theatre. This work does not include those literary works that utilise improv as one of many tools for creating a scene of unscripted in class performance.

Also excluded are edited books that include articles or chapters from several authors as this work aims to uncover the narrative styles and choices particular

to improv literature. Therefore collections of work collected from several authors and sources do not necessarily reveal the full extent of how improvisation is understood and broken down in written form by them. Also these collected works may in small regard be influenced by the editor of the volume and in that sense they do not necessarily represent the literary style or form each author would have chosen individually, which is at the core of this study.

For this analysis only books that have defined improv theatre and methods directly related to that as the main content for their work will be included in the analysis. The analysis will focus on three Finnish improvisation theatre books, which include two books from Koponen: *Improkirja* [*Improvbook*] 2004 and *Lupa mokata* [*Permission to make mistakes*] (2017); and one book from Routarinne: *Improvisoi!* [*Improvise!*] (2004). As there is only a limited amount of published literature about improv written by Finnish authors the selection was easy to make.

Both Routarinne and Koponen have first published their books in the same year 2004. It is clear from the references made by Koponen that her book has been officially published first. There is clear indication that both have been aware of each other's work, since both books mention the other book as a source. Essentially both books were published within the same year and therefore for all intents and purposes either one could be counted as being the prototype of Finnish improv literature. However, for this analysis the time of publishing is not the only divisive factor between these two literary works.

When further analysing the authors and when they began their journey as improvisers it is apparent that Routarinne began his work in the field of improvisation theatre before Koponen. There is also a clear connection between these two authors. As Koponen (2004) in her book mentions she has been a student of Routarinne and her first contact with improv training was in 1997 on a course taught by Routarinne (Koponen, 2017). Therefore technically she can

be counted as a second generation Finnish improviser. Therefore even though Koponen (2004) was published first, for the purposes of this analysis the place of Finnish first generation improv practitioner written literature belongs to Routarinne (2004).

Routarinne (2004) and Koponen (2004) differ in many aspects; while both include exercises their books have a different focus. Routarinne builds on the concept of constructive interaction, while Koponen has stronger emphasis in identifying and reporting the history of Finnish improvisation theatre. Routarinne utilises storytelling and enlightens key features and principles of improvisation through human interaction and personal examples. Koponen builds on the stories and quotes provided by other improvisers, including Routarinne, whom she has interviewed for the book (Koponen, 2004). It must also be noted that while Koponen (2004) can be categorised belonging to the main categories of “what is” and “history of”, Routarinne (2004) does not focus on explaining the history of improv. Routarinne (2004) could be categorised as what is and how to improvise, but also it is for the most part also a book about applied use of improvisation in life, not on stage, but in everyday communication.

However, as literary products both Routarinne and Koponen are influenced by Johnstone’s work. Also the work of Close, Halpern & Johnson (1994) has been referenced by both. However it can be understood that as improvisers they have been influenced more directly by Johnstone as they both tell have also been personally taught by him. One clear difference with the references is that Koponen (2004) utilises Spolin (1963/1999) and Johnstone (1979/2015) as source material for her book. She does also mention Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) as additional reading, but does not present their ideas as a separate theoretical background material. Routarinne (2004) on the other hand does not reference Spolin, but instead references Johnstone and also Halpern and Close.

Indeed as Koponen (2004) is more theoretical and historical reference book, it is understandable that the literary work of Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) would not be used as a theoretical contributor towards improv principles. Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) contributed to the improv culture by creating a format for doing improv on stage (Harold), but their work does not necessarily add or create further knowledge about the basic principles of improv. Their work focuses mainly on elaborating and re-examining ideas that have already been discussed in the work of their predecessors Spolin (1963/1999) and Johnstone (1979/2015). Therefore as a book it is not in the same way a foundational building block for improv culture as a whole, but a record of one particular improv tradition and way of doing improv on stage. Their context is not life and interaction on a general level, but more specifically the stage.

5 Analysis of the improv books

This study focuses on analysing nine improv books from three different countries. These books (table 1) were analysed by the means of content analysis and close reading to provide a clear understanding of their similarities and differences. This chapter is divided in six subchapters that focus on one aspect related to understanding improv literature in relation to structure and content.

Table 1 Analysed improv literature

Country	Book	Originally published	Number of pages	Improvisation literature category			
				How to	What is	History of	Applied to
United States	Halpern, Close & Johnson (1994)	1994	150	x			
	Gwinn & Halpern (2007)	2003	137	x			
	Napier (2015)	2015	210		x	x	
Britain	Johnstone (2015)	1979	208		x	x	
	Johnstone (2014)	1999	375	x			
	Goldie (2015)	2015	287	x	x		
Finland	Routarinne (2004)	2004	218	x	x		x
	Koponen (2004)	2004	300		x	x	x
	Koponen (2017)	2017	344		x		x

The nine improv books chosen for this analysis (Table 1) vary in emphasis and breadth and depth they delve into improv and relevant topics covered in the books. This is relevant when looking at the amount of varying narrative material each book provides for the purposes of this analysis. However, the number of pages does not reveal all about the books depth in relation to text about improvisation as many of the books have extensive amount of games and exercises provided that utilise similar structural devises. For example Johnstone (1999/2014) is the longest book in the selection (Table 1), but actually has the

least amount of longer storytelling and narration text that is not directly linked to any of the exercises.

There is no clear difference between the three improv culture areas in the length of improv books that are associated to that style of improv. Generally speaking it can be observed that the British and Finnish improv books include the longest books of this selected set of literature. The improv books from the United States on the other hand are more condensed and include two of the shortest books and one of average length. Therefore based on this view into the improv literature belonging to each culture it could be said that there is some indication that books by American author tend to be shorter than those written by British and Finnish authors.

Even though the books in this analysis share similar traits, it must be noted that as this analysis only focuses on the Chicago Style improv literature from the United States it is more than likely a trait related to the style of improv being described than a general observation of all improv literature written by American authors. Outside the selected works analysed in this study it can be noted that there is a great variety of available improv literature from the United States and these vary greatly in length from long historic (Wasson, 2017) and handbook style books (Salinsky & Frances-White, 2017) to shorter books (Adams, 2007) about a particular aspect or style of improv.

The following sections focus on the five main themes analysed: Structure and organisation of material, The rules of improvisation, Approach to improvisation, Use of personal examples and humour and Games and their rules. In each section the analysed literature is discussed in terms of how the genre, culture and author specific features are shown in the books in regard to the theme of section.

5.1 “The Secret Code Club for Cool Kids” – Structure and organisation of material

There are several ways the material in improv literature is presented. There is variety in each improv literature culture on how the main content is organised and presented in the content of the book. Several books utilise a complex structure and some have a very simple contents, but may still contain subchapters that are not numbered or listed in the table of contents. There are also differences in the naming conventions for the chapters. When looking at the Chicago Style, improv books from the United States some similarities between different author’s stylistic choices can be observed.

The oldest one of the Chicago Style improv books, Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) is one of the books that have several structural devises inbuilt and each chapter adheres to a similar structure. There are twelve main chapters in the work:

1. What Is Improv, Anyway?
2. But Seriously, Folks...
3. Support and Trust
4. Agreement
5. Initiations and Game Moves
6. Moment to Moment to Moment
7. Building a Scene
8. One Mind, Many Bodies
9. Environmentally Aware
10. Responsibilities of a Harold Player
11. How to Do a Harold
12. Harold as a Team Sport

Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) is for most part utilizing humour also in the names of the chapters. Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) utilises short ‘key points’ summaries at the end of each chapter to list the main ideas covered in

that chapter. These types of summary lists are not used in any of the other improv books analysed for this study. Repetition is a very commonly utilized in this book, which is used scarcely in other books in this study.

The second book from the United States Gwinn & Halpern (2003/2007) includes six main chapters and several subchapters mainly used in the Games section of the book. The six content chapters are:

1. An Introduction to Mind Reading
2. Building Team Spirit
3. The Games and Their Explanations
4. The Secret Code Club for Cool Kids
5. Games
6. Conclusion

Even though there are two authors listed for the second edition of this book the main content is written by the first author Peter Gwinn and only additional material has been provided by the second author Charna Halpern. Therefore although this book (Gwinn & Halpern, 2003/2007) shares an author with Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994), they are independent of each other and utilize different content and structural strategies. Gwinn and Halpern (2003/2007), for example, does not utilise repetition and lists in the same way as Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) did. Moreover the structure of Gwinn and Halpern (2003/2007) is mainly based on the games provided and their categorisations than on any general rules or ideas about improv. Also the focus in these two works is dissimilar as Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) focus on general comedy improv and the Long Form improv format, Harold, they have developed, Gwinn and Halpern (2003/2007) has a more general focus on how group improvisation could be trained through games and exercises developing Long Form improv related skills.

Furthermore in the third book from the United States Napier (2015) addresses the topic of improvisation through long form improvisation and the structure is based on that idea. The book (Napier, 2015) includes fifteen chapters:

1. What is Long Form Improvisation
2. Approaching long Form
3. Introductions
4. Suggestions
5. Openers
6. The Back Line
7. Scenes and Styles
8. Being Funny
9. Scenic Variety
10. Thinking Ahead
11. Editing
12. Sustaining a Character
13. Group Scenes or Games
14. Same not Different
15. Stray Cats

Napier (2015) provides a clear structure that is based on long form improvisation and what types of thinking and skills it requires. As such this is a guidebook towards understanding long form improvisation, which can be seen in the chapter titles. Moving from the very basic concepts of defining what is long form improvisation to understanding how rules can also be broken and what types of uncommon approaches have been taken in doing long form improv, for example, two person shows instead of ensemble shows. This is not necessarily an exercise book as long form improv is approached as an improvised show with a full storyline not a construct of games and scenes like some long form formats, for example, a Harold (Halpern, Close & Johnson, 1994). This being said, there are exercises for various aspects of skills and ideas related to long form improv at the end of several chapters. These games are not

indexed or presented as a list anywhere in the book, but each of the exercises provided are closely related to the topic of the chapter.

Stylistically the three improv books from the United States utilize similar structures to present their content in concise and clearly cut chunks. This is also true to the first of the British books Johnstone (1979/2015) that utilizes a very limited amount of titles in their work. There are six named chapters and an appendix in the book:

1. Introduction
2. Notes on myself
3. Status
4. Spontaneity
5. Narrative Skills
6. Masks and Trance

Sections provided in the book are not listed in the contents, but there are several sections in each chapter. As such the organization of the book is straight forward. The book is built from separate essays or stories that have been woven into one book. The chapters containing the basic improv content, 3. Status, 4. Spontaneity and 5. Narrative skills, do for some parts build on the knowledge provided in other chapters. Other chapters in the book are independent and can be read without any prior knowledge of improv as they illustrate the journey of the author towards his views of improv through life experiences. The last chapter about mask work and trance states can be viewed as a more general story about one aspect that interests the author, which on the larger scale relates to improv. As this work (Johnstone, 1979/2015) is one of the earliest written sources on modern improvisation in some degree it may have influenced any improv literature that has been published after it, but is not clearly influenced by other works.

The structure of Johnstone (1979/2015) is rather interesting as it has several topics that clearly are related to improvisational theatre: Status, Spontaneity and Narrative skills. All general topics that can be found in many books related

to improv. However, Johnstone (1979/2015) as many other improv authors has a particular interest area in his books, which is Masks and Trance. Even though improv and silent theatre forms such as mime and mask theatre share a common origin in Commedia Dell' Arte, masks are not usually used in improv. Therefore dedicating a large section of the book to talking about Mask and Trance states from both historical and personal perspectives is how Johnstone (1979/2015) differs in its approach to talking about improv from later books about improv.

In the second British improv book Johnstone (1999/2014) the number of chapters is increased. Johnstone (1999/2014) does not have as minimalistic structure as Johnstone (1979/2014) as there are sixteen main chapters in the book:

1. Theatresports
2. Audience suggestions
3. Trouble with feedback
4. Spontaneity
5. Impro for Storytellers
6. Making Things Happen
7. Story Games
8. Being There
9. Some Filler Games
10. Procedures
11. Serious Scenes
12. Character
13. Miscellaneous Games
14. Entertainment Games
15. Technical Stuff
16. Afterthoughts

This second book Johnstone reads like an encyclopaedia on improv games. Each chapter has a topic and several games listed related to that topic. Some of the

topics are more general, such as Miscellaneous Games that include games for which a suitable common topic could not be found.

On the surface level the contents of Goldie (2015) are similar to the other British improv books and there are a limited number of chapters in the book. However, when looking at the Sections listed in the contents Goldie (2015) has the longest contents list of all the books in this analysis. Moreover Goldie (2015) utilizes a similar strategy as one of the Finnish books, Routarinne (2004), which will be discussed in detail later in this section, in providing a very detailed list of the topics and games addressed in the book. But when looking at only the main chapter level there are twelve chapters in the book:

1. Introduction
2. Silly Games for Starters
3. Let's get Physical
4. Releasing the Imagination from Bondage
5. What's the Story?
6. Playing with power
7. Creating Characters
8. Let's get Verbal
9. Improv for Devising
10. More Games for Performance
11. Improvisation's life lessons
12. Finding an ending

Goldie (2015) utilises a structure similar in detail level to Johnstone (1999/2014) and provides names of all the exercises in the table of contents under a theme they belong to. However unlike many other books Goldie (2015) utilises also repetition and the same exercises or exercises with the same name can be found under different themes.

Goldie (2015) for the most part has a clear structure where the main topics and exercises provided match. In essence this structure could help when planning teaching and exploring certain aspects and identifiable skills, for example,

storytelling in improv. Moreover the contents also show Goldie's (2015) particular field of interest that coincides with improv and that is devising, which is a method used for unscripted theatre mainly in Drama education contexts and in planned performances, where improvisation is mainly used as a tool or way to create material. As such other improv books do not address devising as a topic or relate ideas relevant to devising to improv.

Goldie (2015) provides ending summaries at the end of each main chapter, but unlike Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994), these are full paragraphs of text not lists. Goldie (2015) does make extensive use of lists but not in summarising chapter content. Lists are mainly used inside game descriptions, when listing tips for exercises and qualities required in that game; for example, status levels and their combinations that could be experimented with in status related improv games.

As already mentioned, first of the Finnish books, Routarinne (2004) has an extensively fine-grained list of contents with almost each page of the book containing a separate section of text. However, when focusing only on main chapter level there are only five identifiable main chapters:

1. Aluksi ["For starters"]
2. Rakentava vuorovaikutus ["Constructive interaction"],
3. Epäonnistumisen pelko ja iloinen mokaaminen ["Fear of Failure and joy of making mistakes"],
4. Tarjous, tyrmäys ja hyväksyntä ["Offers, rejections and acceptance"] and
5. Harjoitteet ["Exercises"].

All of the main chapters are then divided into several sections with their own titles. Some subchapters are less than a page long so any new presented concept is given their own title. Other books such as Johnstone (1979/2015) utilise similar structures and naming strategies, but only provide the numbered main chapters in the table of contents. Therefore, even though the contents of Routarinne (2004) may at first seem to differ greatly in the level of specificity from some of the other books, it actually utilises a similar structural strategies.

The second one of the Finnish books, Koponen (2004) is one of the books that has a more theoretically organized view towards the organization of the contents of the book. It starts from defining improvisation and moves towards larger scale topics related to improv. Each chapter also ends in listing the sources used in that particular chapter. Koponen (2004) includes seven main content chapters:

1. Mitä improvisaatio on? [“What is improv”]
2. Improvisoinnin perusteet [“Basics of improvisation”]
3. Improvisaatioteatteri omana lajinaan [“Improvisation theatre as an individual art form”]
4. Oppien vieminen eteenpäin [“Passing on the knowledge”]
5. Improvisatio Suomessa [“Improv(s)ion in Finland”]
6. Kertakäyttöteatteria [“Disposable theatre”]
7. Tästä tarinasta opimme sen, että... [“This story teaches us that...”]

Koponen (2004) also utilises a finely grained table of contents and all subchapters are also listed in the table of contents, matching the strategy utilised also by Routarinne (2004).

Koponen (2004) is unique in this selection of books in that it is very clearly taking on a more academic style of writing by providing extensive bibliographies of each source and quote used at the end of individual chapters. Each chapter is its own entity and focuses on one clearly defined part of the story, but there is clear overlapping in the contents of various chapters as similar topics are discussed from different perspectives under different titles. Similarly different interviewed people may have talked about similar issues and this also leads to some repetition of ideas and content.

The third Finnish improv book Koponen (2017) has several levels of chapters but on the larger scale there are only three main chapters and an unnamed portion in the beginning of the book containing several subchapters. The three main chapters in the book are:

1. On kyse sinusta [“It’s about you”]
2. On kyse ihmissuhteista [“It’s about human relationships”]
3. On kyse tasapainosta [“It’s about balance”]

This divide to large content categories makes Koponen (2017) unique among the improv books, which may also be due to its nature as an applied improv book. Koponen (2017) reads more like self-help book than a book about improv, even though it provides a lot of information about the principles of improv and exercises to match this disposition. However, unlike the other Finnish improv books it does not have a separate section for games or exercises, but provides them throughout the book.

Section 5.1 delved into the structure and presentation of content in each of the analysed books. There some similarities between books from different cultures, but they are not shared by all of the works from that culture. However, there are also significant similarities in some of the structural choices between individual works from different cultures, for example, Routarinne (2004) and Goldie (2015) or Johnstone (1979/2015) and Koponen (2015). Others have a very limited contents list, but utilize a more complex structure, with several levels of subheadings, in the actual text. However, it is clear that improv books do not universally share a certain structure or way of presenting materials. There are not any clear sections that are presented in a similar way in improv books. How the content is divided varies greatly between all books. The structural choices seem to depend more on the approach to improv of the author and scope of improv they have chosen to cover than their cultural background.

5.2 “I will forget all rules” – The rules of improvisation

Rules of improvisation are generally for the most part similar between different improv books. Finding the rules in many of the books is not actually an easy task. They are not necessarily clearly spelled out, but if the general rules of improv are known they can be found within the books. As Napier (2015) is

book about mainly long form improvisation it does not as such address the basic rules of improvisation as a separate topic, but does include several of the ideas that are commonly seen belonging to the rules of improv. Also Gwinn & Halpern (2003/2007) use a similar strategy that the rules are built in to the exercises provided, but are not clearly listed or addressed. As such Koponen (2004; 2017) and Goldie (2015) are the only authors that directly and in a consecutive manner list the rules of improv in their books. Others do include the same ideologies or even all the rules, but have not clearly listed them. Therefore, for this analysis, only the books that clearly state the rules of improv will be analysed in further detail. Others will be discussed later to identify what could be considered as their way of providing the rules for improvisation in their literary works.

Koponen (2004) provides two sets of ten rules based on Johnstone (1979/2015) and the division of these rules created by Pierse (1995). These twenty rules can be identified also in Johnstone (1979/2015) through analysing the section headings, but they are not listed as being the rules of improv in the way Koponen (2004) addresses them. As such the second list of ten rules are additions to many of the rules in the first set of ten rules and therefore only the first list of ten rules will be discussed in this analysis. The ten rules as stated by Koponen (2004) are:

1. Act - don't hesitate [Toimi - älä vetkuttele]
2. Accept - don't deny [Hyväksy - älä tyrmää]
3. When in doubt break the routine [Kun epäilet, riko rutiini]
4. Maintain focus [Säilytä fokus]
5. Gags are a sin punishable by eternal damnation [Gägeily on synti, josta joutuu kadotukseen]
6. The one doesn't attempt to be smart is, and the one attempting to be isn't [Joka yrittää olla fiksu, ei ole, kun taas se, joka ei yritä, on fiksu]
7. Co-operate - don't succeed over or at the expense of your teammates [Tee yhteistyötä - älä loista joukkueovereidesi yli tai heidän kustannuksellaan]

8. Be impressed by what is said to you [Vaikutu siitä, mitä sinulle sanotaan]
9. Wimping out reveals your true self [Nynnyily paljastaa todellisen minäsi]
10. When lacking faith and facing defeat – relax and smile, because these things don't really matter [Kun usko on vähissä, henki heikko, hyvä onnesi kiven alla ja ryhmä häviöllä (ja huono) - ole rento ja hymyile, koska näillä asioilla ei ole mitään merkitystä]

Koponen (2017) bases some structure of her book on the rules of improv she provides. The rules are grouped basing on the three main chapters (see Section 5.1.) and there are eleven rules that Koponen (2017) also condenses into three simple guidelines: notice [huomioi], accept [hyväksy] and take a leap [heittäydy]. The eleven improv principles according to Koponen (2017) are:

1. I accept. I do not deny [Hyväksyn. En tyrmää]
2. Mistake is a gift [Moka on lahja]
3. I do not know where I am going. I only know where I am coming from [En tiedä mihin olen menossa. Tiedän vain mistä tulen]
4. I live without scripting [Elän käsikirjoittamatta]
5. I focus and maintain my focus [Keskityn, ja pidän keskittymistäni yllä]
6. I help the fellow player to look good [Autan kaveria näyttämään hyvältä]
7. I am open to be influenced [Vaikutun]
8. When in doubt break the routine [Kun epäilen, rikon rutiinin]
9. Less talk more action [Vähemmän puhetta, enemmän tekoja]
10. I am average [Olen keskiverto]
11. I will forget all rules [Unohdan kaikki säännöt]

As can be noticed the last rule is the rule to break them all. So even though Koponen (2017) provides the list she later explains that the rules do not teach anyone to improvise better, they are just guidelines to illustrate and guide thinking related to improv. This latter list combines the first set of ten rules by Koponen (2004) with the second set of ten rules not discussed in detail in this study, to form a new more condensed set of improv rules.

Goldie (2015) provides improv rules as two sets of do's and don'ts of improv in the context of improvising a satisfying story. The do's are:

1. Make Offers
2. Say 'Yes' and Accept Offers
3. Establish the Set-Up
4. Break the Routine
5. Raise the Stakes
6. Reincorporate material

These are all features that provide a sound basis for improvising a story with another improviser. Then Goldie (2015) goes on to list the behaviour that should be avoided while improvising a story:

1. Blocking
2. Wimping
3. Planning
4. Judging
5. Taking the Action Offstage
6. Cancelling the Story

These rules incorporate similar rules that Koponen (2004; 2017) features in her lists. The division between do's and don'ts is also visible in both Koponen (2004) and Koponen (2017), where few of the rules feature both the positive (do) and the negative (don't) side of the same rule.

Section 5.2 focused on the rules of improv and how they are presented in the book. Only three of the books have a defined list that is clearly marked as containing the basic rules of improv. Koponen (2004) references Johnstone (1979/2015) as the original source of the rules. However, Johnstone (1979/2015) does not explicitly list these rules in his work. They can be derived from through closer examination of section titles and the ideas presented, but there is no list of rules in the book (Johnstone, 1979/2015). None of the improv books from the United States explicitly list the rules of improv, but some could be derived from section headings and the contents of the chapters, but this would indicate that to this particular improv literature culture the retelling of rules for

improvisation is not relevant. However, it must be pointed that out of the authors from the United States Napier has provided a list of rules in his previous book (Napier, 2004/2015) as was already discussed in Section 2.3. Out of the Finnish authors Routarinne (2004) does not provide a set of rules for improv, but does address all the issues in his book that are covered in the rules discussed in this section. Therefore providing rules for improv is not dependent on the genre or the cultural context, but seems to be mainly an author specific choice.

5.3 “Misbehave in all sorts of ingenious ways” - Approach to improvisation

Improvisation in literature can be approached through various means and the books analysed in this study showed both similarities and differences in their view on improvisation. When examining the improv books from the United States it can be seen that they share for some part a more limited view on improvisation than the books from other two cultures, by focusing mainly on long form improvisation techniques. Even though Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) also talk about basic principles of improvisation their context is comedy and one particular stage format called “Harold”. So the view point is much more limited than in, for example, Johnstone’s literary work. However, as their influence and work in iO (formerly Improv Olympic) in training improviser’s has been significant it is relevant to include them as also literary influencers. Moreover The Improv Handbook (Salinsky & Frances-White, 2017) also notes them as influencers together with Spolin and Johnstone. Also while looking at the comic side of improvisation their influence in the modern traditions of comic improvisation on stage and as such are pioneers in their own right. Especially when talking about long form improvisation Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) are essential background influencers as both Spolin (1963/1999) and Johnstone (1979/2015) focus on shorter forms of improvisation and do not really discuss longer forms of storytelling on or off stage.

Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994), take on one of the narrowest views on improv of the three books from the United States. Even though the ideas and topics covered in the book are general in the context of improv they are mainly utilised to build ground for understanding the format “Harold” the authors Charna Halpern and Del Close have developed. Their focus is also strongly on creating comedic improvisation. “The truth is funny. Honest discovery, observation, and reaction is better than contrived invention” (Halpern, Close & Johnson, 1994, p.15). Similarly Gwinn and Halpern (2007) utilize a very clear viewpoint towards improvisation by focusing on team building and group work. This approach is common in many of the other books as well in parts, but is structurally emphasised in Gwinn and Halpern (2007). The main leading idea in the book and all exercises chosen for the book is to help ensemble work and focus is not given on individual players in other respects than in that they are part of the group.

Similarly the third improv book from the United States focuses on a limited scope of improvisation. Napier (2015) views improvisation from the viewpoint of Long Form improvisation and all material provided is given to support and create understanding of Long Form improvisation. The approach to the rules and basic qualities are similar to other books analysed for this study, but are always viewed through how they can be utilised in Long Form improvisational comedy. Also the view point is in comedy improvisation in that breaking the rules and being funny is actually desirable. Napier (2015), however, does not advocate joking out scenes, but that the improvisers should have a set of mind that allows them to also find the funny in scenes, since improvisation should remain playful even when doing Long Form improv. This is a counterpoint that addresses the common difference between Short and Long Form improv, where the latter has been often approached as having to be funny, which might then create unfocused and unnecessarily serious style of improvisation (Napier, 2015). However, in the case of Napier it must be noted that in his earlier book (Napier, 2004/2015) he addresses improvisation from a wider perspective and

this literary work is also at points referenced in Napier (2015) so some improv theory related omissions may also be due to avoidance of repetition between the two books.

Unlike the improv books from the United States that are more thorough in their approach towards improvisation and provide a wider view on what is improvisation, but do not address long form improv in a similar way that the previous three books covered did. This analysis looks at the works of Keith Johnstone, one of the early pioneers in modern improv theatre, who did not begin as an improviser, but as a teacher and director.

“When I began teaching, it was very natural for me to reverse everything my own teachers had done. I got my actors to make faces, insult each other, always leap before they looked, to scream and shout and misbehave in all sorts of ingenious ways. It was like having a whole tradition of improvisation teaching behind me.” (Johnstone, 1979/2015, p. 14-15).

The beginning of Johnstone’s work can be seen as a reversal of all the traditional teaching he had received during his education. The principles of improv he utilised were based on the idea of reversing all that traditional education had taught him, since Johnstone (1979/2015) understood what he wanted to accomplish, for example, spontaneity and playfulness, were not supported as goals in traditional teaching, but instead suppressed from students.

As one of the earliest books related to improv, Johnstone (1979/2015) did not have similar options as later books to reference earlier work or base the views on improv on a wealth of written material on improvisation. Therefore the approach to improv could be seen as the clearest example of being directly formed by the author and not the improv tradition and culture around him. Moreover it can be noticed that his later book *Improv for Storytellers* (Johnstone, 1999/2014) the approach to improv is very similar to his earlier books (Johnstone, 1979/2015). Johnstone’s works are books that other authors (e.g. Routarinne, 2004 and Goldie, 2015) reference and indeed from such authority

position on improv tradition Johnstone may be freer to create his own style of improv than the improvisers who have written their books later, as they are both supported and possibly also restricted by prior literature on the subject.

The last one of the British improv books Goldie (2015) approaches improv in a way that resembles a curriculum approach to providing content. Goldie (2015) provides a lot of personal performance and life examples of the ideas and games, which she is describing. The chapters are building on the basic logic that begins with more physical side of improv and slowly moves towards a more verbal improv exercises. Also one interesting idea that makes a Goldie (2015) stand out from the other improv books is utilising devising in relation to improv, which is more commonly used in drama education than improv theories or teaching. Furthermore, all of the British improv books share a view on improv that has a clear connection to pedagogy.

The Finnish improv books are the most mixed selection of the three chosen cultures in their approach to improvisation. Even though Routarinne (2004) is a book on improvisation, its point of view is not mainly on theatre improvisation. For the most part the book deals with human interaction and links the understanding gained through improvisation to everyday use, too. Routarinne focuses on providing basic understanding of positive and constructive interaction in terms that can be applied to several contexts not just improv. Even though the story builds on his own experiences as an actor and improviser these are not given more focus than everyday experiences and ideas have. Although many ideas provided also work on stage and some are specifically addressing topics related to performance they are not necessarily limited to improvisation, but addressed as general issues like performance anxiety in, for example, work related presentations.

While Koponen (2004) is more focused on the history of improv in Finland, it still offers some very basic interaction related knowledge as well. Koponen (2004) approaches improvisation as a combination of theory of improv, the

history of Finnish improv culture and stories of several improvisers that are mixed with her own experiences as an improviser. Among the books analysed for this study Koponen (2004) is the most theoretical in its approach and way of understanding improvisation. Others do use sources and build their own synthesis based on previous improv literature and their own experiences, but Koponen (2004) takes this one step further and provides a study mixing both primary and secondary sources to further the understanding on improv as an art form and what are its historical origins and how the Finnish improv culture has been developed during the first decades it has been around. Both Koponen and Routarinne have later shifted their focus more clearly on applying improvisation to everyday and work life. This focus on everyday interactions is one of the clearly visible strands that is central especially in Finnish improv literature, but can also be seen in other improv traditions as, for example, Gwinn and Halpern (2003/2007) also address corporate and interaction training as applied field the ideas about improv have been used in.

Koponen moved from a clear connection to improvised theatre towards a more everyday view of how to apply improvisation to one's personal life and communication. Koponen (2017) is focused on the personal aspect and indeed reads more as a self-help book than a guide book. It does address the general aspects and rules of improv, but for the most part it is not a guide book for theatre improvisation but something that can be applied to life. Also the exercises presented are mainly for personal use and therefore the book doesn't in that sense fall into the category of a typical improv book. In regards to the approach to improv Koponen (2017) mainly focuses on individual work and not on group improvisation or ensemble work.

Section 5.3 focused on the approach to improvisation each author presented in their book. The works of Johnstone were in tone similar and as the later book (Johnstone, 1999/2014) was more of a collection of games than an explanation of his approach to improv and the passages explaining his views did not show significant change to his earlier view. Therefore Johnstone's approach to improv

was analysed through his first book (Johnstone, 1979/2015). Moreover it could be seen that there are some indications of cultural preferences to the view on improv.

As the books from United States represent a very narrow slice of the improv culture in the United States it is more likely that they represent the particular style of improv more than the overall improv culture in the United States. There the clearest shared view on improv is that the main objective of improv is to be performed and the performance should be entertaining. In style the approach to improv in the books from the United States was in performing comedic improv. The British books, on the other hand, shared a strong connection to education and school teaching. They address the curriculum and pedagogical aspects in as Johnstone (1979/2015) reverses the teaching principles utilised on him and teaches the opposite. Goldie (2015) takes a more integrative position towards educational system in Britain and even though she shares many of the views on improv with Johnstone (1979/2015) she also builds the material to be suitable for educational purposes. The Finnish books have a shared view on improv in the sense that they at all times also discuss its applications to real life and outside the stage. Other books also have some portions that are more general in their approach to improv, but in the Finnish books the applied use is clearly visible throughout the work. However, as Koponen (2004) also has a very strong emphasis on the history and stories about Finnish improvisation, it differs in its general approach to the other Finnish books. Moreover, it also has a clearer emphasis also on the performance side of improv as many of the interviewed people were at the time active members of performing Finnish improv groups.

5.4 “But honey, what about the children?” - Use of personal examples and humour

Improvisation can be other things than plain comedy, but removing comedy completely from improvisation may be difficult due to, for example, the element of surprise included in improvisation, where what is created is not known to the audience or the players before it happens (Napier, 2015). Therefore it is quite natural to also see that each of the books analysed in this study include utilised humour in their narrative styles. Humour has also been shown to have some positive effect on learning (e.g. Hu, Lefton & Ludovice, 2017) and creating a book with humorous undertones could also be therefore also seen as an attempt to improve the learning experience. As such improvisation can be defined as positive act of laughing together at a failure, instead of a more negatively oriented act of laughing at a person who fails (Millar, 2018). For the most part the books utilise similar improv rules based types of humour that are mainly self-referential or neutrally oriented at an idea instead of individuals. However, there are also differences between authors in the style of humour used.

For the most part improvisation books in this study utilise self-referential humour where the author tells a humorous anecdote or story mainly from their own life. Sarcastic style of humour is not common in the books analysed for this study. However, interestingly there is one book (Goldie, 2015) that does sparingly utilise sarcastic side remarks among the body of the text. These side remarks are commonly targeted at least partially towards the previously mentioned concept in the text, but also in part towards the reader. All of the improvisation books analysed in this study utilise personal examples from the authors life or their history as an improviser to illustrate different ideas and concepts in their books. This builds certain informality to the narrative style even for the more neutrally and theoretically oriented books about improvisation. Examples serve several functions in the text.

One reason for telling examples is to illustrate concepts and make them more grounded in everyday observations. Second reason is to also relax and enlighten the narration in the book. Third function would be to also emphasise

one of the key aspects of improvisation theory, which is the acceptance and joyful embracing of failures. As such it could be seen that by revealing their own failures, the authors are as writers not only telling but highlighting and embracing their failures. So in turn these examples can work as devices to enforce the ground work towards understanding and incorporating the basic rules of improvisation in the readers mind.

Each of the improv books chosen for this study builds on the personal experiences of the author. These smaller or larger glimpses into both the improvisational and real life experiences of the authors tie the content to relatable and understandable contexts. The type of personal examples may also reflect the intended readers of the book and the approach chosen to improv. The American literature mainly relies on improv performance and teaching related stories. The British books place more of emphasis on teaching and sort of pedagogical experiences of the authors, but also present examples of performance and personal life utilisation of improv. Finnish books all utilise personal everyday life experiences as well as improv experience related memories and stories.

Firstly in the improv books from the United States it can be observed that Halpern, Close and Howard (1994) utilise mainly improv performance related examples in their narrative. Name dropping is also one of the basic strategies used in American improv literature and they name famous alumni in their stories. For example, to illustrate how going for a quick laugh can deter people from improvising with you they tell a short example that mentions a famous name.

“One night during an improvised scene, Joan [Rivers] told Del [Close] that she wanted a divorce. Del responded as an emotionally distraught husband might, in the hope of getting her to reconsider. “But honey, what about the children?” She replied, “We don’t have any children.”

Naturally she got a huge laugh. Naturally, she had completely destroyed the scene.”

(Halpern, Close & Johnson, 1994, p. 48)

The second improv book from United States Gwinn and Halpern (2007) utilises humour mainly in an indirect way. There is a playful quality to many titles and also some side remarks that display humour. For example, the section title "Theatre people are the most judgmental people in the universe" is accompanied by an opening comment "I'm just kidding, of course. No I'm not." (Gwinn & Halpern, 2007, p. 9). This type of humour that first establishes an idea then revokes it and then affirms the original idea is common in Gwinn & Halpern (2007) style of writing. Additional comments are used in many cases to undermine the credibility of the previous statement in a humorous way. "A friend of a friend of a friend (let's face it, this story might just be an urban legend) named Judy had a small role in *Hello, Dolly* with Carol Channing on Broadway."

Gwinn and Halpern (2007) also utilise personal examples in several game descriptions. One of the clearest examples can be found in the game "Let's Go to the Bank", where Gwinn explains how the exercise in the form he uses it came to be. "Before we start, a quick aside: The "correct" version of this game, which is not presented here, was invented at i.O. by a very talented teacher named Susan Messing. The description that follows is a result of me walking through Susan's class to go to the bathroom, seeing ten seconds of this game, and thinking I understood it when decide to try it in my own class a week later." (Gwinn & Halpern, 2007, p. 90) As such this example beautifully illustrates the basic richness and trouble with improv exercises that there is no one correct set of rules for any exercise. There may be several variations of a game that share the same name, but do not have much more in common with another exercise bearing the same name (Gwinn & Halpern, 2007). Therefore even in written improv literature each writer may present similar but yet different version of a game, even though they share the same name.

Among the improv books analysed for this study the darkest style of humour can be found in the third United States based author Napier's (2015) style. Napier's use of humour or remarks directed at the reader utilise a dark and even sinister style of humour. These remarks are in a style close to Goldie's (2015) sarcastic and self-referential remarks directed at the reader, but lack the good-natured humoristic tone. Instead some of the remarks could be when taken out of context even viewed as threatening or rude, while in context are clearly meant as humour. For example, "One additional note about monologues: when you do a monologue that is from or about the actual "you," be honest. Do not lie or we will know it, and you will look like an asshole liar." (Napier, 2015, p. 194) The more sarcastic but pleasant style of side remarks include: "If you do long form and have never pulled lights for improv and yet have an opinion about the way someone else does it, then first of all, well, fuck you. Pulling lights for improv is hard." (Napier, 2015, p 126). The more sinister ones are a bit more threatening, for example, "Here is a brief overview of what I think about an improv scene, but to truly understand each point, I strongly suggest reading the full discussion in my other book. (If you don't, I'll seriously kill you.)" (Napier, 2015, p 151). The additional comment in brackets could be taken as a threat when read out of context, but in context it is stylistically meant as a joke. However, this style of aggressively sarcastic humour may require a certain set of mind also from the reader to accept the language choices of the author.

British books share some similar strategies, but also differ in how they approach humour. Johnstone (1979/2015) provides humorous examples and stories, but does not in the same way as other improv books utilise explicit humour or puns. There are, however, some small direct puns also made by Johnstone, for example, "I felt crippled, and 'unfit' for life, so I decided to become a teacher." (Johnstone, 1979/2015, p. 18). This shows nicely the way how Johnstone views traditional schooling as something that prohibits people from being spontaneous or using their imagination. The viewpoint in the books changes between personal storytelling, second person narrative and addressing the

reader through written speech like structures “Let’s see how these theories work out in practice.” (Johnstone, 1979/2015, p. 89). As such Johnstone (1979/2015) reads more like personal memoir where the teachings of Johnstone are opened through real-life examples. Johnstone also utilises some added side notes, for example, “At the age of six she has better understanding of storytelling than many university students. – She isn’t concerned with content but any narrative will have some (about insecurity, I suppose).” (Johnstone, 1979/2015, p. 113).

Humoristic stories are also utilised in pointing out how improv works in practice “I tell my actors never to think up an offer, but instead to assume that one has already been made. Groucho Marx understood this: a contestant at his quiz game ‘froze’ so he took the man’s pulse and said, ‘Either this man is dead or my watch has stopped.’” (Johnstone, 1979/2015, p. 99). The teacher side in the story is visible also through the choice of examples as Johnstone refers to theatre theorist Konstantin Stanislavsky’s teaching as something also relevant to improv: “When someone’s chair collapsed Stanislavsky berated him for not continuing, for not apologising to the character whose house he was in. This attitude makes for something really amazing in the theatre. The actor who will accept anything that happens seems supernatural” (Johnstone, 1979/2015, p. 100).

The newest one of the British books Goldie (2015) utilises several types of stories and personal references. She also refers back to examples she had previously used and gives them some qualities. E.g. “Remember my little rave about judgement in Chapter 5?” (Goldie, 2015, p. 265). Also this book utilises a lot of pop cultural references and stories about well-known movies, characters and actors that are told in a similar fashion other improv books use personal examples. Similarly Johnstone (1979/2015) also tells stories of people known in popular culture, for example, Groucho Marx to further elaborate points or concepts he is trying to explain. For the most part, however, Johnstone

(1979/2015) uses his own life and experiences as material for the book as do many of the other books including Goldie (2015).

The Finnish improv books commonly utilise personal examples from either the author or in the case of Koponen (2004) from other improvisers. The first Finnish book Routarinne (2004) is one of the books that has the clearest use of personal everyday life experiences to illustrate central concepts in improvisation. For example, to illustrate the structure of an unintentional deny through “yes, but” structure, which Routarinne (2004) mentions as one of the most common ways to accidentally deny an offer made to you.

Wife: How about we all go to the beach and go swimming today!

Husband: Yes, but let’s read the newspaper first and see what else is going on today.

Wife: (annoyed) Okay, let’s not go then, if you have a better idea.

Husband: I didn’t mean it like that, I just...

(Routarinne, 2004, p. 83)

He then further elaborates the humour in the example by mentioning that he actually thought the idea was good, but through this accidental deny had provoked a conflict that ruined most of the afternoon (Routarinne, 2004). Through this personal example he illustrates the importance and practical applications of the “yes, and” principle that is at the core of improvisation, just by changing one word “but” to “and” the whole conflict could have been avoided (Routarinne, 2004).

When further analysing the style of referencing self in Routarinne (2004) there can be found two types of references actual personal stories and using the first person in illustrating thinking. The use of first person in illustrating thought processes could be attributed as the author’s personal ideas and thoughts, but could as well be seen as retelling of common ideas through the use of first person narrator. Clear example of using a persona I can be seen in retelling of own memories, for example, “--During the rehearsal of the production I remember asking her: “Is there something seriously wrong with my work on

the role, because it feels so easy and good?" She looked confusedly at me and said that it should feel easy when everything is working as it should." (Routarinne, 2004, p. 39-40). This type of telling makes it clear that author is referencing himself when talking in the first person. In other examples it is not as clear. When talking about how difficult saying aloud one single word that springs to mind Routarinne explains the fear of people making judgements about you as a person because of the word you said: "I can't say "donut", because everyone will think I have an eating disorder. I can't say "dildo", because they will think I'm an indecent sex addict. I can't say "apple", because the previous person just said "orange" and I will appear unimaginative. After a long consideration I decide to say something neutral that does not attract special attention, cause unwanted interpretations or associations or negative reactions." (Routarinne, 2004, p. 113). This switch from a more general we to a more personal I can be seen here as a way for the author to relate the ideas directly to the reader.

When looking at the second Finnish book, Koponen (2004) that is an interesting book among the ones chosen for this analysis in that, it is for the most part building its story on quotes from other improvisers that she has interviewed. Significant amount of the content of the book is direct quotation from improvisers active in the early Finnish improv scene including the other Finnish author in this analysis Simo Routarinne. In essence the book reads for many parts more like a historical and theoretical study of improv in Finland than an improv book in the sense that is common with the other books in this analysis. Koponen (2004) does however, also include first person narrative and experiences by the author that support or elaborate the views provided in the chosen interview quotes provided in each chapter.

Koponen (2004) also uses the style of commenting and making side remarks like other books already discussed in this section. In chapter 6 she comments on the basic nature of improv as a once in a life time event and by taking on the task of describing the experiences of improvisers in written form she has

“Taken impossible as a task.” (Koponen, 2004, p. 206). Related to the same idea Koponen further illustrates the difficulty of describing a successful improvised moment by telling a story of one her own experiences while improvising a technique called Spit Fire (story told with one word at a time): “Then I don’t remember what happened. Someone was talking with my mouth, my head felt separated from the rest of my body and the audience was listening in total silence. All the pieces fit into place and individual words formed a story.” (Koponen, 2004, p. 211). This point is then further illustrated by quotes from other improvisers about the same topic. This type of dialogue between own experiences and other improvisers experiences mixed with a more neutral tone when talking about theoretical aspects of improvisation form the style of narrative in Koponen (2004).

Third one of the Finnish books Koponen (2017) does have something similar with the previous book by Koponen (2004), but is by nature more personal and examples told are more clearly linked to the authors own experiences. In Koponen (2017) there are longer stories from the authors own life to illustrate the concepts being talked about. However, the use of italics is not solely reserved for personal stories, but is also used extensively to other purposes (e.g. lists) as well. Along with stories from real-life experiences Koponen also opens up mental processes related to those experiences in the form of stories.

One interesting example of this type of imagining relates to love and especially loving oneself, for which Pia Koponen offers the playful idea of asking oneself on a date: “Love is total acceptance. I toy with the idea for a moment and end up asking myself “will you go out on a date with me?” I take myself out to a fancy restaurant and order the best possible food. I take out a notebook and a pen and ask: “how are you doing?” I write down everything Pia says. Without evaluation, without judgment, without censorship, without comments.” (Koponen, 2017, p. 196). This playful idea is even further developed by adding that she told later to other people attending a same course that she had “met an interesting person” referring to her imaginary date with herself. This was met

with objections from the other course members who protested that does she not already have a husband and family. Koponen (2017) has a gentle style of self-referential humour that is shown through above mentioned style of warmly addressing personal experiences through humour. Internal smiles and stories humour that tickle the authors own mischievous sense of humour in interaction.

Section 5.4 introduced the humour and personal examples used in the improv books analysed. There are certain traits that connect authors from certain cultures stylistically. However, there are also connections in styles of humour that would indicate the time of writing and also the personal sense of humour may have contributed to the style of humour chosen for the book. As such, for example, Napier (2015) and Goldie (2015) share some traits in their more wry and sarcastic sense of humour. Others on the other hand use humour that is more positively oriented. What connected all books was the use of personal examples in all parts of the text. Therefore many of these books are in style for some parts close to being autobiographical. However, the amount of personalisation and the focus varied. Many used either a teaching or directing perspective, but some also utilised their performance experience in explaining concepts or even games. Out of the books the most formal one in tone was Koponen (2004), which had also personal examples, but the additions to quoted interview material used a rather formal style even in personal examples.

5.5 “What are you doing?” – Games and their rules

For the most part all improvisation books include exercises for improvisers. The selected literary works all have several exercises described in them. However there are several different strategies for presenting the games or exercises. Some authors focus on very short introductions and some go to great lengths in discussing several aspects of the exercise and how it can be used or what skills does it apply to. Some authors, for example, Routarinne (2004) also provide

extensive notes on how to instruct the exercises and also describe the author's experiences with teaching and/or doing a particular exercise. There are several strategies that can be identified for providing exercises and how to group them in the book. One strategy is to spread the games into the text (e.g. Goldie, 2015), others structure the book on the exercises (e.g. Gwinn & Halpern, 2007) and some give them as added information (e.g. Koponen, 2004). There are also mixed styles where the exercise section is also a part of narration, but individually placed at the end of the book. The detail level is also different for each book and there is also variation between different exercises.

The Chicago or long form improv style books from the United States, Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) and Napier (2015) are different from many of the other books in that they do not include many techniques or games. This is mainly due to their approach based on long form improvisation, which can include games but they are not a necessary part of each format. Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) basically focus on one long form technique called the Harold, which was developed by authors. Napier (2015) on the other hand provides some warm up games and a few exercises related to creating long form improv skills, but mainly focuses on providing information about the different aspects that need to be taken into account when creating long form improvisation. Also Napier (2015) is hesitant to actually use the name games as his book solely focuses on creating long form improvisations, instead of teaching shorter improv techniques.

While most of the authors have a separate section for exercises in their books, some place games among other text. Goldie (2015) in particular uses various methods for introducing games. The logic of how detailed the description of the game is also varied and there is also repetition of techniques under different sections of the book. Goldie (2015) can list the same or similar games in several places due to the general organisation of the book, where games are listed according to the appropriate topic. Some games are accompanied with detailed descriptions and tips for teaching them, whereas others are only accompanied

by a short few sentence long descriptions. Similarly also Johnstone (2014) utilises descriptions of different length to illustrate exercises, but they are still neatly grouped as one whole section, which consists of only exercises.

The second United States based author Gwinn (Gwinn & Halpern, 2007) on the other hand has structured the whole book around the exercises and shares a lot of backstory and additional information about the creation of the games. Also the logic how Gwinn presents the logic of each technique is unique among the authors, as he has chosen to name the players he utilises to demonstrate the structure of the game. These imaginary players are used to illustrate the first turns taken in group improvisation games and how messages move among players. Others have not utilised such strategies and commonly refer to the players of each game in plainer and more general terms. This small touch of personalisation makes Gwinn's book (Gwinn & Halpern, 2007) stand out from the rest. However, it also means that there is a section in the book where this approach and naming convention used in exercises has to be explained (Gwinn / Halpern, 2007, chapter 4). Without this the basic logic of the exercises and why players are named could be confusing for the reader. Also each category for the games is shortly described, why and what the function of these games is in regard to group work.

What also differentiates Gwinn and Halpern (2007) from the other improv books is the fact that photos are used to illustrate exercises. There are also photographs and pictures in Koponen (2004), but these are not used in the exercises to show how they work. Gwinn and Halpern (2007) on the other hand have in many exercises the explanation in text form, which is then also aided by the pictures providing clarification of, for example, different hand gestures, steps or phases in the game. These photographs are not necessarily of the highest quality, but do clarify some details that may be hard to grasp when only provided with textual explanation. For example, In the Three-Four Rhythm game (Gwinn & Halpern, 2007, p. 43-45) each of the beats are shown in pictures to illustrate the hand positions of each player in each individual beat.

When describing the games presented in the book *Impro* (Johnstone, 1979/2015), Johnstone utilises side-remarks like “It’s a little difficult on the printed page to show how pleasurable the game is.” (Johnstone, 1979/2015, p. 128). This shows the basic paradox, addressed in many improv books, between improv literature and improv training nicely. Many improv techniques are not necessarily fully learnable through written sources and may require real-life exploration of the exercise to fully grasp its function and form. The games provided are explained through a teaching or textual example. As such they read like a story of how this game has been played in real-life more than an instruction manual or set of rules. This approach makes the games relatable and gives a personal twist on what is being shared. Even though the reader might not have a personal experience of the game, after reading the description they have one contextualized example of how the game works in practice.

There is clear stylistic shift from Johnstone’s first improv book *Impro* (Johnstone, 1979/2015) when compared to the content provided in his later book *Impro for Storytellers* (Johnstone, 1999/2014). *Impro* (Johnstone, 1979/2015) was a narrative about Johnstone’s ideas about what improv is, but the later book *Impro for Storytellers* had some similar narrative, but it was mainly a collection of improv games and a how to guide of improv. Out of all the books Johnstone (1999/2014) is the one that reads most like a guidebook for playing improv games than anything else. There are several strategies utilised in the book (Johnstone, 1999/2014) to present games. A sizable portion of the book is utilised to present format called Theatresports™, which Johnstone himself has developed. Games provided later can be played independently, but some of them could also be used in a Theatresports™ show. Several exercises have only a short description even as short as a paragraph. Others are divided into several sections with their own headings. But as there is great variation in what kinds of strategies are utilised to present rules for individual games, listing them would not serve the purpose of illustrating the way games are described. For the most part games that have known variations have them listed as well. When

games are more complex they may include several sections where individual aspects of the game are further illustrated. More complex exercises include, for example, scenic work. Some exercises include tips and notes on how to teach and direct them.

Routarinne (2004) has a clear section of exercises, but unlike many others, who have written material in the book work as an introduction to the exercises; his exercises section includes a significantly larger separate section in the beginning of the main chapter about improv games. This is most likely done to bridge the gap between the general interaction focus of the previous improv theory sections to the more improvisation theatre specific content that is presented in the exercises section. There is clear logic in how the game descriptions are provided. Not all exercises include all categories, but they are always presented in the same order just leaving out those categories that do not apply to that particular game. The most commonly used categories in exercise descriptions are: Description (Kuvaus), Aim of the exercise (Harjoitteen tavoite), How does it work (Miten se toimii), Example (Esimerkki), Additional element (Lisäelementti), Variations (Variaatioita), Tips for the facilitator (Ohjeita vetäjälle), Side coaching (Sivusta ohjaaminen) and Most common pitfalls (Tavallisimpia sudenkuoppia). Most commonly an exercise would include five or seven of the categories mentioned above. There are also some game specific additional categories, for example, Star moments (Tähtihetkiä) (Routarinne, 2004, p.168) that have some additional information related to that particular game.

Goldie (2015) has several strategies for providing game descriptions. Games are provided in relevant chapters of the book among other text and in some cases the exercises are built into the narrative. There is variation in how the games are described. Some have a very detailed description with a lot of personal and additional information and examples related to the exercise. Some are very concise and may only include a few sentences. What is also unique in Goldie is the repetition of games in different chapters of the book. Other authors in this

study only provide a game once, but Goldie (2015) explains the rules of several games at least twice in the book. For example “What are you doing” exercise (Goldie, 2015, p. 78) and an additional look in the same exercise called “What are you doing” (revisited) (Goldie, 2015, p. 93). Unlike other’s Goldie (2015) utilises the chapter titles as guide to where a variation of the same game should be presented, instead of providing all variations in connection with the original description. This may work as a way to ensure that all topics include the relevant exercises even though it adds repetition to the overall structure and text of the book.

Routarinne (2004) uses a clear structure to the exercises and each description includes the same structural parts in the descriptions. What is also unique to the way Routarinne (2004) describes games is the difficulty ratings given to each exercise. Others may include textual description of how demanding the game may be to players, but only Routarinne (2004) utilises a number grading scale to inform the reader about the level of difficulty for each exercise.

Stylistically Routarinne (2004) also differs from the others in the way he approaches exercises. He bridges every exercise by additional information about how to side coach exercises or what are to his knowledge the clearest pitfalls that could be encountered during the exercise and gives examples on how to overcome these pitfalls. Routarinne (2004) gives also examples of variations to each exercise in a clearly structured way among the game descriptions. Others like Goldie (2015) also do this, but they place variations according to their use in context and there is not necessarily a clear link between each variation of the same game to a previous incarnation of the exercise in the book. As such Routarinne (2004) seems to be the most systematic and organised in the way they present individual exercises, which builds the feeling of unity throughout the exercise section of his book. This continuous logic among exercises could also make the exercises more approachable, but may in turn overcomplicate some descriptions as it might not be necessary for all exercise descriptions to be detailed to this extent.

Koponen (2004) adheres to the idea of having a separate section of exercises, but places it in the middle of the book as a small subsection. The descriptions are mainly short and concise. This makes them easy to read at glance. However, as such many of the descriptions may be even too concise to be useful for an improviser unaware of their physical organisation and their focus. This choice may indeed be one sign of who is the intended reader of the book as understanding the descriptions of some exercises may require clear understanding of some more basic improvisation principles and techniques.

The applied improvisation book (Koponen 2017) also utilises differing strategies. Koponen (2017) is more of an exercise book for individuals so all exercises are placed under the relevant topics. There is also room for writing down personal notes in the book about exercises, where making notes is seen as relevant. Most exercises are individual exercises aimed for self-reflection and -development. However, there are also several exercises that relate to interaction, which require either a partner or a group.

Section 5.5 shows that there are several styles of providing exercises in improv books. Culturally there are no clear indications that the improv literature of a certain improv culture or tradition would favour a certain style of providing and explaining the rules of improv games. Apart from Routarinne (2004) and Napier (2015), who use mainly utilise one style of explaining exercises, all other authors use various styles and structures in their exercises. Therefore the style could be more attributed to being the choice of a single author and not particular to any culture or stylistically similar to other improv books analysed in this study. However some indication is seen that the works of Johnstone (1979/2015; 1999/2014) may have offered the initial spark to some choices in presentation of exercises made by the Finnish authors Routarinne (2004) and Koponen (2004). Out of these Routarinne (2004) shares some traits of certain style Johnstone (1999/2014) also uses, but makes a more systematic use of only one style and does not deviate from this style like Johnstone (1999/2014) does.

As such it would mainly indicate that the authors are more influenced in their decisions by books they have read than the culture they are from.

6 Conclusion

Improv literature has been available for several decades in English and for more than a decade in Finnish. This study focused on looking at a selected sample of improv literature from three cultural contexts: United States, Britain and Finland. The scope of this study was in the case of United States and British improv literature limited to only three works, which was partially due to the limited amount of improv literature available in Finnish that has been written by Finnish authors. Therefore the sample of Finnish improv books represents a larger portion of all literature about improv than the samples from the other two cultures. Thus only tentative cultural comparisons were made between the books. As such more emphasis was given to the approach to improvisation the authors had than their cultural background as this was at least partially shared between the representatives of different improv literature cultures. The books from the United States focused on long form improvisation, the British books and Finnish books on the other hand were more oriented toward short improvisation techniques.

Cultural contexts also overlap as the culture of improvisation goes beyond the boundaries of nation states. Authors from different cultures are influenced by each other's literary works or have even been taught by other authors from other countries. Therefore the artificial division between different cultural contexts may be somewhat arbitrary as current cultural trends often are not defined only within a country, but are visible in the society on a larger scale. However, some indications towards the style of humour and the way of approaching the topic could be seen as most likely being influenced by the author's cultural context. As was shown in the analysis the books from the United States focused more on performance, British books on educational and the Finnish ones on applied aspects of improvisation in their approaches. However, as there is only a limited sample of authors and books in this analysis, no generalisations can be made, but some preliminary indications

were found that this is the general disposition at least partly shared by these books with the other books written in the same cultural context.

When looking at the genres the books represent, there is not a clear cut way to say that certain cultures or even that the same author would produce only books for a certain genre. One shared feature in all of the analysed improv books is that they are all partially autobiographical, but the depth and scope vary. All authors use their own personal history with improvisation as material for their books. While others limit their scope to retelling only improv and performance related stories in their narration, several authors also use their personal life as material to illustrate points. The books from United States most commonly utilised performance related stories in their narration, whereas the Finnish books, in particular, also reflected on the personal life occurrences of their author. This may be due to the different foci and the nature of the Finnish books being broader and more applied in their views on improvisation in general.

The genres of improv literature as defined by Leep (2008) were 'what is', 'how to' and 'history of' improvisation. This definition was then furthered for the purposes of this study by adding the additional category of 'applied to', which was a clear function that could be seen in the Finnish improv books. Others might have addressed such issues but the focus was on defining, telling or explaining improv or its history.

Author specific choices are most clearly visible in the organisation of the materials and whether rules of improv are provided. There are similarities between strategies for how to present the contents of the book or the improv games, but as such these do not show a clear overall way in which these would be done in a certain genre or improv books or indeed in a cultural context. The stylistic choice differ greatly between books and any two books do not utilise the same strategies, but have variations even when the books are written by the same author, where the choice of genre play a certain part in the individuals

stylistic choice. However, as there is no clear strategy commonly utilised in improv books of certain genre or from a cultural context, the variation is most likely due to author related factors.

Based on this analysis some discoveries about the nature of improv literature can be made. All books analysed in this study used humour, side remarks and personalisation of narration to provide examples for the concepts they were discussing. However, as this study was limited to only three cultural contexts large scale conclusions cannot be made on whether these observations are generalizable to improv literature as a genre. Also the limitations created by the selection of books to be analysed also pose the question whether different improv literature tradition in for example the United States would share the features prominent in the Chicago-style literature. Further analysis of the improv literature in the United States and Britain would be required. However, as the Finnish published improv literature was well represented in this study the observations are descriptive of the improv literature available in Finnish.

The scope of this study was also limited to only the language areas where improv literature is written in either Finnish or English. However as there are vibrant improv cultures also in other languages such as Italian, French and German. Literature written in other languages could further elaborate whether the language and conventions of improv surpass the language in which the written description of improv is provided, or whether language of the author also plays a role in how improv is described.

Furthermore comparing cultures where the western theatre traditions have not been the dominant form in theatre improv development would provide an interesting addition to the research knowledge. This study did not address the issue of theatre culture and traditions in the analysis and all authors and literary works selected are at least partially influenced by western theatre traditions. The understanding of improv and improv literature could perhaps be further deepened by, for example, analysing the improv traditions in Asian

cultures, where the theatre conventions for a long time were developed without contact to western theatre. Moreover this type of comparison could further the knowledge of human improvisation and whether the conventions of improv are culturally independent or depend on the theatrical understanding and performance culture where the author works in.

Lastly the genre understanding of improv literature could be further deepened. This study only addressed some of the known non-fiction genres applicable to understanding the styles and voices of improv literature and also one established way of categorising improv literature by content type. These categories, however, may be too narrow or limited to describe the whole variety of improv literature available. Also almost all improv books belong to more than one content category and therefore describing them through this categorisation might not provide a detailed enough categorisation of the literary work. Further research could be needed to further understand what are the key differences and commonalities in improv literature to create a categorisation with greater explanatory power.

7 References

Primary sources

Goldie, A. (2015). *The Improv Book: Improvisation for Theatre, Comedy, Education and Life*. London: Oberon Books.

Gwinn, P. C., & Halpern, C. (2007). *Group improvisation: The manual of ensemble improv games (2nd Ed.)*. Denver, Colorado: Meriwether Pub.

Halpern, C., Close, D., & Johnson, K. (1994). *Truth in comedy: The manual of improvisation*. Denver Colorado: Meriwether Pub.

Johnstone, K. (1979/2015). *Impro: Improvisation and the theatre*. New Delhi, India: Routledge.

Johnstone, K. (1999/2014). *Impro for storytellers: Theatresports and the Art of Making Things Happen*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd.

Koponen, P. (2004). *Improkirja. [Improvbook]* Helsinki: Like.

Koponen, P. (2017). *Lupa mokata - Improvisointi arjessa. [Permission to make mistakes - Improvisation in everyday life]* Helsinki: S&S.

Napier, M. (2015). *Behind the Scenes: Improvising Long Form*. Denver Colorado: Meriwether Publishing.

Routarinne, S. (2004). *Improvisoi! [Improvise!]* Helsinki: Tammi.

Secondary sources

- Adams, K. (2007). *How to Improvise a Full-Length Play. The Art of Spontaneous Theater*. New York: Allworth Press.
- Applied Improvisation Network (2018, May 21). Retrieved from <http://appliedimprovisation.network/>
- Alana, L. & Ansaldo, J. (2018). The Connect Improv Curriculum: Supporting youth on the Autism Spectrum and Their Educators. In *Applied Improvisation: Leading, Collaborating, and Creating Beyond the Theatre* (pp. 79-97). London: Methuen Drama.
- Allen, M. (2017). *The sage encyclopedia of communication research methods (Vols. 1-4)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9781483381411
- Baim, C. (2017). The Drama Spiral: A Decision-Making Model for Safe, Ethical, and Flexible Practice when Incorporating Personal Stories in Applied Theatre and Performance. In *Risk, Participation, and Performance Practice* (pp. 79-109). London: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Balme, C. B., Vescovo, P., & Vianello, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Commedia dell'Arte in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beghtol, C. (2001). The concept of genre and its characteristics. *Bulletin of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 27(2), 19-17.
- Cole F.L. (1988) Content analysis: process and application. *Clinical Nurse Specialist* 2(1), 53-57.
- Cole, J. (2016). *I've Got Your Back: Utilizing Improv as a Tool to Enhance Workplace Relationships*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania

- Couldry, N. (2000). *Inside culture*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9781849209267
- Courtney, R. (1973). Theater and spontaneity. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 32(1), 79-88.
- Culham, R. (2016). Modes, Genres, and Formats, Oh My!. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(5), 553-557.
- Downe-Wamboldt, B. (1992). Content analysis: Method, applications, and issues. *Health Care for Women International*.
- Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 62(1), 107-115.
- Finland International Improv Festival, (2018, May 25). *Finland International Improv Festival*. Retrieved from <http://finlandimprovfestival.com>
- Fischer, R. (2009). Where is culture in cross-cultural research? An outline of a multilevel research process for measuring culture as a shared meaning system. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 9(1), 25-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1470595808101154>
- Frost, A., & Yarrow, R. (2015). *Improvisation in drama, theatre and performance: History, practice, theory*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gray, A. (2003). One grasping lived cultures. In Gray, A. *Research practice for cultural studies* (pp. 12-24). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9780857024596
- Griggs, J. (2005). *Guru: My days with Del Close*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee.
- Hauck, B. (2012). *Long-form improv: The complete guide to creating characters, sustaining scenes, and performing extraordinary Harolds*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing Inc.

- Henke, R. (2016). Border-Crossing in the Commedia Dell'Arte. In *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater* (pp. 35-50). London: Routledge.
- Hoffmann-Longtin, K., & Rossing, J. (2016). Making Science Make Sense: Applied Improvisation in Health and Life Sciences. Poster session presented at *IUPUI Research Day 2016*, Indianapolis, Indiana. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1805/10109>
- House, R. J., & Javidan, M. (2004). Overview of GLOBE. In House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W. & Gupta, V. (Eds.). *Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies* (pp. 9-28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hu, D. L., Lefton, L., & Ludovice, P. J. (2017). Humour Applied to STEM Education. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 34(3), 216-226.
- IMPRO, (2018, May 25). *Das internationale Festival für Improvisationstheater in Berlin*. Retrieved from <https://www.improfestival.de>
- Inglehart, R. (1997). *Modernization and postmodernization: Cultural, economic, and political change in 43 societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- International Theatresports™ Institute (2017). *A guide to Keith Johnstone's Theatresports™*. International Theatresports™ Institute (ITI).
- Jagodowski, T. J., Pasquesi, D., & Victor, P. (2015). *Improvisation at the Speed of Life: The TJ & Dave Book*. Chicago: Solo Roma Incorporated.
- Johns, A. M. (2015). Moving on from Genre Analysis: An update and tasks for the transitional student. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 19, 113-124.
- Jørgensen, M. and Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London: Sage.

- Koppett, K. (2013). *Training to imagine: practical improvisational theatre techniques for trainers and managers to enhance creativity, teamwork, leadership, and learning*. Sterling Virginia: Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Krylova, K. O., Vera, D., & Crossan, M. (2016). Knowledge transfer in knowledge-intensive organizations: the crucial role of improvisation in transferring and protecting knowledge. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 20(5), 1045-1064.
- Leep, J. (2008). *Theatrical improvisation: short form, long form, and sketch-based improv*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Libera, A. (Ed.). (2004). *The Second City almanac of improvisation*. Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Madson, P. R. (2005). *Improv Wisdom: Don't prepare, Just Show up*. New York: Bell Tower.
- Mamet, D. (1997). *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*. New York, Vintage.
- Mathison, S. (2005). *Encyclopedia of evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9781412950558
- McClure, C. (2018). Tiffany & Co. Says Yes, And. In *Applied Improvisation: Leading, Collaborating, and Creating Beyond the Theatre* (pp. 141-162). London: Methuen Drama.
- Millar, R. (2018). *Take It Easy™ & more tips for the dedicated improviser*. Ireland: Lettertec.
- Minkov (2013). Main characteristics of culture. In Minkov, M. *Cross-cultural analysis: The science and art of comparing the world's modern societies and their cultures* (pp. 19-37). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9781483384719

- Napier, M. (2004/2015). *Improvise: Scene from the inside out*. Denver: Heinemann Drama.
- Neundorf K. (2002). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Norton, T. (2018). Action! Transforming Executives through Improvised Theatre. In *Applied Improvisation: Leading, Collaborating, and Creating Beyond the Theatre* (pp. 163-176). London: Methuen Drama.
- Oxford English Dictionary, (2018, May 21). *Improvisation*. Retrieved from <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/92872>
- Payne, G. & Payne, J. (2004) Content analysis. In Payne, G. & Payne, J. *Sage key Concepts: Key concepts in social research* (pp. 51-55). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9781849209397
- Pierse, L. (1995). *Theatresports Down Under*. London: Improcorp Australia Pty. Australia Random House Group Ltd.
- Prigge-Pienaar, S. (2018). Who's game? Embodied play in theatre and sport. *South African Theatre Journal*, 1-13.
- Räsänen, M. (2017). *The Art of Making Mistakes: Being in the Spotlight, Scary or not?* Laukka, S. (Ed.). Tampere: T:mi Raija Airaksinen & Draamatyö.
- Rodman, G. (2013). Cultural studies and history. In Partner, N. & Foot, S. *The SAGE handbook of historical theory* (pp. 342-353). 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9781446247563
- Robbins Dudeck, T. & McClure, C. (2018). (Eds.) *Applied Improvisation: Leading, Collaborating, and Creating Beyond the Theatre*. London: Methuen Drama.
- Rossing, J. P., & Hoffmann-Longtin, K. (2016). Improv (ing) the academy: Applied improvisation as a strategy for educational development. *To Improve the Academy*, 35(2), 303-325.

- Routarinne, S. (2007). *Valta ja vuorovaikutus: statusilmaisun perusteet. [Power and Interaction: Introduction to Status Expression]*. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Rudlin, J. (2002). *Commedia Dell'Arte: an Actor's Handbook*. Routledge.
- Salinsky, T., & Frances-White, D. (2017). *The improv handbook: The ultimate guide to improvising in comedy, theatre, and beyond*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Salkind, N. J. (2010). *Encyclopedia of research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9781412961288
- Selman, M. (2015). *Getting 'witness'—thinking through theatrical improvisation*. *Context* (38/2015).
- Spolin, V. (1963/1999). *Improvisation for the theater: A handbook of teaching and directing techniques (3rd Ed.)*. Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Spolin, V (1986). *Theater Games for The Classroom: a Teacher's Handbook*. Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Spolin, V. (2001). *Theater games for the lone actor*. Evanston Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Stiles, P. (2017). *The Art of Making Mistakes: Introduction*. Laukka, S. (Ed.). Tampere: T:mi Raija Airaksinen & Draamatyö.
- Suarez, P. (2015). Rethinking engagement: innovations in how humanitarians explore geoinformation. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 4(3), 1729-1749.
- SWIMP, (2018, May 25). *Sweden International Improv Festival*. Retrieved from <http://www.swedenimprovfestival.com>
- Tint, B. S., McWaters, V., & van Driel, R. (2015). Applied improvisation training for disaster readiness and response: Preparing humanitarian workers

and communities for the unexpected. *Journal of Humanitarian Logistics and Supply Chain Management*, 5(1), 73-94.

Wasson, S. (2017). *Improv Nation. How we made a Great American Art*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Wickham, G. (1992). *A History of the Theatre*. New York: Phaidon Press.