

# “Enymärä”: Thoughts on the use of Finnish as the majority language in locally published EFL activity books

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*It has been a long tradition in Finland to use locally published textbooks in primary foreign language education. The books have been designed for linguistically homogenous groups of students, which explains why Finnish, as the learners' L1, is the instructive metalanguage chosen for the EFL activity books. However, the growing number of immigrant children in the Finnish educational system raises the question to what extent these activity books can serve the needs of linguistically more diverse groups of learners. The connection between the two languages is so strong that Finnish seems to serve as a precondition for the acquisition of English. The high proportion of tasks requiring fluency in Finnish and the exclusive use of the language in the instructions might position Finnish as a gatekeeper language and thus hinder the acquisition of English in the case of non-Finnish students. The background trigger for the research was the case of an immigrant child, who had problems solving the English workbook exercises due to his weak Finnish skills. The paper investigates the role of Finnish in six EFL activity books that are used in Finnish comprehensive education to see to what extent it is present in the books, what functions it takes and what difficulties the lack of fluency might cause in task comprehension and solution. The analysis will be supplemented by interviews made with teachers of English and a textbook author to explore their views and experience regarding the use of the majority language in the activity books.*

**Keywords:** EFL textbooks, language of instruction, language policy, equality in education, immigrant students

## 1 Introduction

The author of the present study moved to Finland with her family from a Central European country in 2014. Her son, Miklos<sup>1</sup> was 11 years old then. During the first year of their stay, Miklos participated in the preparatory education offered for immigrant children to learn the Finnish language. Due to the lack of a common, shared first language (L1), the method of language teaching was total immersion in the preparatory classes. At first, Miklos found it a bit hard to adapt to the new environment but progressed fairly well in language learning. His teachers told

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the parents that it usually took several years for the immigrant children to acquire native-like proficiency.

Having spent one year in preparatory education, Miklos got enrolled in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of a local school and began taking classes according to the national curriculum. He also had to choose a foreign language to learn. The obvious choice was English, as he had learnt the language in his home country for three years. Despite having some basic knowledge of English, Miklos often could not do his homework: either he did not understand the Finnish instructions in the EFL activity book, or he could not do the translation exercises. This led to situations when the author and her child spent unreasonable time and effort solving the assignments together. Figure 1 shows an example exercise with the child's handwritten note, "Enymära", which means "I don't understand".

**1 Kirjoita sanat englanniksi.** ? enymära

1 vieraillla _____	6 pienen pieni _____
2 pimeä _____	7 kirkas _____
3 huolehtia _____	8 huomenna _____
4 vastapäätä _____	9 opas _____
5 kauppa _____	10 kuuluisa _____

**Figure 1.** The exercise in *Yippee! 5. Writer* (Paakkinen, Sarlin, Turpeinen, & Westlake, 2014, p. 111) that the immigrant child could not complete. The instructions are "Write the words in English".

This personal experience made the author interested in exploring the role of the Finnish language in the EFL activity books. With the present study, her aim is to call attention to the difficulties that locally published foreign language textbooks might cause for migrant learners not only in Finland but also in other countries of the world.

The number of immigrant students has increased recently in Finnish education. According to the Finnish National Agency of Education (Hartonen, 2014, p. 38), in 2007 there were only 16,398 students (2.9%) with mother tongues other than Finnish in comprehensive schools. This figure rose to some 6% by 2015 (Finnish National Agency of Education, 2017), which means more than 30,000 students. This increase could be a factor for textbook publishers to consider, in line with Curdt-Christianser and Weninger (2015, p. 3), who suggest the re-examination of textbooks in light of the recent global migration processes.

As Heilenman (1991, p. 105) points out, the textbook is part of a multifaceted social system, which integrates not only the students and the teachers, but also the authors, publishers, researchers and curriculum developers. In accordance with this, the present research combines the analysis of different types of data to explore the role of Finnish in the EFL activity books and to find explanations for its prevalence. In the spring of 2016, interviews were made with three language teachers and a textbook author to find out their opinion about the use of the L1 in the workbooks. In addition, six activity books were examined with the method of content analysis to explore in what functions Finnish was present in them.

The topic raises questions related to textbook choice (global or local) and the use of the national or majority language in foreign language education. But the main point that it focuses on is whether the activity books designed for Finnish learners are still suitable for linguistically more heterogeneous groups, and if not, what changes could be made.

The term “textbook” will be used in the paper as a collective noun to refer to the printed educational materials in book format, including both reading books and activity books. “Activity book” or “workbook” will be applied as synonyms when referring to the books that provide exercises to the texts of the reading books.

## **2 The EFL textbook: global or local?**

The presence or the lack of national (or local) textbook publishers in the country can affect the teachers’ book choices. If there are no national textbook publishers, language teachers need to rely on global or international publications. The situation is not homogenous in Europe. There are countries in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, see Bolitho, 2008) where UK-published global textbooks are still used widely. On the other hand, in the Nordic countries the textbooks tend to be locally published. In Finland, the core educational materials (both printed and electronic) in foreign and second language teaching are published by national corporations. There are two main publishers, Sanoma Pro and Otava, which produce EFL textbooks for the comprehensive schools. Textbooks are still the most important teaching materials used in language teaching in Finnish schools, as a survey by Luukka, Pöyhönen, Huhta, Taalas, Tarnanen, and Keränen (2008) revealed.

Depending on whether the textbooks are designed for the learners from a specific region or are meant to be used in several countries, three main categories of textbooks can be differentiated: local, localized and international (or global) textbooks (López-Barrios & de Debat, 2014). Local textbooks are published specifically for learners who are homogeneous regarding their mother tongue and sociocultural background. Localized textbooks are global textbooks that have been adapted to meet the needs of learners that come from a homogenous sociocultural background and live in a specific country or region. Global or international textbooks are meant for worldwide use by students with either heterogeneous or homogenous L1 background (López-Barrios & de Debat, 2014).

The EFL textbooks used in Finnish comprehensive schools fall into the category of local textbooks because they are designed specifically for Finnish learners and follow the Finnish national curriculum. López-Barrios and de Debat (2014) list several advantages that local textbooks offer in contrast with international or global textbooks. For example, the locally produced versions may allow for contextualization, linguistic contrasts, intercultural reflections, and the facilitation of learning (López-Barrios & de Debat, 2014, p. 41).

Contextualisation means creating a connection between the world of the textbook and the real social context that the learners live in. This can be realized, for instance, by the inclusion of local references (e.g. places, folklore characters, national symbols), by referring to local sociocultural norms, and also by fitting the curricular demands and teaching practices in the country (López-Barrios & de Debat, 2014, pp. 41–42). The shared socio-cultural context as a background may help the learners situate and identify themselves as members of the same culture

who approach a new language from a common base. This importance of common roots is also emphasized by Gray (2002, p. 164), who claims that the lack of reference to the local aspects in textbooks means the lack of a bridge that could connect the students' local, cultural background and that of the foreign language culture.

If the books follow the objectives of a national curriculum, the teaching and learning processes become more standardized, which can balance the quality of teaching nationwide (López-Barrios & de Debat, 2014). Bolitho (2008) agrees with this by stating that local authors are in the best position to judge what meets the needs of the target learners in a given region or country.

Linguistic contrasts in local textbooks can make the learners become more aware of cross-linguistic differences and similarities (López-Barrios & de Debat, 2014, p. 42), which can enhance language learning. Intercultural reflections in textbooks could contribute to the better understanding of the cross-cultural differences and also foster the learners' tolerance towards otherness. López-Barrios and de Debat (2014) point out that the use of L1 in the textbooks can make the learners more independent, which facilitates autonomous learning.

According to Arnold and Rixon (2008), there is a tendency for the withdrawal of the global and the localized textbooks from the market in favour of the locally published materials, especially in the case of young learners. This trend is probably a result of the above listed benefits of using locally published textbooks. The presence of the common root can reduce the stress of language learning and help children relate to the foreign language from a shared socio-cultural background. Local textbooks thus have several advantages, which explains their use in foreign language education in Finland.

However, it should be pointed out that most of the above listed advantages of using local textbooks (i.e. contextualization based on common socio-cultural roots, awareness of cross-linguistic differences and similarities, autonomous learning instructed in L1) most likely hold true only in case of culturally and linguistically homogenous classes.

### **3 The use of the national or majority language in foreign language education**

The use of the national or majority language in foreign language education can have several benefits in case it coincides with the learners' mother tongue: it can facilitate independent learning, raise language learning awareness by creating a link between L1 and L2, and also reduce the learners' language anxiety (Cook, 2001; López-Barrios & de Debat, 2014). This section will first present the arguments for and against the use of the learners' L1 in foreign language classes. Most of these studies are based on the scenario of linguistically homogenous groups, and the focus of interest is to what extent L1 should be involved in foreign language teaching. In the second part of the section, the same question will be discussed from the perspective of linguistically mixed groups of learners.

#### *3.1 For and against L1*

Cook (2001) argues that the mother tongue should not be kept separate from L2 during the teaching and learning process because the two languages are interwoven

in the learners' minds. Even though there should be as much exposure to L2 as possible, L1 should not be banned from the foreign language classroom. It plays an important role, for example, when clarifying the meaning of certain L2 vocabulary items. Translation helps the learners compare the languages and thus become more aware of the connections between them (Cummins, 2007; Juárez & Oxbrow, 2008; Sampson, 2012). The use of L1 can also prove useful in group work, as a form of scaffolding, when the students switch to their mother tongue to discuss the task or to help one another (Cook, 2001, p. 418). Topolska-Pado (2010) is of the opinion that the use of L1 provides the feeling of security for the students. Learning a new language can lead to anxiety (Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, 1986; Horwitz, E. K., 2010), but the use of the first language can make the students feel less tense (Topolska-Pado, 2010). L1 can ease task comprehension by reducing the potential anxiety triggered by non- or misunderstandings.

There are also arguments against the overuse of L1 in the foreign language classroom. Although acknowledging the beneficial use of the mother tongue in task comprehension and the development of translation skills, Dat (2008) warns against the dominance of L1 in the instructions: "soaking instruction in the mother tongue could deprive the learners of valuable opportunities for language to be recycled and become salient enough to facilitate L2 instruction" (p. 273).

Comprehensible target language input is of invaluable importance in the process of second language acquisition, as has been pointed out by researchers (Ellis, 2005; Krashen, 1985; Van Patten, 2002). One way of maximizing the target language input is by using L2 as the medium of instruction (Ellis, 2005, p. 217). If the instructions given in L2 are repetitive, learners can easily acquire the phrases that re-occur in them and can thus enrich their repertoire of formulaic expressions (cf. Ellis, 2005; Turnbull, 2001). Moreover, the contextual situation is meaningful in this case: the learners need to understand and do the task based on what they read in the instruction. The foreign language is used with a purpose in this case; instead of being a subject to be learnt, it becomes a means that serves understanding and task solution.

Tomlinson (2008) confirms the importance of meaningful communication in language learning by suggesting that the learners should engage "in meaningful communication in which they are using language to achieve intended outcomes is essential for the development of communicative competence" (Tomlinson, 2008, p. 5). If the instructions, and basically the metalanguage used in the textbook, are in the target language, the learners do not only enrich their vocabulary through them but also acquire pragmatic competence in the target language, e.g. by reading and understanding different types of speech acts that are used in the instructions (Vellenga, 2004). This way students can attend to the pragmatic meanings and see L2 as a real communication tool (Ellis, 2005).

Considering task comprehension, Nikolov (2016, p. 71) points out that guessing meaning from context is not necessarily a drawback even in the case of children:

Children are able to comprehend a lot more than they can produce; if tasks are tuned to their abilities and background knowledge of the world, they are able to figure out new meanings they are not familiar with. Their inductive reasoning skills allow them to guess meaning in context and if they are encouraged to do so, they will be able to apply this extremely useful strategy over time. (Nikolov, 2016, p. 71)

Nikolov (2016) also calls attention to the fact that it is not necessary to provide L1 equivalents for every single L2 item as children may be able to use the target language in meaningful communication without knowing the exact translation of all the words and phrases.

As we could see, there are arguments both for and against the use of the learners' L1 in the foreign language classes. So far, the topic has been approached as an L1 vs. L2 debate, but in case some of the students' mother tongues are different from the national or the majority language used by the teacher, the same issue also raises questions on language learning motivation, language teaching methods, and educational language policy.

### *3.2 Use of the majority language in EFL*

In EFL classrooms where the students do not have the same mother tongue, the use of the majority language in teaching and in the educational materials should be reconsidered. As was pointed out by Maluch, Kempert, Neumann and Stanat (2015), the students who speak a different language at home than the one used in school face difficulties in understanding instructions and explicit information that are given in the majority language about a foreign language (e.g. grammar rules). Furthermore, the students who are not so fluent in the majority language cannot build on their L1 linguistic resources in foreign language learning to such an extent as the students whose L1 is used in the instructions and grammar explanations. This puts them at a disadvantage and can result in their lagging behind the majority language native speaker peers.

The lack of fluency in the majority language does not only cause a problem in terms of understanding the instructions and completing the exercises, but it might also influence how the students relate to the language and create their possible L2 future selves (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). According to Dörnyei (2005, 2009), L2 motivation is part of the learner's self-system, and it has three components: 1) ideal L2 self, 2) ought-to L2 self, and 3) L2 learning experience. The components interact in the system and thus influence the success of language learning. The ideal self in this context refers to the ideal self that one would like to become as a speaker of L2. The ought-to self means all those attributes that one needs to possess to meet the external expectations coming from the peers, the parents and other external sources. The L2 learning experience includes those motives that are connected to the immediate learning environment (e.g. the teacher, the curriculum) (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). Dörnyei (2009) suggests that the first component of the system, the ideal self could offer a good opportunity for motivation as it is generated through imagination. Ushioda (2011) confirms the connection between L2 learners' current selves or identities and their possible future L2 selves or aspired identities and emphasizes that teachers need to build on the students' own identities and interests in the lessons.

However, if the students are learning a foreign language as L3 from materials in which another language provides the route to success, this can influence the way they create their ideal L3 selves. They need to see themselves first as competent speakers of L2 before they can construct a vision of success in L3. The two ideal selves (L2 and L3) will thus be intertwined, with one serving as a requirement for the other.

In case of culturally and linguistically more heterogenous classes, the students' first languages could also be used as a resource in foreign language teaching as

described in the process of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging comprises the ability and practice to use more than one language for meaning-making and communication, also in the language classroom (García & Wei, 2014). Language learning thus moves away from the monolingual focus and becomes a dynamic, flexible process in which the connections between two (or more) languages are highlighted. When translanguaging, the learners rely on their linguistic repertoire of “languages” from which they select certain features for the sake of meaning-making and communication (García & Wei, 2014). The languages are thus not seen and used as separate entities, and all the languages that the students know are taken advantage of. This practice also ensures equality among the first languages used by the learners in the classroom. Therefore, when translanguaging is applied, the use of the national or majority language as the language of instruction should be reconsidered.

#### 4 Equality for all?

The Finnish education system is highly appreciated and even envied in many parts of the world. The country has been a strong performer in the international PISA test (Programme for International Student Assessment) for decades, featuring equitable and good quality education across the country. Though there is probably more than one factor responsible for this success, the value of equality is generally considered to play a major role (Andere, 2014; Sahlberg, 2011). The importance of equality permeates the Finnish society and gets special attention in education. It is stated in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 16) that “the development of basic education is guided by the goals and extensive principles of equality and equity”. In accordance with this, the Curriculum contains several points that aim at leveling the educational playing field for all students regardless of their linguistic and cultural background. For example, when discussing the special questions of language and culture, it is stated that “the pupil’s cultural background and linguistic capabilities are taken into account in basic education. Each pupil’s linguistic and cultural identity is supported in a versatile manner” (Finnish National Board of Education 2016, p. 90). It should be noted here that it is not only the cultural or linguistic differences that are taken care of this way for the sake of equality; for example, educational and psychological support is provided for students with learning or other social and/or behavioral problems (Sahlberg, 2011, pp. 46–47).

However, research findings reveal that “the Finnish dream of equal education opportunities” (Sahlberg, 2011, p. 13) may not be true in the case of immigrant learners. Based on a web survey among teachers of immigrant students, Suni and Latomaa (2012) pointed out some of the discrepancies that exist between the principles and the realities in immigrant education, calling attention to the fact that many of the instruction practices are tailored for monolingual, i.e. Finnish-speaking pupils. Many of the teachers do not know how to handle immigrant learners and thus see them as a burden (Sunni & Latomaa, 2012; Voipio-Huovinen & Martin, 2012). Voipio-Huovinen and Martin (2012) conducted teacher interviews in Finnish comprehensive schools to explore how teachers perceive their immigrant students’ plurilingualism. They found that “it is only the proficiency in Finnish that is considered important whereas the immigrants’ skills in other languages have no value at all” (Voipio-Huovinen & Martin, 2012, p. 107). In many cases, the norm that the

teachers are following in their teaching and in the assessment of their students is the one set for a native speaker (Sunni & Latomaa, 2012, p. 90). The teachers are not aware of the problems caused by poor Finnish skills; moreover, they tend to overestimate their students' Finnish skills. As the teachers do not realize the obstacles the lack of linguistic fluency might cause, they do not differentiate enough when teaching immigrant children (Sunni & Latomaa, 2012, p. 85).

In theory, the Finnish as Second Language classes should provide support in Finnish for those whose linguistic skills are not strong enough. However, the provision of this instruction is dependent on the municipalities: they can decide whether they offer it at all or not and in what form (Sunni & Latomaa, 2012, p. 74). In addition, the Finnish as Second Language classes do not necessarily offer subject-related and individual-tailored support as the immigrant students who participate in these classes tend to come from different grades (based on the author's experience), which makes it challenging for the teacher to focus on each student's specific, subject-related needs.

If equality is a core value in Finnish education, further measures could be taken to ensure that it is manifested in the teaching of all children, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background. This issue is topical as the number of immigrant students is on the rise: in 2015 around 6% of the pupils in basic education (grades 1–9) spoke a foreign language as their mother tongue, while the same figure was around 4.2% in 2011 (Finnish National Agency of Education, 2017).

The Basic Education Act of 628/1998 (Section 10) states that the language of instruction in Finnish basic education (in non-foreign language content subjects) should be either Finnish or Swedish, but there is also an opportunity to use Sami, Roma, and sign languages. The 1288/1999 Amendment states that

In addition, part of teaching may be given in a language other than the pupils' native language referred to above, provided that this does not risk the pupils' ability to follow teaching. (Basic Education Act 628/1998)

This suggests that the student's ability to follow teaching is considered important when selecting the language(s) of instruction for non-foreign language content subjects in basic education. However, the Basic Education Act does not specify what language should be chosen as the language of instruction in foreign language lessons, which leaves flexibility for the language teachers and also for the textbook authors in the use of languages.

## 5 Data and methods

To explore the role of Finnish in the EFL activity books, two sets of qualitative data were collected to gain multiple perspectives on the phenomenon (Dörnyei 2016, p. 165). This form of method triangulation (cf. Dörnyei, 2016) allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the studied issue. The data was collected in the form of explanatory research design (Bergman, 2011, p. 68): first six workbooks were analyzed to describe the use of Finnish in them, and then four interviews were conducted as a follow-up for the explanation of the textbook-based data.

The research questions were as follows:

- 1) What is the role of Finnish in EFL activity books?
- 2) What are the reasons for its prevalence?



In the spring of 2016, in search for interviewees, the author sent out e-mails to the English teachers who were working in comprehensive schools in a semi-sized town in Central Finland. The exact topic of the interview was not disclosed at that point, but the main theme (EFL textbooks) was mentioned in the e-mails. Altogether three English teachers volunteered for the interview. Two of them (T1 and T2) were subject teachers of English, and one of them (T3) was a class teacher with qualification to teach English. Table 1 shows some background information about the interviewees.

**Table 1.** Interviewees (teachers).

	Age	Gender	Teaching experience
T1	mid 20s	Male	1.5 years
T2	late 20s	Female	5 years
T3	early 30s	Female	6 years

The single-session interviews were semi-structured (cf. Dörnyei, 2016), with questions focusing on the teachers' views on the role of Finnish in the activity books and on their experience using the workbooks in classes. The main interview themes were as follows:

- 1) Teacher's background: teaching experience, grades, groups, subjects
- 2) Types of EFL textbooks used: reasons for choice, views on the books as teaching materials
- 3) Experience teaching non-Finnish children
- 4) Teacher's opinion about the use of Finnish in the activity books
- 5) Teacher's explanation about the reasons for the use of Finnish in the books

A textbook author from Sanoma Pro was also interviewed to find out the publisher's reasons for the use of Finnish in the activity books. All of the interviews were tape recorded, and they lasted for 30–41 minutes.

As the qualitative component was included only to provide explanation for the quantitative findings, the interviews were not transcribed, but were analyzed in the form of a tape analysis (Dörnyei, 2016, pp. 248–249). In practice, it meant listening to the recordings and taking notes of the answers centred around the main themes. In addition, partial transcriptions of those sections were made that were deemed as important (Dörnyei, 2016, p. 249).

The EFL activity books were examined with the method of qualitative content analysis (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Dörnyei, 2016; Krippendorff, 2004). As the first step, a sampling unit of six books was chosen from the larger population of EFL activity books that are in use in Finnish comprehensive schools. The following criteria were used when selecting the books:

- 1) The activity books were in use in spring 2016 (time of the data collection) in Finnish comprehensive schools;
- 2) The books represent two grades from the lower level of elementary education and one grade from the upper level<sup>2</sup>;
- 3) The Finnish textbooks publishers (Otava and Sanoma Pro) are equally represented;
- 4) The workbooks are not designed for children with special needs (e.g. reading difficulties). The activity books selected were thus as follows:

Grade 3: *All Stars 3 Activity book*; *Yippee! 3 Writer*  
 Grade 5: *All Stars 5 Activity book*; *Yippee! 5 Writer*  
 Grade 9: *Spotlight 9 Workbook*; *Top 9 Exercises*.

Before coding the exercises, the structure of the activity books was studied to explore in what parts or sections of the books Finnish was used and for what purpose. As the second step, a sample of 2–5 chapters and additional pages (e.g. extra texts that were in between two chapters, reminder pages, self-evaluation pages) constituting one bigger learning unit was created per book, starting from the first chapter of each book. An exception was made in the case of *Spotlight 9* because in that activity book a learning unit was much longer than in the other workbooks. From that book, Unit 1 (37 pages) was studied. Table 2 shows the list of the books and the pages that provided the data.

**Table 2.** Data selected from the activity books.

Activity book	Publisher	Pages
<i>All Stars 3</i>	Otava	pp. 6–56. (Unit 1, including the introduction, Chapters 1–5 and extra texts)
<i>Yippee! 3</i>	Sanoma Pro	pp. 5–38 (Introductory “My page”, Sections A-E, Chapter 1, Chapter 1 Extra, Chapter 2, Chapter 2 Extra, Reminder A-2)
<i>All Stars 5</i>	Otava	pp. 6–58. (Unit 1, including the introduction, Chapters 1–5 and extra texts)
<i>Yippee! 5</i>	Sanoma Pro	pp. 7–48. (Introductory “My page”, Welcome pages, Chapters 1–3, Reminder 1–3)
<i>Spotlight 9</i>	Sanoma Pro	pp. 8–44. (Unit 1)
<i>Top 9</i>	Otava	pp. 6–50 (Self-evaluation pages, Units 1–4)

The coding of the activity books’ exercises was done manually, and the unit for coding was an exercise in the book. The coding scheme will be presented in section 7. Two main categories emerged during the cyclical act of coding and re-coding (Saldaña, 2013):

- 1) Exercises that required Finnish for understanding and/or completion;
- 2) Exercises that did not require Finnish for understanding and completion.

It must be pointed out that the instructions were in Finnish in all of the books. The coding was thus based on the nature and design of the tasks; i.e. whether they could be solved or not without reading and understanding the Finnish instructions. If an exercise includes some prompts in English (e.g. sentences and the missing words, an example solution in English, crossword puzzle clues in English), or if it involves some images that help in task solving, one does not necessarily need to read and understand the instructions. Figure 2 illustrates an example for such task design.

**19** Etsi laatikosta kaksi sanaa, jotka voi yhdistää verbiin.

a horse	<del>a pen</del>	floorball	a DVD	an email
a lake	a knife	tea	water	<del>a pencil</del>
music	religion	a film	a CD	a river
science	a bike	a book	a fork	badminton

- I write with a pen and a pencil.
- I drink \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I read \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I eat with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I listen to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I ride \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I play \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I watch \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I study \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I swim in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Figure 2.** Task with English prompt in *All Stars 5 Activity book* (Benmergui, Sarisalmi, Peltonen, & Ellonen, 2010, p. 19).

## 6 Main findings

The results of the present study are presented in three sections. First, an overview will be given about the role that the Finnish language plays in the six workbooks. This will be followed by a more detailed investigation of the workbook activities with the aim to explore to what extent they require the knowledge of Finnish. The third section will present the teachers' views on the use of the majority language in the activity books.

### 6.1 Functions of Finnish in the activity books

Regardless of the publisher or the grade of study, Finnish has similar functions in all the activity books. Its most important function is being the language of instructions; the use of English is very limited in instructing the students. There are only two exceptions found in the six workbooks. In *Spotlight 9*, each unit has a section that includes listening comprehension exercises, and that section is labelled as "Listen and learn". However, the instructions given to the listening comprehension tasks are in Finnish. In the same workbook, exercise 19 on page 22 does not have any instruction in Finnish. Instead, "My profile" could be read there, followed by "→Spotlight on writing, workbook page 229", which is an instruction for the learner to check out the task on another page.

Finnish is used in the table of contents in all the workbooks to inform the reader about the grammar to be covered in each chapter. Except for *Spotlight 9*, Finnish appears in the main heading of the table of contents and also serves to provide information about the topic(s) of the chapters, as Table 3 illustrates it below.

**Table 3.** Extract from the table of contents in *All Stars 5 Activity book* (Benmergui, Sarisalmi, Peltonen, & Ellonen, 2010, p. 4).

Kappale	Aihepiiri	Sanonnat ja rakenteet	Sivu
<b>Unit 3</b>			
11. Where were you?	Maita  Ajanilmaisuja	Where was Collin last summer? – He was in Turkey, What was the weather like? – It was hot. Olla-verbin imperfekti: myönteinen, kielteinen, kysymys (Kertaus: omistuspronominit, s-genetiivi)	106

In addition, if symbols are to be used in the workbook (e.g. speech bubbles for pair discussion, earphones for listening comprehension), Finnish explanation clarifies the meaning of these symbols on one of the opening pages.

Grammar is always introduced in Finnish, though it is supplemented by English examples. The vocabulary and phrase lists that include the main terms to be learnt in each chapter are in most cases bilingual, with the terms given first in English and then in Finnish. It is only in the third grade books that images (drawings) are also added to the vocabulary lists (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Extract from the vocabulary list in *All Stars 3 Activity book* (Benmergui, Sarisalmi, Alamikkela, Granlund, & Ritola, 2010, p. 29).

The activity books all have a “My Page” on one of their first pages. This is a page that the learner could fill in with his or her personal details such as name, age, school or even favorite colour. It is usually on this page that the workbook itself greets the learner. In *Yippee!3*, this page is only in English, listing the types of information to be added without any instructions. In the other workbooks, the page is bilingual, with English being used in the personal details form and Finnish in the instructions.

It is worth examining the greetings because this can show how the workbooks address their users. As can be seen in Table 4, the greetings are mostly in English and appear either as first chapter titles or as part of “My Page”.

**Table 4.** Greetings in the activity books.

Activity book	Greetings	Location
<i>All Stars 3</i>	Tervetuloa All Stars – mailmaan!	My Page
<i>Yippee! 3</i>	Welcome to Sandy Bay!	in the title of the first chapter
<i>All Stars 5</i>	Hello!	My Page
<i>Yippee! 5</i>	Welcome to Yippee!	in the title of the first chapter
<i>Spotlight 9</i>	-	-
<i>Top 9</i>	Hello everybody! I’m on Top of the World! [One paragraph in Finnish about the purpose and the structure of the workbook.] Enjoy!	separate page

As the chapter titles in general are in English in all of the reading and activity books, it can be argued that the reason for the English greeting in the title of the opening chapters is its contextual relevance based on the story line. The greeting that appears in “My Page” is in Finnish in *All Stars 3* and in English in *All Stars 5*, which is probably due to the authors’ assumptions about the students’ knowledge of English. Those students who start learning the language in the third grade are not expected to know English greetings, in contrast with the fifth graders. The consistency of using English in all the chapter titles (except for the first chapter in *All Stars 3*) indicates that the language is strongly connected to the story line and the world of the textbook characters.

In *Top 9*, there is a separate greeting page at the very beginning of the book. The greeting “Hello everybody! I’m on Top of the World!” is on the top of this page, accompanied by the image of a dog, giving the impression that it is an English-speaking character. The English greeting is followed by a Finnish paragraph about the purpose and structure of the workbook. The closing is in English “Enjoy!”, with the dog character shown next to it and the signatures of the book authors below it. The dog re-occurs in the workbook, giving advice on language learning, but mostly in Finnish. This combination of languages in the voice of this character and also on the greeting page does not make it obvious what language the authors use to address the learners.

In most of the activity books, the learners can reflect on their own progress in language learning. These sections are in Finnish, and they are arranged either among the exercises or printed on separate pages. The books also contain tips and reminders about the language learning process, but mostly in Finnish.

## 6.2 Tasks with or without Finnish

In the analysis, the exercises that require Finnish skills were further divided into smaller categories with the aim to explore what type of tasks they are and to what

extent they rely on translation skills. The categories within the two main groups were thus created as follows:

I. Tasks requiring Finnish skills

1. Translation of words, phrases and/or sentences from Finnish to English and vice versa
2. Fill-in the gaps exercises that require the translation of words and phrases from Finnish to English
3. Reading comprehension tasks in Finnish (e.g. Finnish questions that need to be answered in Finnish)
4. Matching Finnish and English equivalents (e.g. words, phrases or sentences)
5. Tasks without any prompt (only the Finnish instruction is given)
6. Tasks with some prompt (visual or English), but the task can only be understood after reading the Finnish instructions
7. Tasks without any prompt, but a symbol on the margin indicates the type of exercises (e.g. earphones for listening)

II. Tasks not requiring Finnish skills

1. English prompt helps the learner understand and do the task
2. Visual prompt helps the learner understand and do the task
3. English and visual prompts together help the learner understand and do the task

During the coding, there were only a couple of cases when the category of an exercise was not obvious. For example, there were exercises where some help (e.g. word meaning) was given in Finnish, but it only enhanced task solution as the task could be figured out and solved without this extra help. These tasks were coded under II/1, i.e. tasks where Finnish skills are not required and the prompt in English is enough for understanding. There were also reading comprehension tasks in which the statements were in English, but the *True* and *False* options were abbreviated as “O” and “V”, standing for the Finnish words “oikein” (right) and “väärin” (wrong). To answer correctly, the learner is supposed to be familiar with these abbreviations, so these tasks were coded under I/6: Finnish skills are needed and the English prompt is not enough for figuring out what should be done. The coding scheme and the results of the coding are in Table 5 below.

**Table 5.** Types of exercises in the activity books.

	All Stars 3	Yippee 3	All Stars 5	Yippee 5	Spotlight 9	TOP 9	Total
<b>I. Finnish needed</b>							
1. Translation of words or sentences, no context	5	6	6	11	24	11	<b>63 (9.2%)</b>
2. Translation of words in English context (fill in the gaps)	2	2	1	7	11	14	<b>37 (5.3%)</b>
3. Reading/listening comprehension in Finnish	2	0	2	5	11	5	<b>14 (2.1%)</b>

4. Matching Finnish and English words or sentences	0	1	2	1	0	4	<b>8</b> <b>(1.1%)</b>
5. Finnish instruction, no prompt	11	17	43	14	11	16	<b>112</b> <b>(16.3%)</b>
6. English or visual prompt, but not enough	69	59	57	29	11	31	<b>256</b> <b>(37.2%)</b>
7. Finnish instruction with symbol	10	4	15	3	2	24	<b>58</b> <b>(8.4%)</b>
<b>TOTAL (I)</b>	<b>97</b> <b>(81.5%)</b>	<b>91</b> <b>(81.9%)</b>	<b>126</b> <b>(80.3%)</b>	<b>69</b> <b>(69.7%)</b>	<b>70</b> <b>(70.7%)</b>	<b>105</b> <b>(87.5%)</b>	<b>548</b> <b>(79.4%)</b>
<b>II. Finnish not needed</b>							
1. English prompt	8	7	19	8	22	15	<b>79</b> <b>(11.5%)</b>
2. Visual prompt	0	2	2	4	0	0	<b>8</b> <b>(1.2%)</b>
3. English + visual prompt	14	11	10	18	0	0	<b>53</b> <b>(7.7%)</b>
<b>TOTAL (II)</b>	<b>22</b> <b>(18.5%)</b>	<b>20</b> <b>(18.15)</b>	<b>31</b> <b>(19.7%)</b>	<b>30</b> <b>(30.3%)</b>	<b>22</b> <b>(22.2%)</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(12.5%)</b>	<b>140</b> <b>(20.3%)</b>
<b>TOTAL (I+II)</b>	<b>119</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>111</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>157</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>99</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>99</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>120</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>688</b> <b>(100%)</b>

Considering all the exercises studied in the activity books, only a fifth (20.3%) of them can be solved without any knowledge of Finnish. In these tasks even though the instruction is in Finnish, some English or visual prompt helps the learner to find out what the task is about. In most of the cases (79.4%), the task itself requires the use of Finnish (categories I/1–4), or the Finnish instruction is essential for the understanding of the task (categories I/5–7). Finnish is needed in the translation tasks, fill-in the gaps activities, listening and reading comprehensions, and in exercises where the Finnish and English equivalents have to be matched. If the learner does not have a sound knowledge of Finnish, it is hard to provide solutions to such exercises.

Translation exercises feature in all the activity books and are arranged in different formats, starting from the translation of words to the translation of complete sentences (Figure 4). Many of the translation tasks are in the form of crossword puzzles (Figure 5).

**14 Kirjoita lauseet englanniksi.**

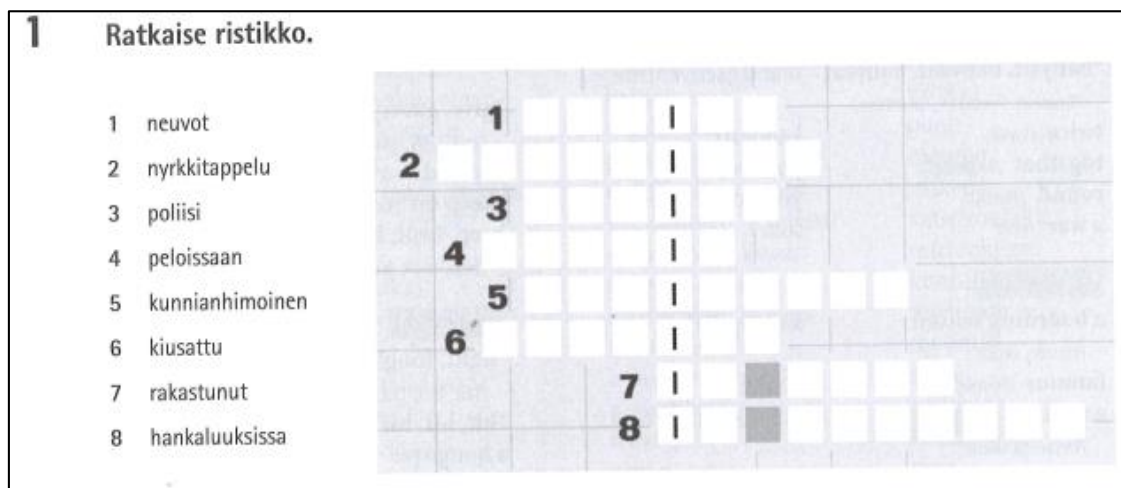
1 Kuinka vanha sinä olet? \_\_\_\_\_

2 Minä olen yhdeksän. \_\_\_\_\_

3 Oletko sinä surullinen? \_\_\_\_\_

4 Ei, en minä ole. \_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 4.** Translation exercise in *Yippee! 3 Writer* (Kuja-Kyyny-Pajula, Pelto, Turpeinen, & Westlake, 2014, p. 31).



**Figure 5.** A crossword puzzle in *Spotlight 9 Workbook* (Haapala, Kangaspunta, Lehtonen, Peuraniemi, Semi, & Westlake, 2014, p. 12).

In the crossword puzzles, there is a lack of other clues; students need to rely on their Finnish knowledge. Even if they know the meanings of the terms in English, they cannot fill in the puzzle. These tasks make students create one-to-one connections between the Finnish and the English words. Some of the crossword puzzles also have some visual prompts, but such cases are rare. A variation of the word and phrase translations are the fill-in the gap exercises in which English sentences need to be completed with the English equivalent of the Finnish word that is listed either right below the gap or next to the sentence (Figure 6).

**G3 Täydennä tulevaisuuden tapahtumista kertovat lauseet.**

Ryan: Do you think it (1) \_\_\_\_\_ soon?  
sataa lunta

Gavin: I don't think so. (2) \_\_\_\_\_ probably \_\_\_\_\_ and play football with my friends.  
Menen

Ryan: What (3) \_\_\_\_\_ tomorrow?  
aiot tehdä

Gavin: (4) \_\_\_\_\_ for Manchester early tomorrow morning.  
Lähden

Ryan: When (5) \_\_\_\_\_ back?  
tulet takaisin

**Figure 6.** Extract from a fill-in the gaps exercise in *Spotlight 9 Workbook* (Haapala et al., 2014, p. 28).

Several reading and listening comprehension tasks are designed so that the students need to answer Finnish questions or they need to decide whether Finnish statements about the text are right or wrong. The rationale behind such activities is that the student should not copy the answers from the text. However, those students who fail to understand the questions properly or have problems producing sentences in Finnish will find such tasks very challenging. Even though reading comprehension can be checked in other ways (cf. Day & Park, 2005), the activity books seem to prefer the translation-based version of it.



There is a relatively high proportion (16.3%) of “instruction-only” tasks, which means that the instruction is given without any prompts. Such instructions are, for example, to write sentences in the notebook. A variation of this type of instruction is the case when a symbol is added (e.g. earphones for a listening task), which can give an instant hint to the learner about the type of the activity.

Having some English context and/or some visual help in an exercise is not necessarily informative for the students (see Figure 7).

**7a Kirjoita Tendajin tarinasta puuttuvat sanat englanniksi.  
Käytä tekstiä ja mielikuvitustasi.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is Tendaji Abasi and 2. \_\_\_\_\_.

I live in a 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Olchani with my 4. \_\_\_\_\_.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ seven of us: my 6. \_\_\_\_\_,

my 7. \_\_\_\_\_ and 8. \_\_\_\_\_.

Our house is always 9. \_\_\_\_\_ and 10. \_\_\_\_\_.

I enjoy 11. \_\_\_\_\_. I have always liked

12. \_\_\_\_\_. My favourite subject at school is 13. \_\_\_\_\_.

One of my dreams is to 14. \_\_\_\_\_. At weekends I often

15. \_\_\_\_\_ with my friends. Last weekend was the best because...

**Figure 7.** An exercise with English prompt in *Top 9 Exercises* (Blom, Chandler, Lumiala, Pajunen, & Raitala, 2013, p. 12).

If there is no example given, it can be hard for the non-Finnish learners to figure out what the task is about. Exercises with this kind of task design amounted to 37.2% of all the coded items, which meant they constituted the greatest category in the data. In such cases, the teacher can help the child by showing an example solution, but it would be better to have an example in the workbook as well to indicate what and how should be done.

### 6.3 Interviews

T1 was teaching from third grade to sixth grade and occasionally substituted in the upper level of a comprehensive school (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade). He had experience teaching immigrant, non-Finnish children, but also admitted that there were only 2-3 of them on average in his groups. In T1's view, the reason for the extensive use of L1 in the EFL workbooks was the grammar explanations in Finnish. He emphasized that it was a good system that the activity books used the same terms in the grammar explanations and in the instructions. This way there was consistency in the wording, which helped the students complete the tasks. He pointed out that Finnish had an important role in clarifying meanings during the learning process. Children feel more comfortable if a connection is established between their mother tongue and English. Regarding the children whose L1 was not Finnish, he explained that sometimes they complained of not understanding some of the Finnish words, but so far this had not been an issue:

So far the immigrant kids have been very smart, so if they don't understand something, they ask, usually, and no, the parents have not contacted me. (T1)

He also added that he could imagine teaching English from a monolingual book or workbook. However, he called attention to the risk that in such a case the parents might feel uncomfortable because they will not be able to understand the instructions and the grammar explanations. For the sake of the parents, it is important to use L1 in the activity books because the children naturally turn to their parents if they need help with the home assignments. T1 emphasized the need for a background helper when a child starts learning a new language:

You need a good supporter in order to learn a new language. (T1)

He mentioned that even in the upper levels of comprehensive education (grades 7–9), some students need background supporters in the family who can help them at home with the assignments. But, in his opinion, students could manage using workbooks with bilingual instructions in the upper grades when their English skills are well-grounded.

T2 was a subject teacher of English, with experience teaching in the lower and upper grades of Finnish comprehensive education. She explained that in her classes there were only one or two children with immigrant background. She did not see it as a problem that the instructions were in Finnish in the workbooks:

It really has not been even questioned. There are not too many migrant students here. (T2)

She could imagine teaching from monolingual workbooks, but only in the upper levels (7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades), when the children's English skills are good enough to understand the instructions in the foreign language.

At the time of the data collection, T3 was teaching English in the third and fifth grades in a school located in a residential area where many immigrants live. She explained that in her groups there were on average 5–7 non-Finnish children. These students often had problems reading and writing in Finnish. She also added that some of the instructions were so complicated in the EFL workbooks that even Finnish children could not understand them:

The Finnish system of writing instructions is just too complicated. The instructions contain abstract, grammatical terms, for example "komparatiivi" [comparative] or "superlatiivi" [superlative]. The texts are long and there are many things in them. (T3)

The way T3 helped the students was by explaining and rephrasing the instructions in her classes. She was also referring to the "easy readers", i.e. EFL workbooks with simplified Finnish instructions. If she notices that there is a student who cannot follow the workbook instructions, she orders the simplified version. These publications also have Finnish as the language of instructions and contain several translation tasks, but the wording is simplified and the page structure is designed to meet the needs of students with reading difficulties.

To summarize the teachers' views, it can be stated that they do not see the use of Finnish in the activity books as a serious problem. The majority language serves the needs of the Finnish students and their parents because it ensures task comprehension and enhances independent learning. T1 and T3, who had experience teaching non-Finnish children, admitted that there might be cases when immigrant learners cannot follow the instructions or do the assignments, but such cases are handled by the teacher.

At the time of the data collection, the textbook author was also an active subject teacher of English, so when answering the questions sometimes she integrated her experience as a teacher. In her view, the workbooks are only rarely used at school, as the lessons are devoted to oral practice:

If there is a speaking exercise, we use it, but we don't spend time asking them to fill in a text. They can do that at home. [...] When I was at school we did a lot of exercises from the workbook, but nowadays, especially here, teaching is more focused on oral skills, spoken language, so the kids do the written exercises at home.

The author deemed it important that the instructions and the grammar explanations be in the students' L1 because children need to understand the tasks and the rules clearly. She also called attention to the parents' role:

If the parents can't speak English, they can't help their children with the instructions.

She said that one of the objectives of the activity books was independent work. If the instructions were not in Finnish, the children would come to class saying they did not know what to do in the home assignment.

Regarding the translation tasks, the author explained that these exercises were meant to help vocabulary acquisition. The reading books provide texts in which the new words are introduced, and the translation tasks provide opportunities to work with the new vocabulary. When translating sentences from Finnish to English, for example, the learners combine the words in sentences.

In the author's view, it is the task and responsibility of the teacher to pay attention to the needs of the immigrant children and notice if they have problems understanding the instructions or completing the exercises in the workbook. In such cases, the teacher should work together with the S2 teachers (teachers of Finnish as a second language) and jointly decide how to help these children.

The interviews with the teachers and the textbook author revealed the importance of the teacher's role in paying attention to those learners who are not so fluent in the majority education language. A closer look at the activity books confirms the need for this as many of the workbook tasks are based on the assumption that the learner is fluent in Finnish.

## 7 Discussion

The results show that the target reader and user of the EFL activity books is the Finnish native speaker student. As a national and at the same time the majority language, Finnish is the language of instruction in all the books studied. It is the language of the translation and vocabulary exercises and also that of the grammar explanations. The EFL workbooks in their present format thus set the knowledge of the Finnish language as a condition for the acquisition of English. While this might not be an issue for the majority of the learners, it can cause problems for the growing group of immigrant and non-Finnish students who are put at a clear disadvantage by the strong presence of Finnish in EFL textbooks. This de facto inequality is furthermore at odds with the value of equality stated in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016).

Therefore, the author suggests that the use of Finnish as the language instruction in the EFL textbooks should be reduced and complemented by the use

of the target language. One solution could be the use of bilingual (Finnish and English) instructions in the activity books in “alakoulu” (grades 2–6) so that

- 1) the lack of fluency in Finnish could not prevent task comprehension,
- 2) both the Finnish and the non-native Finnish learners could acquire English vocabulary from the instructions,
- 3) the Finnish instructions could still help the Finnish students and their parents to understand the tasks.

Two of the interviewed teachers also supported the idea of introducing the English instructions gradually in the textbooks. This way the activity books in grades 7–9 could have the instructions in English only as by then the learners’ English skills should be good enough to understand them. As it was pointed out earlier, the use of the target language in the instructions can enhance the language acquisition process by exposing the learners to repetitive language chunks (cf. Ellis, 2005). If the target language is used in a meaningful, communicative way, the learners acquire not only the semantic, but also the pragmatic meanings (Ellis, 2005; Tomlinson, 2008; Turnbull, 2001; Vellenga, 2004).

The exercises could also make more use of images and rely more on the learner’s creativity when guessing the meaning from context (cf. Nikolov, 2016). The number of exercises requiring translation could be reduced and replaced by a greater variety of more creative tasks. This way the publications would move away from the presently dominant Finnish-English connection, which is also in line with the deep-rooted ideology of the national language functioning as a taken-for-granted and expected norm, which defines the Finnish nation (Leppänen & Pahta, 2012).

Instead of building on one particular L1 in the EFL textbook activities and in the assessment practices, more flexibility could be achieved by applying and realizing the principle of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014). By modifying the EFL classes in a way that the students’ linguistic repertoire is taken advantage of, the equality of all the languages that are used in the group could be ensured. If the activities and the teaching materials were not based on the connections between the majority language and the English language but would leave scope for bringing in other languages (but at least all the first languages), real multi- and plurilingual competencies and identities could be constructed. This might be a challenging task for an EFL teacher, but not an impossible one, if there are good materials available. Future research could focus on the development of EFL teaching materials that build on the students’ diverse linguistic repertoires.

The interviewed teachers and the textbook author did not seem to be aware of the problems that locally published EFL textbooks might cause for the immigrant learners, because they saw the phenomenon mainly from the perspective of a Finnish native-speaker learner of English. This confirms the findings of Suni and Latomaa (2012) and Voipio-Huovinen and Martin (2012), who came to the conclusion that even though at the policy level Finland promotes multilingualism, the policies are not necessarily followed and implemented in educational practice. Both of the former-mentioned studies point out that the teachers are usually not aware of the difficulties that immigrant learners face in Finnish schools, where “the only norm to be followed is that for native speakers” (Suni & Latomaa, 2012, p. 90). This is surprising in a country where equality is a core value and cultural diversity is valued as richness in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 16). The teaching of immigrant and non-Finnish students should involve the catering for their

communication and linguistic needs both in educational instruction and assessment practices. The Curriculum also calls attention to versatile assessment practices in the case of immigrant learners:

In the assessment of pupils with an immigrant background or pupils who speak a foreign language as their mother tongue, the linguistic background and the developing Finnish or Swedish skills of each pupil are accounted for. In order for a pupil to be able to demonstrate their progress and achievement regardless of any deficiencies in their Finnish or Swedish skills, particular attention should be focused on versatile and flexible assessment methods that are suited to the pupil's situation. (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016, p. 51)

The interviews made for the present study revealed that one of the reasons why the teachers do not notice the difficulties of migrant learners is that neither the students, nor the parents complain about the use of Finnish in the activity books. It should be noted that the fact that immigrant children or their parents do not contact the language teachers to ask for help does not mean that problems do not exist. Miklos, the child introduced at the beginning of the paper, did not complain to the teacher either because he wanted to hide his difficulties with Finnish from his classmates. Further research should be done on the experience of immigrant children who are learning foreign languages through a second language from this respect. The results and corresponding solutions could be integrated in the training of future teachers of English.

It would be good if the teacher trainees (not only the future EFL teachers) could learn how to design their teaching and assessment practices for linguistically and culturally heterogeneous groups of learners. This way the (linguistic) support of immigrant children would not be limited to the responsibility of the Finnish as Second Language (FSL) teacher, but all the teachers could be involved in the process.

## 8 Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the role of the majority language, Finnish in the EFL activity books published in Finland. It was found that Finnish is the language of the instructions in all of the workbooks studied. In addition, this is the language in which the grammar rules are explained and the vocabulary lists are introduced. Finnish also has an informative role in the table of contents and in the description of the symbols used in the books. Moreover, this is the language in which the learners can reflect on their own language learning. The majority of the workbook exercises require the knowledge of Finnish either for comprehension or solution. Only a fraction of the tasks are designed so that they can be completed without any knowledge of the Finnish language.

The reasons for the prevalence of Finnish in the activity books were highlighted by the teachers and the textbook author in the interviews. The use of Finnish benefits most of the learners because this way they can clearly understand the home assignments and do them independently at home. The use of L1 is also good for the Finnish parents, who can help their children if they do not understand the tasks. The interviewed teachers did not mention any cases where immigrant children had serious problems following the workbook instructions or using Finnish in the home assignments. All of the teachers emphasized the role of the teacher in case such problems occur. One teacher mentioned the use of the workbooks designed for learners with reading difficulties as an option in such cases.

The present study made suggestions on raising EFL teachers' awareness regarding the needs of immigrant students. It was also recommended that English as a target language should be included in the instructions gradually during the years of basic education to ensure that both Finnish and immigrant learners understand them. It was pointed out that native speakers of Finnish would also benefit from this arrangement because the students could acquire English terms and phrases in a meaningful, communicative way. Especially in the case of English, which functions as a lingua franca in Finland and is used in several contexts (Laitinen, 2015; Leppänen & Nikula, 2007; Moore & Varantola, 2005; Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003, 2008), the English instruction would probably not seem unnatural or hard to understand either for the children and or for the parents. A further solution could be the development of teaching methods and materials that make it possible to integrate all the students' first languages in the form of translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014).

The problem, however, goes beyond having trouble in understanding and solving the workbook exercises. The way the immigrant learners relate to English and imagine their future selves as successful speakers of English (cf. Dörnyei, 2005, 2009, Ushioda, 2011) might also be affected by how they manage as speakers of Finnish. If a language functions as a gate-keeper to the acquisition of another language, it might affect the learner's feelings and attitudes to language learning in general and to the languages in specific.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> A pseudonym is used.

<sup>2</sup> The aim was to choose grades that represent different stages in Finnish basic education. At the time of the data collection, it was the third grade in which the students could start learning English, which explains the author's selection of third-grade books. Grade 5 was chosen for the reason that Miklos, the author's son was enrolled in this grade. Grade 9 was also included because this is the final year of Finnish basic education.

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