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**EVALUATION OF *MOOMIN LANGUAGE*
SCHOOL IN EARLY ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHING**

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ABSTRACT

Laura Heinsuo: Evaluation of *Moomin Language School* in early English language teaching

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This thesis analyzes and evaluates the content of a language learning service Moomin Language School from the perspective of early English language teaching. Although it seems that all the time more children begin to learn their first foreign language at an earlier age, there is still very little research on it. Therefore, the motivation of this study is not only to produce an evaluation of Moomin Language School but to also gain more knowledge of the field of early English language teaching. The role of evaluation of English language teaching materials is crucial in enhancing and developing more suitable and appropriate language teaching materials for young learners. The first objective of the study was to examine the content of the first year of Moomin Language School curriculum to see how the service takes into consideration the young age of the learners. The second objective of the study was to investigate what kinds of attitudes and experiences the users of Moomin Language School have of the service in the context of early language teaching. The third objective was to make suggestions for improving the service based on the results of these analyses.

In order to form an objective evaluation, the study combines quantitative and qualitative methods, although the analyses focus on the qualitative approach due to the nature of the material. The study is divided into two types of analysis. First, for analyzing the first 50 lesson plans in Moomin Language School curriculum and the application, a language teaching material analysis was executed through a close reading of the lesson plans and the application. In the quantitative analysis, the number of themes, theme-related lessons, activities, and activity types were counted, and thus the emphasis of the material could be assessed. In the qualitative analysis of the curriculum, themes, vocabulary, sequencing of lessons, and activity content were analyzed from the perspective of early English language teaching to assess their age-appropriacy and suitability.

Second, for analyzing the attitudes and experiences of the users of Moomin Language School, a qualitative survey was conducted. An electronic questionnaire was used to gather the data, in order to reach as many participants as possible. 18 participants answered the questionnaire; 16 from Finland and 2 from Greece. The questionnaire consisted of three sections and 17 questions, which combined dichotomous yes/no questions to gather information about attitudes, 5-point Likert scale questions to evaluate the content of Moomin Language School, and open-ended questions to give the participants a platform in which they could express their views more deliberately. Through these question types, both quantitative and qualitative data could be gathered. Yet, due to the low number of participants, the focus is on the qualitative approach, and the open-ended answers are emphasized in the analysis to gain a more comprehensive view of the perceptions of the participants.

Firstly, according to the analysis of the content of the first year of Moomin Language School curriculum, the material is prominently age-appropriate and suitable to young English learners, although there is no culture teaching as recommended by the national core curriculum, and the sequencing of themes as well as the challenge level of vocabulary and activities fluctuate. Secondly, the analysis of attitudes of the users of Moomin Language School shows that all 18 participants had a positive attitude towards Moomin Language School as a tool in early language teaching. Still, many participants expressed suggestions for improvement, and for instance malfunction of the application, challenge level and age-appropriacy of the content arose as central factors from the answers given by the participants. From the basis of the results it can be concluded that Moomin Language School takes the young age of the learners into consideration well, and the 18 participants who use the service have a positive attitude towards its use in early language teaching. However, there are elements that are yet to be refined in the service to meet the needs of the learners at each stage of development.

Keywords: early English language teaching, early language teaching, English language teaching material, material evaluation, digital language learning

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Tämä tutkielma analysoi ja arvioi kielenopetuspalvelu Moomin Language Schoolin oppimateriaalia varhennetun englannin kielen opetuksen näkökulmasta. Vaikka yhä useammat lapset aloittavat ensimmäisen vieraan kielen opiskelunsa nuoremmalla iällä, varhennetusta kielenopetuksesta on vielä suhteellisen vähän tutkimusta. Tämän tutkimuksen lähtökohta onkin tuottaa Moomin Language Schoolin materiaalianalyysin lisäksi lisää tietoa varhennetusta englannin kielen opetuksesta. Varhennetun englannin kielen opetusmateriaalin analysointi ja arviointi on tärkeä osa opetusmateriaalien kehitystä, ja se auttaa havainnoimaan opetusmateriaalien sopivuutta varhennetun kielenopetuksen kontekstissa. Tutkielman ensimmäinen tavoite oli analysoida Moomin Language Schoolin ensimmäisen vuoden opetussuunnitelmaa, ja tarkastella, miten palvelu ottaa huomioon oppijoiden nuoren iän. Tutkielman toinen tavoite oli tutkia millaisia asenteita ja kokemuksia Moomin Language Schoolin käyttäjillä on palvelusta varhennetun kielenopetuksen kontekstissa. Näiden analyysien tuloksista pystytään etsimään parannusehdotuksia palvelun kehittämiseen, ja niistä saadaan tietoa varhennetun Englannin kielenopetuksesta ja siinä käytettävästä materiaalista.

Jotta analyysi ja arviointi olisi mahdollisimman objektiivinen, tutkimus yhdisteli määrällistä ja laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää. Tutkimusmateriaalin ominaisuuksien vuoksi painotus on kuitenkin laadullisessa analyysissä. Tutkimus on jaettu kahteen analyysityyppiin. Moomin Language Schoolin opetussuunnitelman ensimmäisen vuoden 50 tuntisuunnitelman ja sovelluksen analysointiin käytettiin kielenopetusmateriaalianalyysia, joka toteutettiin lähiluvun avulla. Määrällistä analyysimetodia käytettiin laskemaan, kuinka monta teemaa, teemoittain linkitettyä tuntisuunnitelmaa, aktiviteettia sekä eri aktiviteettityyppejä opetussuunnitelma tarjoaa. Näin pystyttiin tarkastelemaan opetussuunnitelman painotukset. Laadullisessa analyysissä opetussuunnitelman teemoja, sanastoa, tuntisuunnitelmien järjestystä ja aktiviteettien sisältöä analysoitiin varhennetun englannin kielen opetuksen näkökulmasta. Tämän analyysin avulla pystyttiin päättämään oppimateriaalin asianmukaisuus ja sopivuus nuorille englannin oppijoille.

Moomin Language Schoolin käyttäjien asenteiden ja kokemusten analysointiin käytettiin laadullista kartoitusta. Kyselylomake lähetettiin sähköisesti, ja 18 vastaajaa osallistui kyselyyn: 16 Suomesta ja 2 Kreikasta. Kyselylomake koostui 3 osiosta ja 17 kysymyksestä. Kysymykset koostuivat kyllä/ei -kysymyksistä, joilla kerättiin tietoa asenteista, 5-kohdan skaalakysymyksistä, joiden avulla vastaajat arvioivat Moomin Language Schoolin sisältöä, sekä avoimista kysymyksistä, joiden avulla vastaajat pystyivät kertomaan näkemyksistään yksityiskohtaisemmin. Näiden kysymystyyppien avulla määrällistä ja laadullista tietoa pystyttiin keräämään. Matalan vastausprosentin vuoksi pääpaino on laadullisen tiedon analysoinnissa, jotta kyselyn vastaajien asenteista saataisiin mahdollisimman kokonaisvaltainen kuva.

Analyysistä voidaan päätellä, että Moomin Language Schoolin ensimmäisen vuoden opetussuunnitelman sisältö on asianmukaista ja sopivaa nuorille englannin oppijoille. Tosin uuden opetussuunnitelman mukaista kulttuurinopetusta ei ole tuotu esiin materiaalissa, ja teemojen järjestys sekä sanaston ja aktiviteettien vaatavuustaso vaihtelee. Moomin Language Schoolin käyttäjien asennetutkimuksen perusteella kaikki 18 vastaajaa suhtautuivat positiivisesti palvelun käyttöä kohtaan varhennetun kielen opetuksessa. Monet vastaajat kuitenkin antoivat parannusehdotuksia, ja esimerkiksi sovelluksen toimintahäiriöt, oppimateriaalin vaatavuustaso sekä asianmukaisuus eri ikätasolle nousivat esiin vastauksissa. Tutkimuksen tuloksista voidaan päätellä, että Moomin Language School huomioi oppijoiden nuoren iän monipuolisten opetusmateriaalien ja -metodien kautta. Kyselyyn osallistuneet vastaajat, jotka käyttävät palvelua, suhtautuvat sen käyttöön varhennetussa kielenopetuksessa positiivisesti. Tulokset kuitenkin osoittavat, että palvelua tulisi kehittää, jotta se tukisi paremmin eri kehitysvaiheissa olevien lasten kielenoppimista.

Avainsanat: englannin kielen opettaminen, varhennettu kielenopetus, englannin kielen opetusmateriaali, materiaalianalyysi, digitaalinen kielenoppiminen

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1. Introduction

Language competence is an imperative skill in the globalized world. Through globalization languages and cultures intertwine and create platforms for international communication. This multitude of languages forms a need for a common language that can be used in any given situation, and often this common language is English. Indeed, the essential role of English as a global language positions it as a school subject in a pivotal place in the field of language education, which is one of the reasons why there has been a growing interest in early English language learning research as well (Nunan 2017, 68). It is evident that in today's job market fluency in English has become an absolute necessity, rather than a special skill. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to find new and efficient teaching methods through which fluency in English could be achieved. There is a widespread belief that the earlier children start to learn a foreign language, the better (Nunan 2017, 70). This view has influenced policymakers to push the start of foreign language learning at an earlier age.

The Finnish National Agency for Education, which creates the guidelines for education in Finland, has recognized the necessity for language competence, and it has made significant changes to the country's language education system: all 1st graders started learning their first foreign language from the start of 2020 (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 3-4). This means, that children start learning their first foreign language – called the A1 language, which is most often English – two years earlier than before. Therefore, English teaching begins around the age of 7, whereas before 3rd graders around the age of 9 have begun studying their first foreign language (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency 2012, 10). According to a report published by Eurostat in 2012, most children in Europe begin learning their first foreign language between ages 6 and 9. This indicates that Finland is following the tendency of other European countries to start teaching foreign language studies at an earlier age (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency 2012, 10). In this thesis, I have chosen to use the term “foreign language” as opposed to using the term “second

language”, when discussing English language teaching, since English is taught in Finland mainly as a foreign language, and not as a second language.

As children develop physically and cognitively at a very fast pace, the foreign language teaching methods that have suited English teaching purposes of 3rd graders will not function as well with 1st or 2nd graders. Young learners follow “a series of developmental stages, and at each stage, their cognitive processing, ‘world view’, socialization and attitude to others, attention span and myriad other factors will change” (Nunan 2017, 77). This poses substantial challenges for language teachers in Finland to find suitable pedagogical tools and appropriate material for teaching English to young learners. The pace at which education authorities introduce requirements for foreign language learning often exceeds the pace at which teacher education or suitable teaching material evolves (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 39). There has been a lot of discussion as to who would be the best choice to teach English to young learners: language teachers or primary teachers? Meanwhile, English language teaching (ELT) materials are expected to adapt to the needs of the time and offer support to teachers who are now facing challenges due to the transition (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 40).

As language competence has increased its prominence in the new core curriculum, so has the inescapable presence of digital technology. The new national core curriculum of Finland emphasizes the importance of versatile use of different learning environments as well as information retrieval – both of which require knowledgeable use of information technology (Opetushallitus 2014). The digitalization of schools and education has happened at great speed, and it has brought with it a wide range of new pedagogical opportunities. However, this change brings forth issues. Chapelle (2008, 585) states that “the question is how computer technologies can be introduced and used to help learners to develop their second language ability”. Digital technology offers a wide variety of options but putting them in efficient use requires new pedagogical tools and approaches to digital language learning.

The transition creates a need for early English language teaching material that would combine all the requirements that young English language learners as well as digitality present to English language teaching. Moomin Language School is a language learning service created by Playvation in 2015, that seeks to offer a solution to these issues. The service is designed by both language specialists and early learning professionals. It has been updated in the past couple of years, and at this time version 2.0 is in use. Moomin Language School is a service that includes a website in which there are lesson plans and printable material for the teacher, as well as a digital application for the children to play with. It is stated that Moomin Language School service is suitable for all children over 3 years old: it can be used in early English language teaching in kindergartens and elementary schools (Playvation Ltd., Promotor Solutions Oy). The fundamental idea behind Moomin Language School is to teach languages to children when they are at their most receptive stage to learn a language through versatile and child-friendly methods. The child completes “game-like exercises” on the app daily for approximately 5-15 minutes, and teachers, as well as parents, can follow the child’s progress through online reports. The weekly sessions are instructed by the teacher, who can access readymade lesson plans and teaching material on a webpage called Moomin Language School Tool.

This thesis aims to analyze and evaluate Moomin Language School service as English language teaching material from the perspective of early English language teaching (EELT). The role of evaluation of English language learning materials is crucial in enhancing and developing more suitable and appropriate language teaching materials for young learners. Tomlinson (2016, 2) argues that ELT materials must be examined from multiple perspectives to attain a comprehensive picture of their influence, so that the materials can be developed further. This focus was chosen, because examining new digitally enhanced English teaching materials is extremely relevant at the time, as it provides relevant and necessary information on the modern language teaching materials that are now in transition.

This thesis aims to fill the gap in the research of EELT materials and their evaluation. Although it seems that all the time more children begin to learn their first foreign language at an earlier age, there is still very little research on it. Indeed, second language acquisition research has paid very little attention to especially preliterate children learning a language (Leśniewska & Pichette 2016, 18). Hence, the motivation of this study is not only to produce an evaluation of the service but to also gain more knowledge of the field of EELT. Research concerning the quality of EELT materials is limited, as the field is at the time quite new (Ghosn 2019, 380-381). Consequently, as Moomin Language School is a rather new service, no previous research has been done on it from the perspective of early English language teaching material evaluation. In addition to providing information about the service in question, it is in the interest of this thesis to provide information about suitable teaching materials and methods that could be used in EELT in general, as well. Thus, the results of the study can be utilized to design and enhance digital language teaching tools targeted to young learners. Hence, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does Moomin Language School as EELT material take into consideration the young age of the learners and the regulations of the Finnish National Agency for Education?

1.1. Is the selection of the thematic and linguistic content age-appropriate, suitable, relevant, and interesting to young learners? Is it organized appropriately?

1.2. In which ways is the linguistic content practiced and does it suit the language learning process of young children at each developmental stage? Are the methods functional and easy to apply to different contexts?

2. What attitudes and experiences do the users of Moomin Language School have of using the service in early English language teaching?

3. How could Moomin Language School be improved on the basis of the results of this thesis?

The study hypothesizes that Moomin Language School takes the young age of the learners into consideration by offering child-friendly materials and activities and that the users' attitudes and

experiences of the service are mostly positive. However, it is expected that the analysis will reveal elements in the service that require modifications, and thus specific and concrete issues in the service are brought forward.

The study is divided into two sets of analyses. First, the content of Moomin Language School is analyzed, and this part of the thesis aims to answer research questions 1, 1.1, and 1.2. In order to conduct an objective evaluation of the material, I will also examine the attitudes and experiences of the users of Moomin Language School – that is, the teachers and educators who use Moomin Language School to teach English in early childhood education contexts. This part of the thesis answers research question number 2. The attitudes and experiences are investigated to discover how the service could be concretely enhanced to suit its purpose better and to see whether the evaluation by the users coincides with the language teaching material analysis done in the first part of the analysis. Finally, by combining the answers to research questions 1, 1.1., 1.2, and 2, an answer to the last research question, how the service could be improved, can be gathered.

The thesis is divided into 6 sections. First, as this study is located in the fields of English language teaching (ELT) and early English language teaching (EELT), the most relevant concepts and research related to this study in these fields are introduced. Next, the material is presented in more detail, and the methods for the analyses are explained. The analysis is divided into two sections as mentioned above, and they are followed by a discussion of the results and the study, ending in a conclusion that summarizes the main findings.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the most relevant concepts, theories, and research are introduced. First, some key concepts in second language acquisition are presented. Second, the most relevant aspects of early language are introduced, followed by a discussion of suitable EELT materials and teaching methods, and an introduction to the regulations of the Finnish National Agency for Education. Third, central

concepts in the field of digital and game-based language learning are presented. Fourth, relevant research in ELT material evaluation and analysis is introduced, followed by an introduction to previous research related to the study.

2.1. Second language acquisition

Second language acquisition is one of the most central terms in the field of language teaching. Second language acquisition refers to the gradual and systematic process of acquiring a new language through natural communication and interaction with others (Yule 2010, 187). Language learning, on the other hand, refers to a more consciously occurring process that often takes place in an institutional context. In other words, second language acquisition happens more unconsciously than second language learning, which in turn requires some amount of effort from the learner. It seems that subconsciously occurring second language acquisition results in more proficient language competence. Although the acquisition process happens somewhat subconsciously, the process of acquisition follows a certain pattern, and it “is not haphazard but systematic” (Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan 2008, 383). The systematic nature of the acquisition process requires that language teaching methods complement the acquisition pattern as well. Although SLA is strongly linked to the field of language teaching, it does not offer simple solutions to determine which teaching methods are best (Cook 2008, 11-12). The goal of SLA research is to “describe how people learn and use another language” (Cook 2008, 9). Thus, SLA research provides relevant information about how people learn a second language, and this information is essential when developing English language teaching materials and methods.

A crucial factor that concerns second language acquisition is the concept of input. Input is the language that the learner is exposed to in the surrounding environment (Yule 2010, 192). It is impossible to learn a language without receiving input. However, for the input to contribute to the second language development of the learner, it must be actively processed to “help make connections between particular language forms and their meaning” (Verspoor, Lowie and De Bot 2009, 62).

Encoding input requires active engagement from the learner. In addition, it is said that the language input must be comprehensible enough (Yule 2010, 192; Beatty 2012, 15-16). This means, that with beginners the input should contain simple sentence structures and vocabulary, for example. However, the simplicity of language does not mean a lower quality of the level of input. “Quality of input is likely to be of as much importance as quantity and type of input, particularly with regard to the language proficiency and pedagogical skills of teachers” (Graham 2017, 928). Although preliterate children have not yet developed a very wide vocabulary or grammatical skills, they still require high-quality input on behalf of the teacher. In relation to input, output has a tremendous impact on second language acquisition as well (Beatty 2012, 15-16). Output is the language that the language learner in turn produces, and it is claimed that the meaningfulness of interaction plays an important role in acquisition (Yule 2010, 192). In language teaching, this detail can be utilized by creating meaningful opportunities for communication for the learner, so that they feel that the interaction is authentic and purposeful.

Moreover, language learner’s personal characteristics and affective factors contribute greatly to the second language acquisition process. Cook (2008, 6) explains that second language acquisition research has moved its focus from language produced by the learner to learners themselves. The learners’ background and their individual characteristics are taken into consideration, to analyze the contexts in which second language acquisition takes place. A learner is never a *tabula rasa*, and the cognitive and affective factors have a significant influence on the second language acquisition process (Singleton 2014, 28; Cook 2008, 8-9). A supportive and encouraging learning environment is more helpful to learners than an environment that fixates on errors and requires perfection (Yule 2010, 192). Second language acquisition benefits from a safe learning environment, in which the learner feels supported and relaxed. Indeed, the emotions of a learner are in a key role when learning and producing utterances in a second language. However, if the emotions of the learner are negative, in a worst-case scenario, they can function as barriers to language acquisition (Yule 2010, 188).

Furthermore, the teaching methods and material have an immense impact on second language acquisition; negative emotions do not always stem from teaching methods, but they can also be the result of boring textbooks, unsuitable classrooms, or tiredness (Yule 2010, 188-189). This is one of the reasons why further improving and developing ELT materials is extremely vital in the field of foreign language teaching.

2.2. Early language

This chapter focuses on issues in early language development and introduces in more detail the most prominent topics in early English language teaching (EELT). First, early language development and the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) are introduced. Second, the developmental stages of children are briefly presented, before diving into the detailed description of issues in early English language teaching in terms of content and teaching methods.

Moomin Language School is designed to function as a tool for language learning for young children in kindergartens and elementary schools (Playvation Ltd., Promentor Solutions Oy). This period is called “the critical period” in language development. “During childhood, there is a period when the human brain is most ready to receive input and learn a particular language. This is sometimes called the ‘sensitive period’ for language acquisition but is more generally known as the critical period” (Yule 2010, 165). The critical period is also one of the most central concepts in second language learning (Singleton 2014, 18). Furthermore, it can be argued that it is never too early to start learning a new language since children actively process the input they hear long before they start to produce speech themselves (Yule 2010, 172.). As early as at the age of three, the vocabulary of the child increases immensely up to hundreds of words, and the pronunciation evolves to resemble the speech of adults (Yule 2010, 175). By this time, the input that the child is exposed to can have a great influence on the child’s speech development. For these reasons, early foreign language learning can have a significant influence on the child’s language development.

The critical period hypothesis, or CPH, claims that after a certain age learning a new language becomes more difficult. “The CPH claims that natural language acquisition is available to young children, but it is limited in older adolescents and adults. Although the existence of age effects is widely accepted, many applied linguists disagree on whether age effects are consistent with a CP” (Nikolov and Djigunovic 2006, 235-236). The critical period hypothesis has been widely criticized due to its controversial nature (Nunan 2017, 71), and the effects of the early start are not “consistently positive” (Singleton 2014, 19).

The notion that there is a critical period for language acquisition that is governed by brain lateralization is controversial. In the first place, while it is uncommon for individuals to develop near native-speaking competence in a second language post-puberty, it is by no means unheard of. Neuroscience also indicates that the metaphor of brain plasticity may not be appropriate, that, in fact, the brain retains its ‘plasticity’ well beyond puberty. (Nunan 2017, 71)

For example, teenagers have proven to be very effective second language (L2) learners, even more so than for instance 7-year-olds (Yule 2010, 188). Despite the criticism towards the Critical Period Hypothesis, it appears that an early start to L2 has a positive impact on the phonological skills of the child and can help develop a native-like accent. If the aim of the language teaching is to achieve a native-like accent, then an early start to L2 makes sense. However, achieving a native-like accent should not be considered the only goal in EELT, and instead, the aim should be to support the learner’s growth into an efficient and capable foreign language user. The critical period hypothesis has received its share of criticism, but be that as it may, the current trend seems to state: the earlier, the better.

The way in which young children learn a foreign language differs greatly from that of teenagers or adults. Therefore, the teaching content, as well as methods, need to be altered so that they are age-appropriate and suitable for young learners.

Second language materials for young learners are often deceptive in their simplicity. They appear to be easy to create because their content spans a limited range of grammatical forms and vocabulary. However, beyond the challenging process of selecting such content are the underlying theoretical concepts, methodologies, and approaches that inform well-constructed learning materials. (Beatty 2012, 13)

The pace at which children develop and progress from stage to stage is fast and at times fluctuating, which is why new pedagogical tools that adapt to this turbulence should be offered to language educators. Issues of early language teaching are complex, because although the learners are “at a crucial point in their lives”, children have often fewer opportunities to affect their language teaching methods and practices (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 41). Indeed, as young learners are often unable to express their needs in terms of language learning, educators and material developers are given a great responsibility to find the right tools and materials to support the learning of children. Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) has been called “the Cinderella of applied linguistics research in general and in second language acquisition in particular” (Garton and Copland 2019, 1). However, the growing interest in TEYL during the past decade has created plenty of research that seeks to investigate how children learn languages (Garton and Copland 2019, 1-2). Furthermore, Adisti (2016, 138) argues that teachers need special methods to teach English to young learners because although children can show extreme enthusiasm towards language learning, their mood and attitude can change rapidly if the teaching methods do not suit their ways of learning. Therefore, motivational tools are needed to maintain their concentration on the subject.

Before discussing teaching contents and methods that can be used in early English language teaching, the different stages of development during this age-period must be considered. Without understanding the characteristics concerning the cognitive, social, and emotive development of the child at each stage, the right pedagogical tools cannot be modified to suit the learner’s needs properly. Murray and Christison (2010, 74) summarize the characteristics that define learners’ stages of development at the ages of 2-4, 5-7, and 8-10. As Moomin Language School is targeted to a rather wide age group (from approximately 3 to 8 years old), the categorization of characteristics by Murray and Christison becomes extremely essential in approaching the content and design of Moomin Language School.

First, Murray and Christison (2010, 74) mention that preschoolers (ages 2-4) are at a sensitive period regarding their language development, and at this stage, children imitate speech patterns very well, however, they “do not work well in groups and prefer to work alone on something that interests them”, and they “have very short attention spans and love to repeat the same activity over and over again”. Second, children of ages 5-7 are described to enjoy defining new objects and learning through binary opposites. At this stage they have “vivid imaginations and respond well to stories of fantasy”, and consequently “they learn best through oral language”. Finally, it is stated that at ages 8-10 children are open to new and different ideas, which is why “introducing children to information about other cultures and countries at this stage is very important”. Furthermore, at this stage children begin to work well with their peers, and “like children in younger grades, they continue to benefit from imaginative and creative play”. Thus, it can be concluded that during these critical years from ages 3 to 8, the way that children learn a language varies significantly, although one element prevails; play should be part of learning at all stages. However, kindergarteners generally prefer working alone as opposed to 8-year-olds in the 2nd grade, who are beginning to collaborate with their peers. In addition, the attention span alters as the child gets older. Also, it seems that young learners require topics that interest them enough to maintain their attention, meaning that the themes need to be relevant and close to the child, whereas 2nd graders are more open to unfamiliar ideas and therefore to new cultures and experiences. According to this information, it seems that the teaching material and methods should vary greatly depending on the age of the child, to appropriately suit the characteristics of the developmental stage of the learner.

2.2.1. Early English language teaching content

When designing material for EELT, age-appropriate thematic and linguistic contents, as well as versatile sources and tools, need to be considered. Many different factors contribute to the selection of teaching content, and in fact, Faravani and Zeraatpishe (2016, 44) claim that the specification of

content in language teaching syllabuses is one of the most controversial issues in second language teaching. Furthermore, the specification becomes more complex when the material is targeted to young learners who are at different stages of development and have therefore very different interests.

First, when selecting content for early English language teaching, it must be remembered that young children have certain limitations regarding their cognitive and linguistic capabilities. These limitations in language capacity and young children's short attention spans should be taken into consideration when designing the curriculum and appropriate EELT material. Hestetræet (2019, 222) adds that vocabulary size development is one of the most important issues in teaching L2 vocabulary. Mezzi (2012, 18) explains that an 8-year-old native speaker knows approximately 7000 to 8000 words, and thus a realistic number of words to teach to a young foreign language learner is approximately 500 words in one year. However, it must be noted that for very young learners, this number is probably significantly lower. As the number of new words is limited, the importance of instructing grammar becomes a less important target in EELT. Mezzi (2012, 17) suggests that teaching grammar should not be the goal of foreign language teaching, although raising the learners' awareness of grammar is important. This happens imperceptibly through input, as the children's attention is called to vocabulary and semantics. Although young children's limitations in language learning are unavoidable, it must be noted that young language learners should not be underestimated. Mezzi (2012, 16) argues that language teachers should take into consideration the fact that young learners are able to begin producing the target language fairly soon, but only if they have been "exposed to language and listening comprehension". This factors into the development of early communicative language production. Hence, the role of input is extremely important, and the content of input should be carefully designed.

First, the selection and gradation of topics and themes should be carefully designed to fit the needs of young English learners. In early language teaching, one of the most common ways to organize the content of the syllabus is to divide the linguistic matter into different topics and themes

(Arnold and Rixon 2008, 42). McQuiggan et al. (2015, 31) mention that “by organizing larger pieces of information into meaningful units, we allow for greater processing capacity in working memory, which allows the individual to engage in more complex thought or retrieve additional information from prior knowledge, thereby increasing their depth of learning”. A well-planned organization of interesting topics seems to have a significant effect on both memory and the learning process (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 36). As adults, we may not be able to accurately determine which themes and topics are most interesting and relevant in the eyes of young language learners. However, McQuiggan et al. (2015, 35-36) state that learners “find topics of which they have lots of knowledge and positive emotions towards interesting”. Thus, for instance, toys, animals, food, and vehicles are common themes in early language teaching. By choosing topics that are familiar to children, the learners can integrate “new information with prior knowledge”, and “engage with the material at a much deeper level” (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 30). However, as mentioned in the characterization of development stages by Murray and Christison (2010, 74), meaningful and suitable themes to 3-year-olds relate to their close surroundings, whereas 8-year-olds benefit from being introduced to new and foreign ideas and cultures. Hence, interesting topics should always be selected to match the interests and stage of development of the learner in question.

Tightly linked with the selection of thematic content is the selection of vocabulary. In fact, vocabulary teaching is in a pivotal place in ELT material for young learners (Adisti 2016, 138). To begin with, simple and short lexical items, such as words or short communicational phrases are easier for the children to memorize, repeat, and link to the surrounding environment (Hestetræet 2019, 224). Hence, syllabuses are often constructed on the basis of complexity (Faravani and Zeraatpishe 2016, 46). This means, that simple linguistic constructions precede more complex structures. Consequently, when organizing the content of language teaching material, “basic level concepts should be introduced first, gradually followed by lower and higher level ones as the children develop cognitively” (Hestetræet 2019, 22). Moreover, young learners are eager to interact and be understood

by others, which is why teaching and learning vocabulary becomes extremely relevant (Mezzi 2012, 18). The selection of this vocabulary should be chosen on the basis of age appropriateness, frequency, and accessibility (Hesteraet 2019, 222-223; Mezzi 2012, 17-18). The words need to suit the needs of young learners, they should be common words that are frequently used, meaningful to children, and they should be easy to pronounce, memorize, and understand. In other words, the vocabulary should be teachable. In addition to the word's teachability, the demonstrability of the concept is a matter that requires special attention. Faravani and Zeraatpishe (2016, 45) present the element of demonstrability as referring to the concreteness of the words; for instance, the word *car* is easier to comprehend than the abstract word *transport*. They also explain that the brevity of a word contributes to its teachability. This theory "is based on the assumption that long words are more difficult to learn than short ones" (Faravani and Zeraatpishe 2016, 45). Continuing with their example above, the word *car* is easier to learn than *automobile*.

EELT material should also include content that can be used to practice listening comprehension since the quality of input is one of the main contributors to second language acquisition. Music and stories that are age-appropriate and engaging for young learners can be used as listening comprehension material. For example, songs and rhymes are a natural and pleasant way for young learners to learn new linguistic elements, as they can provide strong mental images that help in the memorization process (Bland 2019, 272-273). Young learners are naturally sensitive to different rhyming patterns and sounds, and for instance, Anglo-Saxon nursery rhymes are built on this fact (Whitehead 1999, 21). Rhythm, rhymes, and alliterations can help preliterate children memorize the words better as they are not able to pick up on written clues from the spelling (Whitehead 1999, 21). Also, storytelling and picture books have proven to make a beneficial addition to TEYL material contents (Hesteraet 2019, 228; Bland 2019, 271). Visual clues help the learner comprehend new words as well as guide them to follow the narrative. In fact, one of the greatest advantages of using oral stories in early language teaching is that they "contain short sentences and are rich in repetitive

vocabulary and formulaic language and therefore offer plentiful exposures and recycling of vocabulary” (Hestetræet 2019, 228). Listening comprehension through storytelling is a natural and joyful way for young learners to engage with the English language, whilst receiving plentiful recycling of vocabulary.

2.2.2. Early English language teaching methods

Language teaching methods that suit teenagers or young adults differ greatly from those that benefit young children. Young children require pedagogical approaches that incorporate interaction, movement, repetition, creativity, and play. There are also many factors in the way in which young children learn a foreign language, that are particularly beneficial to second language acquisition. For instance, children are often a lot less self-conscious than teenagers. Self-consciousness can hold a L2 learner back when practicing a new language (Yule 2010, 188). These affective factors do not seem to bother young children as much, which can make them more willing to confidently practice producing new sounds in the target language (Yule 2010, 189). Indeed, children can often be more enthusiastic and fearless than teenagers to participate in producing foreign language, but in order to benefit from these features, appropriate pedagogical practices need to be formed. However, individual differences in children’s temperaments and personalities can never be predicted, which is why it cannot be assumed that all young English learners would participate similarly; timid and more sensitive children should be taken into consideration as well when selecting teaching methods.

First, interaction is an essential part of early language teaching practices (Hestetræet 2019, 223). Whitehead (1999, 14) states that interaction with other people is in a key role at this stage in language development. It is important to language acquisition that a child is encouraged to play and talk with their peers and their teacher. Moreover, Yule (2010, 176) suggests that especially for children, playful interaction with peers and wordplay are essential for speech development. Therefore, EELT practices should be constructed to support the interactive and social aspects of language learning by introducing

activities that enable this kind of communication to occur. Mezzi (2012, 19) lists five ways that can be used as a basis for activities, that offer playful engagement and require output from the learner – these are “guessing”, “‘either/or’ questions”, and finally “classifying” which can be used in three different ways: “repeat for purpose”, “practice new vocabulary”, and “consolidate vocabulary they already know”. However, once again the developmental stage of the learner should be considered in the selection of the teaching methods that rely on interaction. As mentioned by Murray and Christison (2010, 74), 3-year-olds prefer working alone whereas 8-year-olds benefit from collaboration. Thus, the interactive methods and exercises should be designed so that it allows variation according to age.

Furthermore, nonverbal communication, movement, and action-oriented teaching methods are in a key role in early language teaching. Children who are not native speakers of English benefit from nonverbal clues when communicating with the teacher or other children with whom they do not necessarily share a common language (Whitehead 1999, 14). Nonverbal communication functions as a bridge to comprehension and interaction, and for children who love to move and play, it is a natural way to build mutual understanding. Whitehead (1999, 15) suggests that child-friendly physical activities such as “face-to-face gazing, talking, gesturing, bouncing, singing, dancing, and clapping” are natural ways to include movement and nonverbal clues into early language teaching. However, imagination and creativity create endless possibilities for how movement can be integrated into foreign language teaching. Of course, this presents a challenge to early language teaching professionals on how to naturally and efficiently integrate nonverbal communication and action-orientedness into foreign language teaching, but it is also a fruitful opportunity to find new perspectives on more child-friendly teaching practices (Whitehead 1999, 15).

Repetition is an integral element in EELT methods. Mezzi (2012, 17) claims that first and foremost the emphasis should be put on “the correct and repetitive reproduction of lexical chunks”. Shintani (2016, 51) further argues that many studies support the claim that “task repetition benefits foreign language learning of young children”. Also, “revision of new information is important in

storing the information to long-term memory (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 29). Children learn new words “little by little, over time”, which means that young learners require repeated and continual revision of new vocabulary (Hestetraet 2019, 224). In fact, it seems that in order to learn a new word, the learner requires approximately 8-10 encounters with the word (Schmitt 2010, 31). However, it must be again noted that with very young children, this number is unavoidably significantly higher, which is why this statement should be interpreted with caution. Nursery rhymes are a suitable way for young learners to be exposed to multiple encounters of the new word in a natural and child-friendly manner. Mezzi (2012, 20) argues that singing songs and nursery rhymes offer favorable opportunities to practice pronunciation and intonation of the language. “One other important form of play with the stuff of language is the simple pleasure of repeating favourite words or phrases over and over again” (Whitehead 1999, 21). It appears that young learners enjoy repetition through singing, and for instance performing a song can even build their confidence and generate positive feelings towards the language (Mezzi 2012, 20).

Finally, one of the most fundamental elements that needs to be present in EELT methods is play. Play seems to have a strong influence on learning, and it can be used to interest and motivate young children (Adisti 2016, 138; McQuiggan et al. 2015, 262-264). ‘Play’ as a concept has received negative connotations in the past in the context of learning and teaching, and it has been mostly seen as an unwanted habit that should be eliminated from the school environment (Whitehead 1999, 17). However, new pedagogical approaches examine play more closely by investigating in more detail who is playing, how, and why (Whitehead 1999, 18). It seems that play functions as an important space for young learners to experiment with their peers in an environment in which it is safe to take risks and try new things (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 262; Whitehead 1999, 19). Play offers great potential to language teaching practices, and its significance in the development process of a child should not be underestimated in the educational setting (Whitehead 1999, 20). On the contrary, the relationship between play and learning should be embraced and welcomed into English teaching, so that it could

be utilized to create more appropriate learning methods to young learners. In fact, play and language have many things in common. They both occur universally, and they appear naturally as part of human nature (Whitehead 1999, 20). Also, they are used to symbolically express feelings and thoughts, and they reflect the human mind and support the creation of new ideas.

Playfulness, on the other hand, is a descriptive concept that derives from play. It seems that the surrounding environment can facilitate and create playfulness (Kangas 2014, 76). Playfulness can increase positive social structures between the learners and the teacher, as well as reduce distance between them. Consequently, *playful learning* is a comprehensive experience, that combines cognitive, social, psychological, and physical sensations. Kangas lists seven aspects of playful learning: playfulness, creativity, narrativity, communality, embodiment, richness of media, and joy of learning (Kangas 2014, 84-85). Playful learning can occur informally or formally, and it can function as a bridge between informal and formal learning. Moreover, it can be used as an analytical tool for designing games (Kangas 2014, 83-84). Integrating playfulness in learning situations can produce more motivated and engaged learners (Kangas 2014, 73). Playfulness and playful learning should function as the basis when designing and forming new ELT material and practices in early English language learning.

2.2.3. Regulations of the Finnish National Agency for Education

The document “Amendments and additions to the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 regarding the instruction of the A1 language in grades 1-2” conducted by the Finnish National Agency for Education in 2020, introduces new regulations for teaching first foreign languages in 1st and 2nd grades. It states that the goal of learning a foreign language is to “kindle a positive attitude towards learning languages” and “to strengthen pupils’ confidence in their own abilities to learn languages” (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 26). Moreover, in order to achieve this goal, the instruction should support the pupils’ “ability to perceive and make use of linguistic and

cultural stimuli”, and it should provide versatile “experiences with the target language as well as with cultures related to it”. Indeed, new regulations emphasize the importance of culture as an essential part of language learning. The methods of teaching a foreign language in 1st and 2nd grades should focus on “joy of learning, varied and action-oriented working methods, and spoken interaction in everyday situations”. Thus, the teaching methods must suit the needs of young learners and offer more playful and active ways to engage in learning.

The A1 syllabus for teaching a foreign language in the 1st and 2nd grades offers a more detailed description of the most important language learning areas and the objectives of instruction and learning, as well as the content areas to be used in foreign language teaching (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 27-29). Here are listed the five areas of language learning with a summary of their main objectives:

1. Growing into cultural diversity and language awareness:

Familiarize the pupils with surrounding cultures, recognize cultural diversity, and collaborate to discuss the issues of culture.

2. Language learning skills:

Opportunities to work alone and together with others to familiarize themselves with language learning, encourage to deduce meaning, observe spoken language.

3. Evolving language proficiency, interaction skills:

Encourage pupils to use the target language and utilize communicative strategies (nonverbal communication, ICT) to express themselves in typical situations. Proposed contents: pupils’ everyday lives, areas of interest, everyday language use through “songs, play, drama and games”, and polite expressions.

4. Evolving language proficiency, text interpretation skills:

Understanding the most common words and expressions. Proposed content: pupils’ everyday lives, areas of interest, focus on spoken text and intonation through “songs, play, nursery rhymes, stories, and images”.

5. Evolving language proficiency, text production skills:

Encourage the pupils to produce the most common words and expressions and practice pronunciation. Proposed content: pupils’ everyday lives, areas of interest, pronunciation practiced often and in different ways through “images, songs, play, nursery rhymes, stories, drama, and games”.

All in all, the objectives of instruction, learning, and content should derive from child-friendly approaches to language learning by using methods and contents that are natural and appropriate for young learners. In addition, it is added that “the pupils’ age and stage of development must be taken into consideration” when selecting the method of working, and these methods “must be diverse, pupil-

centered and engaging” and they “should be based on action-oriented and exploratory learning” (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 29).

2.3. Digital and game-based language learning

As Moomin Language School offers a digital platform, the most central concepts in the field of digital game-based language learning must be addressed. There is plenty of research in the field of digital learning, and the evidence suggests that digital teaching has positive effects on students’ learning, creativity, motivation, engagement, and skills (Mukundan, Seyed and Naghipour 2014, 19; Anyaegbu, Ting and Li 2012, 154). These results have attracted many teachers and students and have only made e-learning more appealing to education specialists (Mukundan, Seyed, and Naghipour 2014, 19). Games and play intertwine and can help build a fruitful environment for learning. Game worlds can function as a stress-free platform for experimentation and making mistakes, just like playfulness (Whitton 2014, 6). Especially for children who are learning new skills, a game world can be extremely enticing. Games can help build playful learning if the digital platform creates a safe and fun environment for young learners to experiment with language and develop their skills. However, digital game-based learning targeted specifically to young English learners has not been widely researched (Butler 2019, 312). Indeed, many of the new digital and game-based teaching and learning methods are yet to be discovered and refined.

Mobile learning via different applications has become popular in recent years. McQuiggan et al. (2015, 7) present the potential of mobile learning in an extremely optimistic light and claim that it offers “a new paradigm in connectivity, communication, and collaboration in our everyday lives”. However, the presence of information and communication technology (ICT) has not changed teaching methods in a significant way, which means that mobile learning has not yet reached its full potential. McQuiggan et al. (2015, 40) further suggest that in order to take into consideration the personal differences between individuals, mobile learning should provide “several levels of the same lesson to

accommodate individual differences in knowledge and ability”. Also, it is recommended that the material should “provide multiple, interesting ways to practice the same skill so as not to compromise motivation” (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 41). In the best-case scenario, a computer game designed to teach English combines learning through play, and this increases the learners’ motivation towards language learning through interaction (Adisti 2016, 138). As noted earlier in the paper, interaction plays an important role in language learning. McQuiggan et al. (2015, 264) also state that the most important characteristic in a good mobile learning application for preschoolers is, that it is above all else engaging and the learning is play-based. Hence, enabling interaction and communication in digital learning environments can engage the learners with language in a fundamental and beneficial way.

Also, one important aspect to consider when designing appropriate and efficient digital and game-based learning environments, is that the focus should be on the characteristics and needs of the learner (Butler 2019, 314). Beatty (2012, 17) claims that “language teachers increasingly aim to increase learner-centeredness—moving the locus of control away from the teacher and towards the learner”. Chapelle (2008, 588) introduces four components, which need to be taken into consideration when aiming “to achieve a good learner fit” to suit the needs of the learner better. These are as follows: detecting potential difficulties of different learners, selecting language content that is relevant to the learner, presenting material in an interactive manner, and assessing the learner’s skills to indicate which areas they should focus on to improve their knowledge. As mentioned earlier, young learners are easily distracted, and their concentration span is very short. Therefore, digital learning environments that require autonomy and distance learning from the learner can create issues. Chapelle (2008, 587) claims that most learners do not have the skills to work autonomously in the most efficient way possible, and thus they require instruction and guidance. This is especially true with young learners, to whom autonomous learning can be extremely challenging. However, apparently with appropriately designed digital materials that deliver guidance and attention to the learner, this issue

can be diminished. Chapelle (2008, 587) further claims that designing such material has been one of the most prominent goals in software development. McQuiggan et al. (2015, 179) explain that even if a mobile learning application would be pedagogically eligible if its design is not “engaging or satisfying, the app will likely fall flat”. The importance of the visual layout is extremely crucial when the users are young children, in that the application is interesting and attractive enough for them to maintain their focus. It was noted that young users found “hunting for things to click” or “animation and sound effects” pleasant whereas older users disliked them, meaning that the methods for learning need to be properly tailored to meet the needs of the learner (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 186). Preliteracy of young children needs to be considered in the visual elements of the design to provide enough visual clues for the learner, as well (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 185-186). In addition to the app’s visual aspect, immediate feedback should be provided to engage the learner (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 183).

Consequently, it is claimed that digital and game-based learning materials should first and foremost raise the language learner’s awareness of their acquisition progress and motivate as well as to encourage the learner (Soleimani and Esmaili 2016, 140). Faravani and Zeraatpishe (2016, 54) add that “following a learner-centered approach, learners’ needs turn out to be the primary focus of materials developers”. This can be done by assisting the learner to become aware of the aims of learning, the means to achieve them, and finally evaluation of their development (Soleimani and Esmaili 2016, 140). However, it is difficult to create a learning environment that would benefit all learners in the same way, since “learners are different in terms of aptitude, maturity, stage of language development, motivation, personal experience, and a host of other factors” (Maley 2016, 12). Indeed, very young English learners may not yet be able to assess or be aware of their progress in language acquisition. He further suggests that learners have different interests and progress at different paces. Although it is impossible to design a software that would suit all types of learners in all contexts and situations, learner-centered focus in digital and game-based language learning development is still a goal that cannot be dismissed (Soleimani and Esmaili 2016, 142-143). Technology is and will be a

central part of language teaching and learning practices, and so far many software programs have played the role of “a virtual teacher, a teacher’s helper, a guide, an instrument, a teaching tool and a learning tool” (Soleimani and Esmaili 2016, 142). New pedagogical approaches are needed to utilize the potential of technology to create more ways in which ICT can be used in supporting early language learning and teaching.

2.4. English language teaching materials

English language teaching (ELT) materials can have a strong influence on the second language acquisition process. Very often ELT materials are created on the basis of what is required from foreign language learning and teaching at the time. In Finland, the National Core Curriculum, created by the Finnish National Agency for Education, dictates the goals, means, and evaluation of language learning, but it must be noted that “materials are increasingly expected to offer much broader educational perspectives – critical thinking, life skills, citizenship, global issues, cross-cultural understanding and more” (Maley 2016, 11). Hence, ELT materials are expected to serve a much bigger purpose than to just teach a language. McQuiggan et al. (2015, 195) add that creating ELT material, such as a mobile learning apps, is not enough: there should exist “an ongoing evaluation and improvement process”. Hence, a crucial part of ELT material development is the evaluation of the materials. In order to evaluate how well ELT materials serve their purpose, the material must be thoroughly, systematically, and objectively analyzed. In this section, ELT material analysis and evaluation models are presented. This is followed by an introduction to the research on attitudes towards ELT materials.

2.4.1. Analysis and evaluation

Teaching material analysis and evaluation are dependent on each other and are often in a dynamic relationship. Before any conclusions can be made based on certain material, the material in question

must be carefully and systematically examined. One of the most demanding aspects of language teaching material evaluation is achieving a thoroughly objective evaluation. Indeed, individual perceptions of what constitutes language learning and teaching ultimately affect the way language teaching specialists assess and develop ELT materials as well (Maley 2016, 11). Consequently, Littlejohn's model offers a framework for analyzing "materials themselves, to investigate their nature" (Littlejohn 2011, 181). Indeed, according to Littlejohn (2011, 202, Figure 1) the process of

The process of materials evaluation

Figure 8.10 *A preliminary framework for materials analysis, evaluation and action*

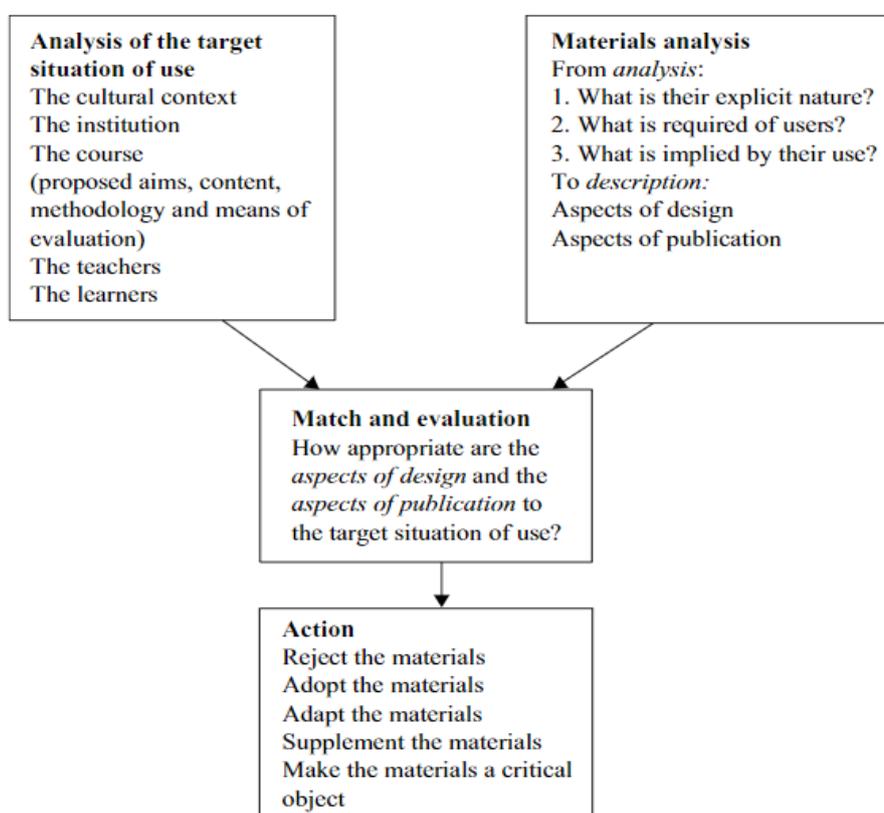


Figure 1. The process of materials evaluation, taken from Littlejohn (2011, 202).

evaluating teaching materials consists of an analysis of the target situation, material analysis, evaluation process and finally taking action based on the evaluation. This process offers a wide scope for research, but for the purposes of this study, the analysis of material and evaluation are given the most emphasis.

The analysis of material consists of three levels: starting from the objective description of material and activities, moving on to subjective analysis in which the tasks are analyzed in terms of what the learner is expected to do, with who and with what kind of material, and finally deducing principles of selection and sequence, learner roles as well as demands on learner's competence (Littlejohn 2011, 185). Furthermore, he suggests three questions that need to be taken into consideration in the analysis: "1. What aspects of materials should we examine? 2. How can we examine materials? 3. How can we relate the findings to our own teaching contexts?" (Littlejohn 2011, 182). On the basis of the observations made in the analysis, an evaluation of the material can be conducted.

Determining which ELT materials are "good" in serving their purpose is no easy task. Moreover, teachers and students can have very distinct opinions of what constitutes a "good" ELT textbook, for example (Sheldon 1988, 380). However, in order to approach the task of evaluation, Sheldon (1988, 383-387) proposes a list of 17 different criteria that have emerged most frequently in the discussions by reviewers, teachers, educational advisers, and the like, when choosing a textbook. The most relevant ones to the current study are appropriacy, selection/grading, layout/graphics, stimulus/practice/revision, and flexibility of ELT material. This extensive list can be summarized in Weir and Roberts's (1994, 466) suggestion of a more abbreviated list of variables to evaluate language teaching materials, which focuses also on the suitability of texts, challenge level, teachability, usefulness, and appropriateness, but also examines the practicality and clarity of teachers' notes. Both criteria pay particular attention to appropriacy, structure, and teachability of the material.

As both of these sets of proposed criteria are dated, they cannot be applied straightforwardly to the study in question. However, some of their most fundamental ideas still stand true today, which is why they are useful in setting the criteria for the evaluation. For example, when comparing these criteria to a more recent one, one can detect many similarities. In a list composed by McQuiggan et al. (2015, 196) that can be used to evaluate mobile learning services, the criteria include adoption,

usability, purpose/alignment, and pedagogical soundness. These elements are based on the usefulness and appropriateness of ELT material, bearing resemblance to the criteria proposed by Sheldon (1988) and Weir and Roberts (1994). The last two areas of evaluation by McQuiggan et al. (2015, 196) relate closely to the focus of this thesis as well. Criteria of purpose and alignment aim to find answers to the following questions (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 199): “Does the app actually accomplish the goals for the educator and the student?”, “Is it aligned to standards or curricula?”, “Is it appropriately leveled for the target group?” and “Does the app replace existing activities or offer new methods for instruction?” Hence, achieving standards, challenge levels, and innovativeness are in a key role in the evaluation of a mobile learning service.

Although McQuiggan et al. (2015) focus on mobile teaching platforms as opposed to Sheldon (1988) and Weir and Roberts (1994) who analyze textbooks, some important similarities can be detected. It seems that when evaluating ELT materials, especially appropriacy, functionality, suitability, and usefulness of the teaching material should be considered. Especially when the material is directed to young learners of ages 3 to 8, the age-appropriacy becomes relevant. Parker and Valente (2019, 35) argue that in order to create a syllabus or a curriculum for young learners, the practitioners need to “carefully consider both the linguistic and unique age-related needs of the learners”. It appears that the research of EELT syllabus and curriculum design is still at its first stages, and therefore there are many shortcomings in the design process still left to solve (Parker and Valente 2019, 363-364). Due to the lack of research in evaluating ELT materials for young learners, the criteria that are used to analyze EELT material content need to be carefully chosen based on suitability and appropriacy.

The criteria for ELT evaluation are not all-encompassing, however; the outcome of the evaluation is strongly dependent on the perspective of the evaluator (Sheldon 1988, 387). Also, the same material can be viewed very differently in altering contexts. Therefore, the context and point-of-view of the evaluation need to be clearly determined to select an appropriate scope for the criteria. A carefully constructed evaluation of teaching material can reveal new additional elements that have

contributed to its production. Although it is important to examine what is included in a syllabus, it is also necessary to recognize the elements that are excluded from it and why. Moreover, the choice of teaching material is extremely powerful, as the material will have a great impact on a very large group of people over time (Sheldon 1988, 379).

2.4.2. Attitudes

In order to analyze what attitudes educators have towards using Moomin Language School as a tool to teach English, we must approach the issue from the perspective of technology acceptance. As Moomin Language School includes a digital learning platform, it can be analyzed as a technological system. In their article “User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models” Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989, 982) claim that it has proven to be rather difficult to understand why end-users will or will not accept available computer systems, even though using them would generate significant performance gains in their job performance. The same phenomenon can be seen in the process of digitalization of teaching in schools. The fact that most classrooms in Finland have, for instance, a smartboard, does not necessarily mean that it is being utilized by the teacher. The attitudes that the users have towards digital language learning applications and services, influence the way these innovations are adapted into kindergartens, schools, and classrooms, which in turn shapes the future of language education. The National Core Curriculum dictates and regulates the way English is to be taught, but ultimately it is the user of the service and the educator who functions as the gatekeeper for change. Therefore, the acceptability of a product should be taken into consideration already in the design and implementation phase. This same factor is, of course, essential when new digital language teaching platforms and applications are being designed and implemented in teaching practices.

Technology acceptance model (TAM) was created to better predict why end-users accept or reject a certain computer system, and also to gain a better understanding of the computer use behavior

of the end-users (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw 1989, 983). “A key purpose of TAM, therefore, is to provide a basis for tracing the impact of external factors in internal beliefs” (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw 1989, 985). In addition to the user’s attitude towards the system, the most fundamental factors that determine technology acceptance are *perceived usefulness* and *perceived ease of use*:

Perceived usefulness (U) is defined as the prospective user’s subjective probability that using a specific application system will increase his or her job performance within an organizational context. Perceived ease of use (EOU) refers to the degree to which the prospective user expects the target system to be free of effort. (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw 1989, 985)

Indeed, the presuppositions that surround software programs influence significantly the actual use of the program. The beliefs and attitudes people have towards a computer system have a major impact on the way digital innovations are ultimately being used and accepted. This affects also the success in reaching the programs’ full potential in language learning and teaching.

Furthermore, Anyaegby, Ting, and Li (2012, 162) discovered in their study that the attitudes and perceptions that teachers have towards software programs can influence the students’ attitudes as well. Also, Li, Han, and Gao (2019, 63-66) argue that children’s motivation towards learning English is strongly influenced by the attitudes that their parents, teachers, and peers have towards English learning. It seems, that if a teacher has a negative attitude towards using a digital game-based learning environment in their teaching, this affects the way the students themselves accept the game as well. In fact, also parents’ attitudes appeared to affect the success of game-based learning (Anyaegby, Ting, and Li 2012, 154). To conclude, it is extremely important to investigate the attitudes that the users have towards using digital games in teaching.

2.4.3. Previous studies on attitudes towards digital EELT materials

In this section, three previous studies in the field are introduced. The first study is conducted by Arnold and Rixon in 2008, which discusses ELT material analysis from the perspective of early language learning by comparing multiple ELT materials and investigating attitudes that surround

them. The second study is conducted by Adisti in 2016, and it concentrates on the analysis of using computer games in TEYL. The final study is concerned with Moomin Language School, specifically with the attitudes that early education teachers have towards the Moomin Language School service. This study was conducted by Peltola and Hamberg in 2018.

Arnold and Rixon (2008, 45) conducted a survey to investigate the views of language professionals about teaching materials. The results show that the informants in the field of education expressed “their concern that materials should be at the appropriate cognitive and maturity level for the age of children” (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 45-46). Also, “affective values such as children’s enjoyment and engagement with characters were also frequently mentioned” (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 46). They received some statements also regarding the cultural representation in the materials, either praising the presentation of cultural diversity in the material or noting its absence (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 46-47). Criticism was pointed towards “boring or repetitive approaches to teach grammar”, or “sudden jumps of level and difficulty and for unconnected introductions of new language” (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 47). In their study, they also analyzed ELT materials. They found that “the language content was often not particularly ‘realistic’, often more what an adult might expect a YL to say, rather than the sort of language that children might genuinely use to each other” (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 49). In addition, they noted that developing literacy in English was not emphasized and it was actually neglected in most of the materials they analyzed. Also, the use of ICT in English teaching materials was evaluated: “The prevalence of interactive whiteboards in schools in prosperous countries should not be forgotten, although EYL targeted software that we have seen for this resource has so far been disappointingly Behaviourist in design” (Arnold and Rixon 2008, 51). What they mean by “Behaviourist design” in multimedia materials is the drill-like activities that only allow short feedback. Although the overall evaluation of the materials was positive, the materials seemed to lack creativeness in the use of ICT.

The second study conducted by Adisti (2016) investigated the relationship between computer games and TEYL. She examined interactive materials, their development, and the effect of using computer games as interactive material in TEYL (Adisti 2016, 140). In addition to investigating English teaching materials and methods by interviewing teachers, Adisti also included the analysis of the results of English learning. Adisti (2016, 143) conducted a questionnaire for the teachers to evaluate some aspects of the material, regarding, for instance, the appropriacy of the computer game and vocabulary, suitability to learners' level, age, culture, and interests, the enjoyability of computer exercises, organization, functionality, and structure of the game, as well the appeal of the visual layout. Alterations and modifications were done to the software on the basis of the evaluation (Adisti 2016, 144-145). Adisti (2016, 148) was able to conclude that based on the research, students require interactive material in order to memorize new words, and the students found games motivating and effective in English language learning.

Finally, the study conducted by Peltola and Hamberg (2018) focused to investigate the attitudes that early childhood educators have towards digital learning environments in general, but also towards Moomin Language School specifically. They conducted two questionnaires, that measured the attitudes that the educators had towards digital learning before and after using Moomin Language School at their job. Peltola and Hamberg (2018, 92) found that the views on digital learning were positive, and the positive outlook only strengthened after using Moomin Language School. However, some participants reported having technical difficulties in the use of the service, and suggestions were made to improve for instance the selection of topics, vocabulary, and challenge level (Peltola and Hamberg 2018, 83-84). For example, some participants suggested that there were too many words for the children to learn in a week, and thus the amount of vocabulary should be reduced and that the selected vocabulary should be more closely linked to the everyday life of the learners.

3. Material

In this chapter Moomin Language School is introduced in more detail. Second, the data gathered by the questionnaire are presented by introducing the background information of the participants.

3.1. Moomin Language School

According to their website, Moomin Language School has been programmed to teach English and Finnish as a second language (Playvation Ltd.). The clear target age range varies in English and Finnish as a second language teaching in the service: the former is said to suit English teaching in elementary or primary schools (*varhennettu englannin opetus*) and kindergartens, and the latter is defined to suit children ages 3-10 (Promentor Solutions Oy). They also inform that “the ideal age to start Moomin Language School is 4-6, but some of our users have started when they were only 3”, and that “younger children may need an adult’s help in the beginning until their fine motor skills catch up”, whilst “older children will benefit from the service, too, but they may find the beginning a little slow if they already have some skills in the foreign language” (Playvation Ltd.). As early English teaching in Finnish elementary schools refers to English teaching in the 1st and 2nd grades, the focus of the study will be on analyzing Moomin Language School from the perspective of 3-8-year-old children, although the clear target age definition of the service leaves room for interpretation.

Regarding the variation of levels, the website states that:

At the moment, all children start on the same level – the beginning. This helps children become familiar with the story and the family whose life the application follows. There is a possibility for children with prior knowledge of the new language to progress faster in the application, but this needs to be decided with the educational institution on a case-by-case basis. We are working on bringing level tests and a placement test into the service in the future. (Playvation Ltd.)

It can be concluded from this statement that for the time being, all children start at the same challenge level in the application.

It is also stated that “the full scope of the service is four years” and it offers “a vocabulary up to 3000 words” (Playvation Ltd.). At this time, Moomin Language School has produced 50 weekly lesson plans, which combined form a curriculum of one year. Hence, this analysis will only cover the first year of a four-year curriculum, as the rest of the curriculum is still under development. At the moment the second year of lesson plans is in the making, and the application includes approximately two years’ worth of activities. Also, the lesson plans for the first year were updated in December 2019, which means that the lesson plans that are analyzed in this study are very recently produced. All the lesson plans can be accessed through the Moomin Language School Tool, which is a website designed for the teacher (see Appendix 1). It is mentioned on their website that “the playful lessons have been designed to be flexible and enable teachers to choose the parts that work for them and adapt them for their children’s level and needs” (Playvation Ltd.). In the Tool, the teacher can view the progress of each student that they have made by playing the app (see Appendix 1.2). There is also some additional material, for instance, diplomas that can be printed out for the students. Each lesson has a similar structure. The lesson structure is divided into four sections: Preparation, Circle time, Theme, Goodbye (see Appendix 1.1) These 4 sections are built around 6 different types of activities, which are labeled as follows: Song/Rhyme, Introduction play, Play, Crafts, Sticker card, and Story. Each activity in the lesson plan has detailed instructions on how the activity is to be carried out. The instructions are divided into numbered sections that further clarify the progress the activity should follow.

First, the *Preparation* section contains a list of all the equipment and material that is needed to carry out all the activities in the lesson. Moomin Language School produces all the visual material for the teacher, for instance, picture cards and coloring pictures, which can be printed through a link in the *Preparation* section. The second part of the lesson, *Circle time*, begins the actual lesson. First, the teacher does a namecheck with the help of a song, which gives each child a chance to participate. The section continues either with an *Introduction Play* and/or a *Song* or a *Rhyme*, that aim to set the

theme for the lesson. All the songs and rhymes are downloaded to the Tool. The third part of the lesson is called *Theme*, and it aims to both introduce and practice new words in various ways that often require physical activity and creativity from the child. The Theme section consists of the activity types *Play*, *Crafts*, and *Story*. Often the first part of Theme consists of one or more Plays, ending in a related Crafts exercise. The last part of the lesson plan is called Goodbye, which is the same every week. First, there is a rhyme “Goodbye”, that the teacher and the children sing together at the end of the lesson. This is followed by an activity called “Sticker Card”, in which each child gets to choose a sticker for their sticker card.

In addition to the teacher’s Tool, Moomin Language School offers a gamified application for children (see Appendix 2). Children can play on the app approximately 5 to 15 minutes per day, and it follows the same pattern of topics as the lesson plans. The game is designed to be played on a phone or a tablet, and the instructions and language input happens in the target language. Ideally, the child plays the game at the same pace as the topics are introduced in class so that the weekly lessons and games on the app support each other, and the learners have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the words both independently on a digital platform and in real interaction with peers and the teacher. In the application, there are 5 Days with different sets of exercises for each week’s topic (see Appendix 2.1.). This means, that the learner can practice the words taught in a weekly lesson with 5 different combinations of digital activities. In each day, there are short exercises in which the learner is encouraged, for example, to listen, recognize, categorize, and memorize new words. The games get more challenging by omitting, for instance, visual clues so the learner must remember either the pronunciation or spelling of a word. Approximately after every 5 lessons, there is a ‘Test your skills’ section, in which the learner completes exercises related to the topics and words learned in the last 4-5 previous weeks.

There are also additional activities of 4 different activity types that offer additional ways to practice the words. These are Speak, Write, Play, and Rhyme. In the category ‘speak’, the task is to

listen and repeat words that are related to the week's topic. In the second category 'write', the children are encouraged to practice writing by dragging their finger on the screen. In the second category, 'play', there are different kinds of games for the learner, for instance, puzzles and categorization games. The final category 'rhyme' includes rhymes related to the theme, that the children can listen to.

3.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent to the participants with the help of Moomin Language School so that it would reach as many users of Moomin Language School as possible. In total, 18 participants answered the questionnaire: 16 from Finland and 2 from Greece. The questionnaire form for Finnish participants was written in Finnish, and another questionnaire form in English was sent to the participants in Greece (see Appendices 3, 4). The questionnaires were created on Google Forms and sent out to the participants through a link via email, and the participants could answer the questionnaire anonymously. I received the contact information of the participants from Moomin Language School personnel, and the emails were sent to them after the participants had first given their permission to be surveyed. The first links to the questionnaire were sent in December 2019, and the last one in March 2020. First, the goal was to find participants who are language teachers, but as the number of participants would have been very low, also users of Moomin Language School with different educational backgrounds were taken into consideration. To gain more participants from kindergartens, I was advised by the Moomin Language School personnel to apply for a research permit from Touhula, who use Moomin Language School in many of their kindergartens. Touhula is a "daycare family", which is privately owned. The daycares offer early childhood and preschool education (Touhula). I was granted a research permit by Touhula to be able to reach more participants.

The questionnaire consisted of 3 sections and 17 questions, and it combined quantitative and qualitative methods including dichotomous yes/no questions, Likert-scale questions that "measure

the response ‘on an interval level’” and open-ended questions (Trochim 2006). Interval Likert-scale questions that employ a 5-point rating scale “on a set of bipolar adjective pairs” were chosen to allow the participants to rate and evaluate the material in an easily-measurable manner (Trochim 2006). The questions were formed by modifying the Technology Acceptance Model as well as Peltola and Hamberg’s (2018) questionnaire to suit the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was not pretested *per se*, but the only other Moomin Language School user I know, my employer, answered the questionnaire, and based on her notes and comments the questionnaire was modified to its final form.

The first section includes questions of background information, such as the education of the participant, their experience of using Moomin Language School, and the language they teach. This section consisted of multiple-choice questions. The second section includes questions that ask the participant to evaluate different aspects of Moomin Language School by answering to Likert-scale questions and open-ended questions. The Likert-scale questions consisted of 5 options, where e.g. 1 stood for “very poorly designed” and 5 stood for “very well designed”. Five options permit a chance to answer “not poorly nor well designed”, which was done as it was considered a possibility that some of the participants had not utilized the lesson plans to instruct lessons as much as others and therefore did not perhaps have a clear opinion on the lesson plan content. As the number of participants in the questionnaire was low (N=18), the mean or mode of the answers will not be calculated. However, all the Likert-scale questions were accompanied with an option for a written answer as well, in case the participant wanted to add something or specify their answer. This was done to gain more reliable results. The third and final part of the questionnaire focused on investigating the attitudes that the participants have towards the service. This section includes dichotomous yes/no questions that also include an option for a written answer. This was done to gather data that can be used to analyze attitudes in terms of percentage, but also to gain qualitative data to support the dichotomous answers. All the questions were mandatory, except for the last question of the questionnaire, 3.8, which was used to gather any additional information regarding the service. After the questionnaire was first sent

out, the scope of the thesis was narrowed. Due to this alteration, answers to questions 1.4, 2.3, and 3.5 are not emphasized in the analysis.

The participants represent many different educational backgrounds (Figure 2). For the Finnish-speaking participants, this was a multiple-choice question. In addition to the options I selected based

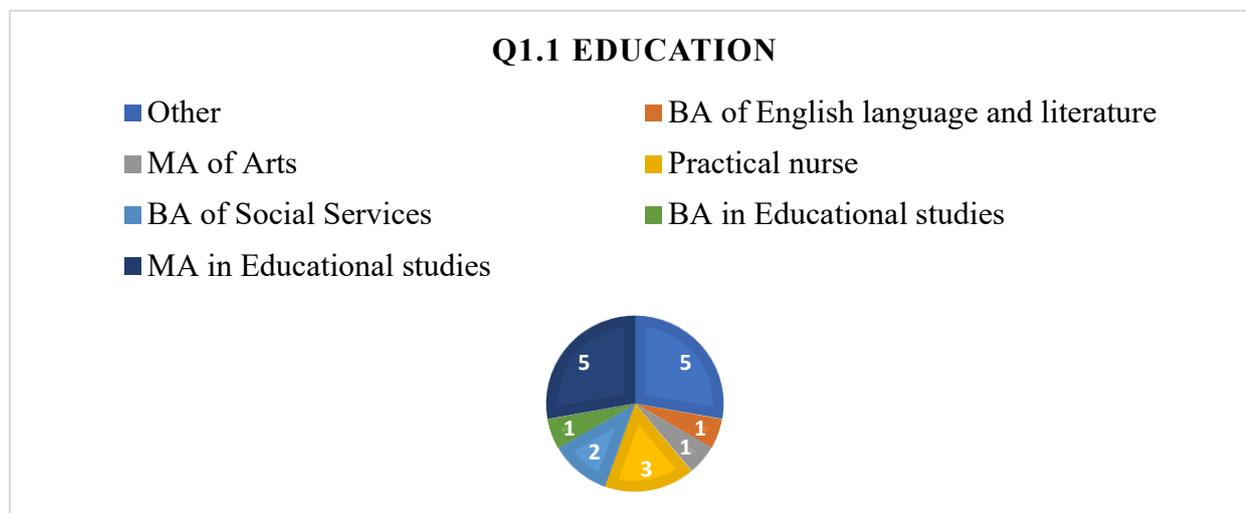


Figure 2. Educational background of the participants (question 1.1.).

on the questionnaire done by Peltola and Hamberg (2018), which were Practical nurse, BA of social services, BA in educational studies, MA in early education and MA in educational studies, there was an option to choose “other” if the participant’s education did not match any of the proposed options. This is also one of the reasons why many participants wished to elaborate and specify their education, and therefore many responses have been labeled as “other”. For the non-Finnish-speaking participants, this question was open-ended, as I have no prior knowledge of the most common degree programs in the field of early language education in Greece. Still, the most important information Figure 2 gives is that the participants come from very different backgrounds in terms of education, which influences their answers, as they look at language learning from different perspectives. In addition to the variation in the educational backgrounds of the participants, there were also differences in the participants’ experience in using Moomin Language School and of the languages taught via the

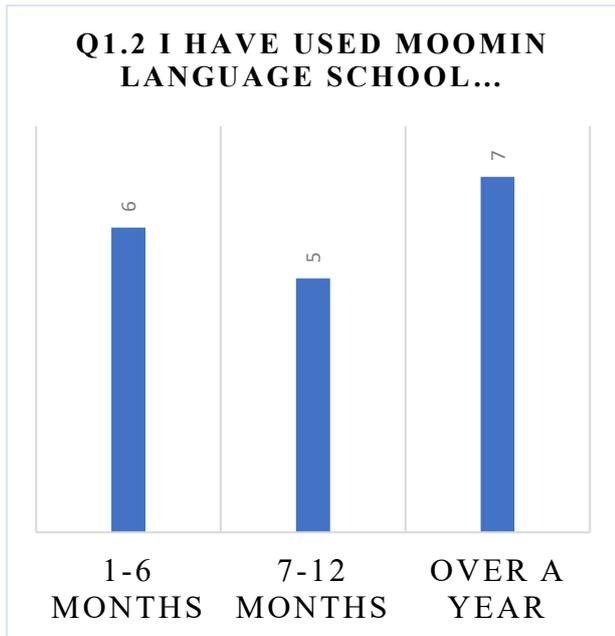


Figure 3. Participants' experience in Moomin Language School in question 1.2.

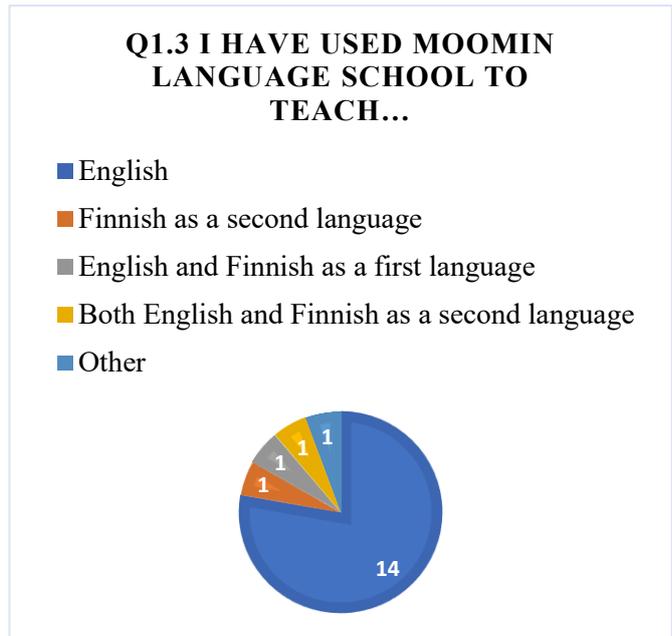


Figure 4. Languages taught by the participants via Moomin Language School in question 1.3.

service (Figures 3, 4). Although one participant had used the service to teach only Finnish, the majority of the participants had taught English via Moomin Language School (Figure 4). Also, even though 7 of the participants had used the service over a year, 5 participants had used it only 1-6 months (Figure 3). The differences in educational backgrounds, experience, and languages they have taught via Moomin Language School are accounted for in the analysis of the results.

4. Methods

In this section, the methods for the analyses are presented. The first chapter discusses the methods that are used to analyze and evaluate the content of Moomin Language School from the perspective of early English language teaching. The next section presents the research methods that are used in the analysis of the answers gathered by the questionnaire. Both methods contribute to indicating as to how Moomin Language School could be improved based on the results of this study.

4.1. Material analysis and evaluation

Moomin Language School is analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods, although the main aspect of the analysis is quantitative to thoroughly inspect the nature and characteristics of the material. This was done to gain more reliable and versatile data. Quantitative methods are used to, for instance, subcategorize content areas and activity types to indicate the emphasis of the material. Qualitative methods are used to describe and analyze the content and activities in more detail and compare them to the theories of SLA and EELT as well as to the regulations of the Finnish National Agency for Education. The analysis of Moomin Language School content is conducted by doing a close reading of the material. Close reading means observing the text in great detail in order to find all striking features or predetermined selected features of the text (Kain 1998). Next, the text is interpreted based on the observations. However, “close reading requires careful gathering of data (your observations) and careful thinking about what these data add up to” (Kain 1998). Hence, the material is analyzed to find relevant features relating to EELT. These observations are interpreted and analyzed, and finally compared to the answers gathered by the questionnaire.

The method for analyzing the content of Moomin Language School is strongly based on Littlejohn’s model for language teaching material analysis (2011, 179-211) introduced in chapter 2.4.1, and it is modified to suit the purposes of this study. This model was selected because it concentrates on analyzing “materials ‘as they are’”, and not analyzing them as “materials in action” (Littlejohn 2011, 181). Indeed, the analysis of how teaching material actually functions in real classroom situations would require a very different methodology, and as the aim of this study is to conduct an evaluation of the material, the teaching content is analyzed solely on the basis of how it is presented in the Moomin Language School Tool and application.

As the aim of the first research questions is to find out how Moomin Language School takes the young age of the learners into consideration, the evaluation focuses on analyzing “how the tasks, language and content in the materials are selected and sequenced” (Littlejohn 2011, 183). The analysis

includes all three levels of analysis that Littlejohn suggests, moving from objective description of the material to subjective analysis of the material and tasks to finally deduce principles of selection and sequence, learner roles as well as demands on learner's competence (Littlejohn 2011, 185). Littlejohn (2011, 187-201) further on suggests a detailed step-by-step model for analyzing the material, but it does not suit the level of young English learners, as the materials and tasks are limited to mostly learning vocabulary and practicing short communicative phrases, and are based on short and generally repetitive action-oriented and playful methods – which are not present in Littlejohn's model. However, he does offer a clear and applicable framework for analyzing English teaching material.

In order to evaluate the content of Moomin Language School, ELT evaluation theories are used to determine what is regarded as age-appropriate thematic and linguistic content and teaching methods for young English language learners. The theory and research introduced in chapter 2 are used to select suitable parameters for the analysis. These parameters function as the framework to which the material can be compared. Hence, this comparison indicates how Moomin Language School follows the guidelines provided by theories in the fields of SLA and EELT, as well as the Finnish National Agency for Education.

4.2. Qualitative survey

A qualitative survey was used as a methodological approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, through which the analysis of attitudes and experiences of the users of Moomin Language School could be conducted. As stated by McQuiggan et al. (2015, 206-207), surveys are a convenient and efficient way to gather relevant data. Furthermore, McQuiggan et al. (2015, 199) explain that in order to give a comprehensive evaluation of a learning service, data “collected through feedback from the users, who are usually educators or learners” is crucial, which is why this method was chosen for this part of the analysis. Surveys tend to be regarded as a quantitative method to gather data; a questionnaire can nevertheless produce plenty of qualitative data in terms of open-ended

questions. As stated by Hutton (1990, 219): “It is able to explore the subtleties of human perception, the nuances of language and the interrelationship of concepts largely lost to the quantitative researcher.” Here Hutton is describing the interviewing method, and although the research method chosen for this study is a questionnaire, the questions still enable the collection of qualitative data of the participants’ attitudes and perceptions through multiple open-ended questions.

The questionnaire used in this study combines quantitative and qualitative methods to gain more reliable results, and to reveal any contradictions in the participants’ answers. An electronic questionnaire was chosen because, in addition to it being an inexpensive, efficient, and timesaving choice, it enabled the questionnaire to be sent to as many people as possible to ensure the maximum number of responses (Barribeau et al. 1994-2012). However, one of the weaknesses of an electronic questionnaire is that the participants cannot ask any instructions, and this may affect the response rate.

5. Analysis

The following chapter is divided into three sections. The first two sections analyze the content of Moomin Language School from the perspective of early English language teaching. The section begins with an analysis of the thematic and linguistic content of Moomin Language School, followed by an analysis of the teaching methods offered in the lesson plans and the application. The third and last part of the analysis examines the views, attitudes, and experiences of users of Moomin Language School gathered by the questionnaire. From the basis of the results of the analyses in all three sections, an indication as to how Moomin Language School could be improved can be concluded. This will be discussed further in chapter 6.

5.1. Thematic and linguistic content

This section investigates the appropriacy of selection and organization of the content of Moomin Language School and aims to answer the following research question: “1.1 Is the selection of the thematic and linguistic content age-appropriate, suitable, relevant and interesting to young learners? Is it organized appropriately?” The analysis begins with themes, continues to discuss vocabulary, and ends in the analysis of the audio material.

5.1.1. Themes

To begin with, the quantitative analysis of the thematic content reveals that Moomin Language School offers a wide range of themes during the first year of the curriculum. The selection and number of themes reflect the way in which the designers of Moomin Language School perceive what kinds of themes and topics are relevant and meaningful to young English learners. In the Moomin Language School curriculum’s span of 50 lessons, there are 25 distinguishable themes in total (Table 1). As the titles of the weekly lesson plans do not always indicate the straightforward topic of the lesson, the analysis was done by inspecting all 50 lessons one by one and determining to which theme does the

Table 1. Distinguishable themes in Moomin Language School lesson plans.

1. Family	11. Park	21. Counting/numbers
2. Town	12. Verbs	22. Entertainment & technology
3. Nature	13. Adjectives	23. Politeness
4. Vehicles	14. Cooking	24. Classroom
5. Home	15. Colors	25. Shapes
6. Kindergarten	16. Clothes	
7. Food & drinks	17. Body	
8. Animals	18. Weather	
9. Traffic words	19. Things that fly	
10. Shopping	20. Toys	

weekly topic relate most prominently. For example, the theme of food consists of lessons titled “7. Food and drink”, “17. Play, eat and drink”, “39. Fruits and berries”, “42. Movie night”, and “43. Counting vegetables”. All these lessons contain food-related vocabulary, which is why the sequencing of lessons can be seen as an objective to develop a thematic vocabulary of food items lesson at a time.

Also, some themes overlap in the weekly lesson topics, as can be seen here; the theme of numbers consists of the lessons titled “40. Count”, “43. Counting vegetables” and “44. Counting at the Zoo”. Consequently, the last two lessons include also themes of food and animals, which is why they are perceived as belonging under two different themes. In addition, counting is introduced in some of the earlier lessons as part of a game or activity, but as its role as a distinguishable theme is insignificant, these lessons are not categorized under the theme of numbers.

Out of all 25 themes, 15 include revision or developing thematic vocabulary (Figure 5). This means, that of all 25 themes, 15 themes are practiced more than once, and the theme-related vocabulary will expand or deepen as new vocabulary is introduced or revised more than once. Also, there are 3 lessons in the first year’s curriculum, that are not included in the total count of the themes.

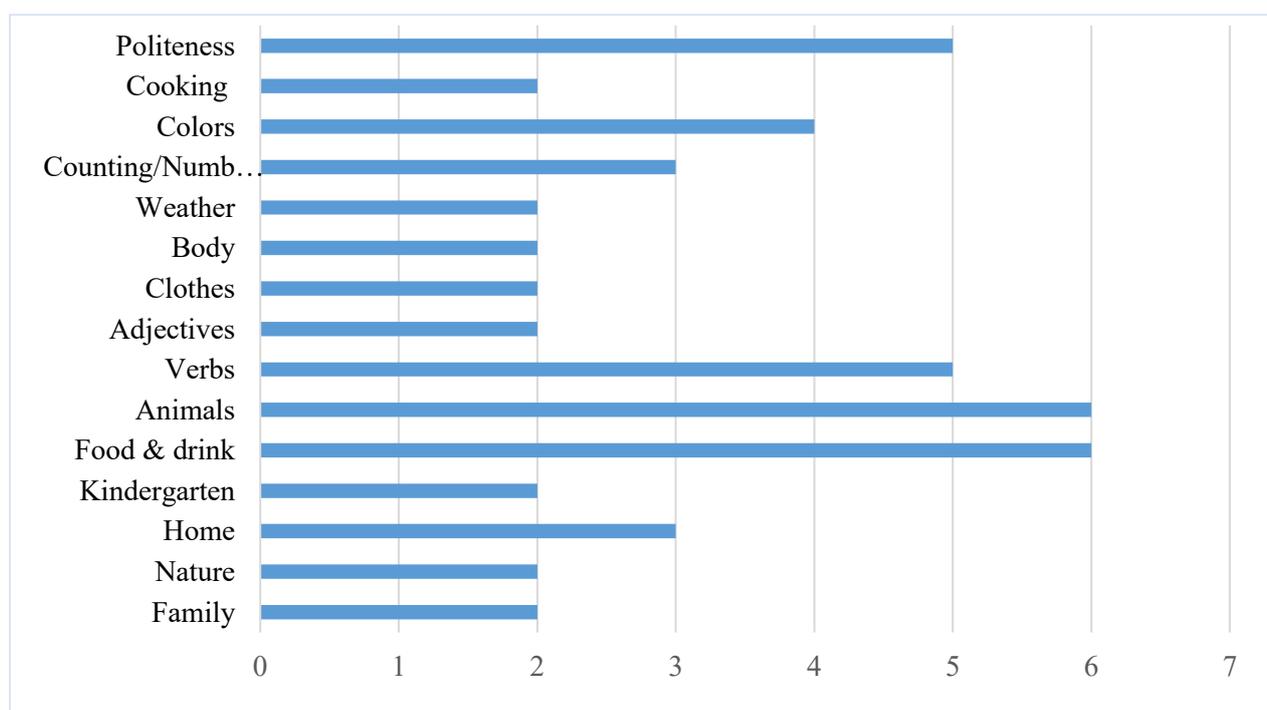


Figure 5. Instances of revision or development of thematic vocabulary in Moomin Language School lesson plans.

This is because their focus falls on abstract matters, and the lessons’ goal is not to introduce any linguistic elements but to practice, for instance, social interaction, collaboration, and motor skills. However, a clear division of the theme-related lessons can be difficult to make, as some lessons consist of more than one distinct theme, and their prominence is subjective. For example, almost all

food & drink related lessons include an activity that introduces or revises politeness rules. Nevertheless, it appears that most emphasis is given to the theme of animals and food & drink, and the second place in terms of prominence is shared between themes of verbs and politeness (Figure 5). The content's focus is thus very age-appropriate to young English learners, who benefit from familiar, relevant, and interesting themes and topics – for instance learning about animals. Also, short communicative phrases are introduced along with the theme of politeness, which coincides with the regulations of the National Core Curriculum.

It seems that overall the themes relate closely to the familiar topics of interest of young children (Table 1, Figure 5). As regulated by the Finnish National Agency for Education (2020, 29), the content of topics should revolve around “pupils’ everyday lives” and “areas of interest”. From this perspective, the themes of Moomin Language School align with the current regulations, since the most frequent themes are familiar, relevant, and interesting topics to most young learners. Also, themes of home, kindergarten, and school take into consideration the actual physical environments in which young learners often spend their time in real life. Through these themes, the children can link new vocabulary to actual, concrete objects in their surroundings outside the English classroom, whilst deepening the learning experience. Furthermore, Moomin Language School incorporates themes that are often familiar to young children in today’s digital world. For example, there is a theme of technology with words such as “tablet” in week 6, and “laptop” in week 41, which take into consideration the current needs of 21st century children, who start using entertainment technology often at an early age.

However, there are some inconsistencies in the way the themes are organized in the first year’s curriculum. The lessons in Table 2 were selected as they highlight some characteristics in the structure and sequencing of the thematic content in the curriculum. The number in front of the lesson indicates the lesson week (Table 2). Thus, the curriculum starts with the theme of family, which as a theme is very familiar and relevant to young learners. However, the theme of town which includes words of

Table 2. Example of the organization of lesson plans, adapted from the Moomin Language School Tool.

1. Family	2. Town	5. Home	11. On the bus	12. Shopping	23. Colors	40. Count	41. Entertainment & technology
<i>girl boy mom dad grandma grandpa family</i>	<i>house people park café shop school bag hat</i>	<i>chair rug table lamp sofa door window bookshelf</i>	<i>a town a street light a hot air balloon a traffic sign a bus a road a roundabout a crosswalk</i>	<i>a shopping cart a bill a shopping basket a cash register chicken potato a coin a receipt</i>	<i>red blue yellow green</i>	<i>numbers from 1 to 10</i>	<i>a phone a camera a DVD player a screen a movie headphones a laptop a keyboard a mouse a radio</i>

public buildings, precedes the theme of home, thus moving backward from a more distant topic to a more familiar one from the young learner's perspective. Certainly, home can be seen as more familiar to young children, than public places. In addition, already in week 12, the topic of the lesson is shopping, whereas the theme of colors is introduced for the first time in week 23 and themes of numbers in week 40, which as themes could be regarded as being more familiar, comprehensible and relevant to young learners than the theme of shopping. Moreover, the theme of entertainment & technology with an extensive word list is placed right after the first appearance of the theme of numbers, which highlights the difference in challenge level between the two lessons' linguistic content. The organization of themes in the curriculum does not seem to follow a straightforward pattern of expanding from the most familiar, relevant, and simple themes to the most distant and intricate topics from a young English learner's perspective.

The sequencing of theme-related lessons seems to vary in the curriculum. Some theme-related lessons are spread across the curriculum, whereas some themes are sequenced tightly one week after another. For example, lessons with the theme of food & drink are placed in weeks 7, 17, 39, 42, 43, and 45, leaving a gap of 21 weeks between the second and third lessons, whereas the last four lessons are rather tightly sequenced. Then again, for example, the themes of colors, verbs, clothes, and body have a follow-up lesson in subsequent weeks (Table 3). These theme-related lesson pairs are followed

Table 3. Examples of lessons with a follow-up lesson in subsequent weeks, adapted from the Moomin Language School Tool.

23. Colors	24. Colors	25. Action	26. Action	27. Clothes	28. Clothes	29. Head	30. Body
<i>red</i> <i>blue</i> <i>yellow</i> <i>green</i>	<u>red</u> <u>blue</u> <u>yellow</u> <u>green</u> <i>gray</i> <i>pink</i> <i>orange</i> <i>black</i> <i>white</i> <i>purple</i> <i>brown</i>	<u>catch</u> <u>kick</u> <u>throw</u>	<u>run</u> <u>climb</u> <u>jump</u> <u>walk</u> <u>play music</u> <u>drink</u> <u>eat</u> <u>play videogames</u> <u>play football</u> <u>paint</u> <u>read</u> <u>swim</u> <i>can</i> <i>catch fish</i> <i>ride a horse</i> <i>ride a bike</i> <i>catch a ball</i>	<i>a t-shirt</i> <i>pants</i> <i>a skirt</i> <i>a jacket</i> <i>a dress</i> <i>overalls</i> <i>a cap</i> <i>a shirt</i>	<u>a t-shirt</u> <u>pants</u> <u>a skirt</u> <u>a jacket</u> <u>a dress</u> <u>overalls</u> <u>a cap</u> <u>a shirt</u> <i>a shoe</i> <i>a boot</i> <i>a sock</i> <i>a sneaker</i> <i>singular &</i> <i>plural</i>	<i>a head</i> <i>an eye</i> <i>a nose</i> <i>a mouth</i> <i>hair</i> <i>a cheek</i> <i>a chin</i> <i>an ear</i>	<i>a foot</i> <i>a hand</i> <i>fingers toes</i> <i>a knee</i> <i>a back</i> <i>a shoulder a</i> <i>belly</i>

immediately in the following week by adding new linguistic elements to the existing knowledge. All new words practiced in the lesson are in cursive, whereas already familiar words are underlined. The lessons share a straightforward and logical thematical connection to each other, and young learners may better remember the words of the previous lesson when the follow-up lesson comes only one week after. Moreover, it becomes easier for young learners to comprehend the relationship between new and old words, as well as link the new information to the previously existing knowledge. As McQuiggan et al. (2015,31) argue, “organizing larger pieces of information into meaningful units, we allow for greater processing capacity in working memory”. By sequencing themes closely together, the learning processes of young English learners are better supported, compared to if there were multiple lesson weeks between the theme-related lessons.

5.1.2. Vocabulary

It appears that the first year of Moomin Language School offers a vast variety of new words for young learners both through the lesson plans as well the application. On average, there are 8-12 words

introduced or revised in each lesson with a distinguishable theme throughout the first year's curriculum. On their website, it is mentioned that the 4-year-curriculum offers up to 3000 new words in total. It needs to be noted that the application entails additional vocabulary and revision of the previous vocabulary, which do not appear in the lesson plans. For example, in week 10 with the theme of home, there are also such words introduced in the application as "dog", and "ball". "Dog" is a word that has appeared in the lessons in week 3, but "ball" is a completely new word introduced solely in the application. Therefore, the actual number of words that Moomin Language School offers is much higher, than what appears in the lesson plans.

To analyze the vocabulary of lesson plans, first, the criterion of the teachability of the selected vocabulary must be revisited. The criteria of teachability – brevity, demonstrability, relevance, and appropriacy – are crucial in selecting vocabulary in language teaching materials. The selected words for vocabulary teachability analysis in Table 4 are based on their length or number of sounds of speech they entail that do not occur in the Finnish language, which makes them more challenging to pronounce than short one-syllable words with no distinctively English speech sounds. Hence, the selected words represent one of the most challenging words of each lesson (Table 4). Regarding words in lesson 1 which consists of words such as "grandma", all four elements of teachability apply; the word is relatively short, appropriate, relevant, and easy to demonstrate. However, in week's 11 traffic-themed vocabulary, the word "a roundabout", is neither short, particularly relevant or familiar, nor easy to demonstrate to very young children, as, for instance, kindergarteners are not usually particularly familiar with specific traffic-related vocabulary. In addition, in the word "a cash register" in week 12, demonstrability and appropriacy do apply, but regarding brevity and number of speech sounds that occur in the English language, it does not fit well to the needs of very young learners. All in all, based on the observations made from Table 4, most variation in the teachability of the selected vocabulary occurs in terms of relevance and appropriacy of the word, as also this element in teachability can be viewed subjectively.

Table 4. Analysis of vocabulary teachability, examples adapted from Table 2.

Lesson & example word	Brevity	Demonstrability	Relevance & Appropriacy
1. Family: <i>grandma</i>	Two syllables	Easy to demonstrate to young learners	Familiar and relevant since part of the learner's family and possibly everyday lives
2. Town: <i>people</i>	Two syllables	Easy to demonstrate to young learners	Familiar and relevant to young learners' surroundings in their everyday lives
5. Home: <i>bookshelf</i>	Two syllables, includes a speech sound that does not occur often in the Finnish language: /ʃ/	Easy to demonstrate to young learners	Familiar to young learners as an item that is in their close surroundings in their everyday lives
11. On the bus: <i>a roundabout</i>	Three syllables	Easy to demonstrate to older children, possibly difficult to demonstrate to young children who may not know the meaning of the word even in their native language	Not a crucially essential or familiar part of young learners' everyday lives
12. Shopping: <i>a cash register</i>	Four syllables, includes speech sounds that do not often or never occur in the Finnish language: /ʃ/ /dʒ/	Easy to demonstrate to young learners	Not a crucially essential or familiar part of very young children's everyday lives, but may be familiar through play and toys
23. Colors: <i>yellow</i>	Two syllables	Easy to demonstrate to young learners	Familiar and relevant to young learners' everyday lives
40. Count: <i>seven</i>	Two syllables	Easy to demonstrate to young learners	Familiar and relevant to young learners' everyday lives
41. Entertainment & technology: <i>headphones</i>	Two syllables	Easy to demonstrate to young learners	Familiar and relevant to young learners' everyday lives

As an example of the construction of developing vocabulary in the lesson plans, the theme "Home" is presented. It includes three lessons relating to furniture words and rooms (Table 5). After the first Home-lesson, more items are being added to the list of furniture words, and therefore in the later sessions there will be words the learners already know, and some words that are new to them.

The new words of the lesson are in cursive, whereas the familiar words are underlined. It can be concluded that the development of vocabulary is being constructed on top of previously existing knowledge in order to expand and deepen the learner’s knowledge of the theme, which makes the memorization of the new information more effortless, and increases the learners’ “depth of learning” and thus the young learners are able to “engage with the material at a much deeper level” (McQuiggan

Table 5. Vocabulary content and sequencing of lessons with theme “Home”, adapted from the Moomin Language School Tool.

5. Home	10. Home	14. Home
<i>chair</i>	<u>a table</u>	<u>an armchair</u>
<i>rug</i>	<u>a chair</u>	<u>a mirror</u>
<i>table</i>	<u>a bookshelf</u>	<u>a wardrobe</u>
<i>lamp</i>	<u>a lamp</u>	<u>a rug</u>
<i>sofa</i>	<u>a sofa</u>	<u>a bed</u>
<i>door</i>		
<i>window</i>	<i>an armchair</i>	<i>curtains</i>
<i>bookshelf</i>	<i>a shelf</i>	<i>under</i>
	<i>a rug</i>	<i>in</i>
	<i>a bed</i>	<i>on</i>
	<i>a drawer</i>	<i>behind</i>
	<i>a computer</i>	<i>between</i>
	<i>a tv</i>	<i>in front of</i>
	<i>a wardrobe</i>	
	<i>a mirror</i>	
	<i>kitchen</i>	
	<i>living room</i>	
	<i>bathroom</i>	
	<i>bedroom</i>	

et al. 2015, 30-31). In addition, the last lesson also introduces prepositions as a new linguistic

element, and it is linked to furniture-related vocabulary. The prepositions are introduced to learners through picture cards, in which for example a cat is *behind* a *chair*, and a clock is *on* a *table*. This makes the introduction of new linguistic elements very age-appropriate to young English learners, as new information is introduced along with interesting and familiar content by combining animals and furniture words.

5.1.3. Audio material

There is a myriad of audio files that can be used in instructing English to young learners with Moomin Language School. In the 50 lesson plans, there are 50 different Songs/Rhymes and 3 stories. Considering the fact that music and singing songs or nursery rhymes are an extremely beneficial way to teach English to young children (Bland 2019, 272-273; Mezzi 2012, 20; Whitehead 1999, 21), Moomin Language School does offer a great variety of possibilities specifically for this purpose. This aligns with the core curriculum’s recommendation to use songs and nursery rhymes in instruction to

support both interaction, interpretation, and text production skills (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 29). For example, in one food-related lesson the following rhyme in Table 6 is introduced to the children after name-check:

Strong alliteration and rhythm help the children memorize and sing along. Also, this rhyme offers “strong mental images that help in the memorization process” (Bland 2019, 272-273), as the content

Table 6. “Rhyme: Form Bananas” An example of lyrics of a song adapted from Moomin Language School Tool.

<i>Banana Split!</i>	<i>Slice bananas,</i>
<i>Form bananas,</i>	<i>Slice, slice bananas.</i>
<i>Form, form bananas.</i>	<i>Slice bananas,</i>
<i>Peel bananas,</i>	<i>And mmm take a bite!</i>
<i>Peel, peel bananas.</i>	

of the song is simple, and it is easy to accompany the lyrics with nonverbal clues by gesturing to support comprehension (Table 6).

Next, the following story in Table 7 was chosen for a more detailed qualitative analysis based on the fact that its theme is more abstract, educational, and thematically a strong part of the core curriculum as it focuses on collaboration and life skills. Also, this story represents one of the three stories that the lesson plans offer. The selected story “The girl who didn’t like to share” reinforces collaboration and critical thinking. The instructions for the story include the following: “Give each 2-3 children a blanket, asking them to share it while you listen to the story. Help the children get comfortable and wrap the blankets around themselves” (Playvation Ltd.). Indeed, as the affective factors contribute to second language acquisition, it is important to pay particular attention to the atmosphere and surroundings of the learners to reinforce positive emotions (Yule 2010, 192). Moomin Language School offers picture cards that provide visual clues, which “facilitates the comprehension of unfamiliar vocabulary” (Hestetræet 2019, 228). Moreover, in addition to practicing

Table 7. Content and instructions for story “The girl who didn’t like to share” in lesson “46. Sharing” adapted from the Moomin Language School Tool.

Story	Instructions
<p><i>Once upon a time, there was a girl who didn't like to share.</i></p> <p><i>When she had many cupcakes and her brother said: "I don't have any cupcakes. Can we share them?" the girl said: "No, no, no! I don't want to!" because she didn't like to share.</i></p> <p>...</p> <p><i>Because the girl didn't like to share, she made everyone sad. She made her brother sad. She made her friend sad. She made her teacher sad. The girl didn't like making people sad. It made her sad too.</i></p> <p><i>What do you think the girl should do?</i></p> <p><i>So she said to her brother: "Let's share the cupcakes!" One for the brother, one for the girl.</i></p> <p><i>She said to her friend: "Let's share the toys!" One for the friend, one for the girl.</i></p> <p><i>She said to her teacher: "Let's share the books!" One for the teacher, one for the girl.</i></p> <p><i>"Well done!" said the teacher. Now everyone was happy.</i></p>	<p>Place the picture of the girl in the middle.</p> <p>Place the cupcakes next to the girl on the right side. Place the brother on the girl's right side, further away, with the smiling side up.</p> <p>...</p> <p>Flip the brother, the friend, and the teacher so the frowning side is up. Flip the girl so the frowning side is up.</p> <p>Talk with the children and listen to their suggestions. They can discuss in their mother tongue.</p> <p>Place one cupcake next to the brother. Flip the girl and the brother so the smiling side is up.</p> <p>Place one toy next to the friend. Flip the friend so that the smiling side is up.</p> <p>Place one book next to the teacher.</p> <p>Flip the teacher so that the smiling side is up.</p>

listening comprehension, the story entails engaging in discussion and critical thinking with others; the children are asked to deduce the meaning of the story, as well as devise possible solutions to the problem, which is strongly linked with social skills. This theme as well as instructional method aligns perfectly with the regulations of the core curriculum, that promotes collaboration, and encourages to deduce meaning and observe spoken language through, for instance, using stories, making it an age-appropriate activity to young English learners at various stages of development.

5.2. Teaching methods

This section investigates the appropriacy of selection and organization of the methods of instruction in Moomin Language School, and it aims to answer the following research question: “1.2 In which ways are the linguistic content practiced and does it suit the language learning process of young children at each developmental stage? Are the methods functional and easy to apply to different contexts?” The analysis begins with examining the categorization and frequency of activity types in the curriculum as well as in individual lessons, followed by an analysis of the methods and activities that are used to practice new linguistic elements. The section ends with the analysis of the methods used in the Moomin Language School application.

5.2.1. Categorization and frequency of activities

It appears that the Moomin Language School curriculum offers multiple different activities and exercises that focus on engaging young learners in an active and playful manner. In total, there are 3 Introduction plays, 88 types of Plays and 18 Crafts, and all in all, there are 161 subtypes of activities. Each lesson is divided between different activity types, and the distribution is fairly balanced between all activity types (Figure 6). However, “practice”, which consists of practicing new linguistic elements, covers the biggest portion in most of the lessons. Also, the methods for practicing new vocabulary often entail physical activity and playfulness, which is well-suited to the needs of young learners. Indeed, “Plays” offer the most variation in the curriculum (Figure 7). “Songs/Rhymes” are in the second place, whereas “Crafts” occupy the third largest section of all the activities. Then again, “Introduction Plays” and “Stories” are not emphasized in the overall picture.

Indeed, it appears that there are plenty of different types of plays in the first year’s curriculum of Moomin Language School (Figure 7). However, a close reading of the activities reveals that in fact many of these plays are similar to one another, which reduces the actual count. For example, there is

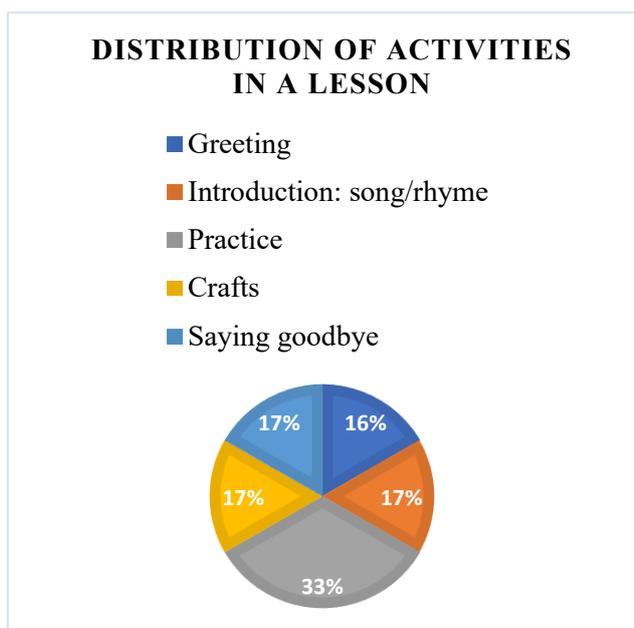


Figure 6. Distribution of activities in a lesson.

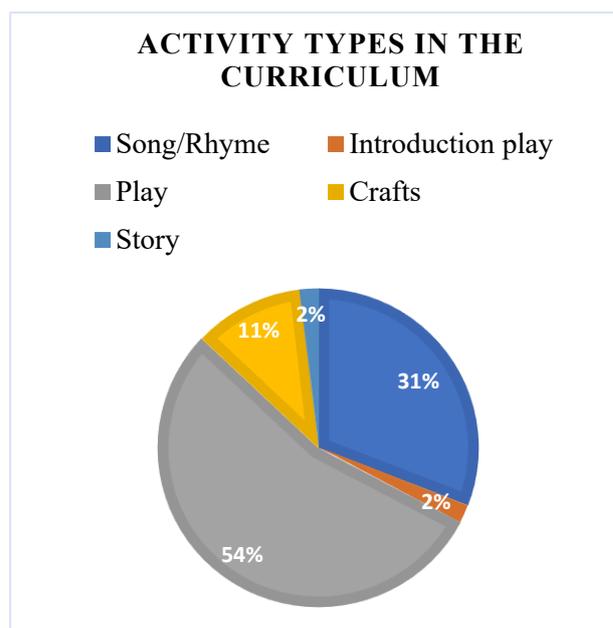


Figure 7. Frequency of activity types in the curriculum.

an exercise called “Hidden picture cards”, in which the teacher hides picture cards in the classroom, and the children must find them. In contrast, there is also an exercise called “Can you find the carrot?”, which is carried out essentially in the same manner. Although the actual number of “Plays” is less than 88, there is still a vast variety of different games and plays in the Tool. There are 73 activities that only occur once in the whole curriculum, meaning that 83 percent of the activities have been designed for a specific purpose in a particular theme. Still, it needs to be remembered that although the name of the activity might be unique, the content of it can strongly resemble some other activities, which decreases the percentage. Of all the 88 Plays, there are 58 exercises that entail physical activity of some kind, for instance, running, walking, jumping, or miming. The other 30 exercises that do not require physical activity from the child, are centered around memory games.

The emphasis that is given to engaging and action-oriented “Plays” coincides with the regulations of the core curriculum. Indeed, it was mentioned that the chosen teaching methods should focus on the “joy of learning varied and action-oriented working methods” (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 26). In fact, in order to develop pupils’ interaction, text interpretation, and text production skills, for instance, play, games, and drama should be used. In addition, EELT research

centers great attention to the fact that utilizing playful interaction as an instructional method for young learners is beneficial to their language learning process (Mezzi 2012, 19; Adisti 2016, 138; Yule 2010, 176; Whitehead 1999, 15). Therefore, Moomin Language School's emphasis on providing multiple playful and action-oriented activities to teach English to young learners is an appropriate and well-suited choice.

5.2.2. Methods for practicing linguistic elements

Four different exercises have been selected for close reading and analysis. The first three activities are very prototypical and the most frequent activity types used in the lesson plans, and the last exercise type was chosen because unlike the first three activities, this exercise occurs only once in the curriculum and its construction differs from the other three in a significant way, which makes it an interesting object of analysis.

First, the most common exercise type that appears 6 times in the lesson plans is called "Which one is missing?" (Table 8). This exercise functions as a memory game for the children and situates each learner one by one as an active participant in the shared activity (Table 9). Here, both text interpretation and text production skills are repeatedly practiced, and all learners have a chance to practice the words. The play engages children in a joyful and playful manner by introducing elements that shift the learner from passive to active participant. The structure of the exercise also makes the

Table 8. Instructions "Play: Which one is missing?" adapted from the Moomin Language School Tool.

Materials: Picture cards (girl, boy, mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, family).

Instructions:

1. Sit down with the children.
2. Go through the picture cards with the children and practice saying the words.
3. Put the picture cards on the table/floor with the picture side up.
4. Ask the children to close their eyes. Take one picture card away and hide it behind your back.
5. Ask the children to open their eyes. Ask them to guess which picture card is hidden. If the children don't know the word in English, they can say the word in their mother tongue.
6. Repeat the word in English.
7. Once the children know what to do, let one child be the one to take away a picture card. You can also let them take away more than one.

Table 9. Activity analysis for “Play: Which one is missing?”.

Parameter	Analysis
Interaction skills	Vocabulary and linguistic structures are practiced as part of the game in interaction with others
Text interpretation skills	Pupils learn to comprehend basic words they hear and see in their daily lives, focus on spoken language, opportunity for revision. Learners practice observing English language pronunciation through play and images.
Text production skills	English language pronunciation, stress and intonation are practiced repeatedly through play
Action-orientedness	No action-oriented elements
Engagement & playfulness	Engages the learner to participate actively as the role of the “guesser” and “hider” shifts. Learning as a memory game creates joy of learning and playfulness, which increases motivation.
Requirements	The length of activity is heavily dependent on the number of learners in the group. The exercise is easily prepared by printing out the required picture cards. No special requirements for the space.

activity seem like a play or a game, which makes the interaction motivating and meaningful from the perspective of the learner. Meaningfulness of interaction plays a significant role in second language acquisition (Yule 2010, 192). Indeed, placing young children in these active roles is extremely important in engaging them in playful and thus meaningful interaction with their peers and the teacher. Furthermore, “guessing” was listed as one of the five ways that can be used as a basis for EELT activities that engage the learner to produce output in a playful manner (Mezzi 2012, 19). This is also mentioned in the core curriculum, as it is suggested that the method of working should be based on “exploratory learning” (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 29).

However, the age-appropriacy and functionality of the activity in big groups are debatable. As is also stated in the core curriculum, “pupils’ age and stage of development must be taken into consideration” when designing teaching methods (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 29),

this activity is very different in the eyes of a 3-year-old versus an 8-year-old. Although 3-year-olds imitate speech patterns very well, they do not work well in groups, and they have very short attention spans (Christion and Murray 2010,74). For example, if there is a particularly big group of very young children, say a group of twelve 3-year-olds, waiting for one's turn can turn out to be overwhelming, which can weaken young learners' motivation significantly. Thus, this exercise would benefit older children best. In addition, although the activity engages children in playful interaction, it is not particularly action-oriented, as it does not entail for example running or jumping or any other type of movement. Then again, in terms of the demand for space and materials, the activity is flexible and easy to prepare, making it easy to apply to different contexts and situations.

The second most frequent exercise with 4 instances is called "Run to the picture!" (Table 10). In contrast to the previous exercise, this activity is strongly action-oriented, and the length of this activity is not dependent on the number of children in the group, making it an age-appropriate and

Table 10. Instructions for "Play: Run to the picture!" adapted from the Moomin Language School Tool.

Materials: Picture cards (girl, boy, mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, family), Blu-Tack or tape

Instructions:

1. Place the picture cards around the room (for example on a chair, under the table, on the wall).
2. Ask the children to stand up.
3. Say one of the words in English. The children must run to the corresponding picture. For example, if you say "dad", children must run to the picture of dad.
4. You can also let a child choose a word and say it in English.

learner-centered activity (Table 11). These elements make it a perfect example of an engaging, exciting, and motivating language learning activity for young learners. Each child is once again an active participant, and shy learners can participate in this activity with more ease since the attention does not shift from child to child one at a time. This helps take the pressure off and build a secure learning environment in which it is safe to take risks. These affective factors have a significant influence on second language acquisition (Yule 2010, 192 McQuiggan et al. 2015, 262; Whitehead 1999, 19). The activity is playful and fast, and it incorporates both memorization of words, visual

Table 11. Activity analysis for “Play: Run to the picture!”.

Parameter	Analysis
Interaction skills	Pupils are not encouraged to interact or work together. Opportunity to deduce meaning by following the example of others.
Text interpretation skills	Pupils learn to comprehend basic words they hear and see in their daily lives, focus on spoken language, opportunity for revision. Learners practice observing English language pronunciation through play and images.
Text production skills	If step number 4 is included, English language pronunciation, stress and intonation are practiced, but not repeatedly or in a particularly extensive manner.
Action-orientedness	Focus is strongly on action-oriented methods: opportunities to run and move around and explore the space.
Engagement & playfulness	Engages the learner in playful physical activity. Learning as a memory game creates joy of learning and playfulness, which increases motivation.
Requirements	The length of activity is not dependent on the number of learners in the group. The exercise is easily prepared by printing out the required picture cards. The space should be large, empty, and confined enough to withhold running children.

clues, as well as text interpretation skills, which all contribute to language learning (Hestetraet 2019, 228; Bland 2019, 271-272). If step 4 is applied, the activity includes also text production skills. However, the size of the group may limit the possibility to apply step 4 into the exercise. Still, having this option available offers flexibility and opportunities for the teacher to carry out and modify the exercise according to the circumstances. In this way, the teacher can adjust the challenge level and time consumption of the exercise if needed, which adds functionality.

This exercise is very flexible in terms of age-appropriacy; the learners can engage with their peers and complete the activity together, but in general, collaboration is not needed. Thus, in theory, this activity is suitable for all stages of development for all children from 3 to 8 years old. Then again, because of these elements, the activity does not engage the children in a deeper verbal engagement or interaction with others, as the interaction is mostly limited and brief. Also, there is no guarantee

that all learners will focus on recognizing and memorizing the words, as they can just follow others' example and run after others to the corresponding picture card. Furthermore, the activity makes many demands in terms of space decreasing its adaptability to altering circumstances.

The third activity occupies a shared third place in terms of frequency, with 3 instances in the lesson plans, and it is called "Look Alike", and its main focus is on nonverbal communication and drama (Table 12). The activity allows playfulness, imagination, and creativeness to take place, as

Table 12. Instructions for "Play: Look Alike" adapted from the Moomin Language School Tool.

Materials: Picture cards (a tiger, an elephant, a wolf, a zebra, a monkey, a rhino, a bear)

Instructions:

1. Sit by a table or on the floor.
2. Go through the picture cards with the children and practice saying the words.
3. Ask children to stand up.
4. Say one of the words and show the picture card. Ask children to act like the animal/item in the picture; for example, if you say "a tiger", the children are supposed to act and sound like a tiger.
5. Continue until you have gone through the picture cards at least once.

children explore drama by acting out different exotic animals (Table 12, 13). Using drama in EELT is also encouraged in the core curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 28-29). Furthermore, the activity offers a great opportunity to engage young learners in nonverbal communication to expand their comprehension (Table 13). Also, it exercises listening comprehension in a versatile and joyful way: the learners are encouraged to link previous knowledge of wild animals' behavior, sounds, and appearance to the corresponding new word, supporting a deeper engagement in the learning process (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 30-31). Furthermore, the exercise is easy to prepare from the perspective of the teacher, because the activity does not make many demands in terms of space, materials, or number of children in the group.

This exercise is especially appropriate for young learners of approximately 3 to 6 years old, since completing the exercise does not require collaboration and is strongly built on playfulness, and it does not require extended moments of deep concentration. Also, the activity may be seen as inconvenient from the perspective of older learners of 7 to 8 years, who are completing these exercises

Table 13. Activity analysis for “Play: Look Alike”.

Parameter	Analysis
Interaction skills	Vocabulary and meaning are practiced as part of play. Opportunity to deduce meaning from context and general knowledge. Pupils are not required to work together or interact with each other.
Text interpretation skills	Pupils learn to comprehend basic words they hear and see in their daily lives, focus on spoken language, opportunities for revision. Learners practice observing English language pronunciation through images, play, and drama.
Text production skills	English language pronunciation, stress, and intonation are practiced once before the game, so production skills are not repeatedly exercised.
Action-orientedness	Entails action-oriented methods, as learners are encouraged to use movement and drama in the activity.
Engagement & playfulness	Engages the learner to participate in physical activity by using imagination and creativity. Builds a foundation for joyful and playful learning, which increases motivation.
Requirements	The length of activity is not dependent on the number of learners in the group. The exercise is easily prepared by printing out the required picture cards. No significant requirements for space, however, open space would support the children to move more freely.

most likely in an elementary school setting in a classroom with desks and chairs, in which this type of activity might seem out of place. In addition to the constraints in terms of space and age-appropriacy, the learners are not required to produce output in the activity or engage in meaningful verbal interaction with their peers or the teacher, as once again, the verbal interaction is limited and brief.

The fourth and last exercise is called “Let’s go shopping!”, and unlike the previous exercises, this is a unique activity that appears just once in the lesson plans (Table 14). The activity aims to practice collaborative and polite expressions through the introduction of new theme-related vocabulary (Table 15). The structure of the exercise is designed in a way that incorporates playfulness, drama, and requires producing output as well as exercising listening comprehension. The

Table 14. Instructions for "Play: Let's go shopping!" adapted from the Moomin Language School Tool.

Materials: Furniture and toys in your classroom, Picture cards (ice cream, a sandwich, a pizza, a pie, a milkshake, juice, a doughnut, a hamburger), Craft paper, Scissors, Pencils and coloring pens

Instructions:

1. Build a grocery stand with the things you find in your classroom.
2. Make 1) groceries and 2) fake money out of craft paper or use toys.
3. Practice saying the following sentences, and ask/explain to children what they mean:
 "Would you like ___?"
 "Yes please"
 "No thank you"
 "May I have __, please?" / " __, please!" (depending on the children's level and courage)
 "Thank you"
 "You're welcome"
4. Say: "Let's go shopping!"
5. You can start as the cashier and ask children "Would you like ___?" Once the children get the hang of the activity, let them be both customers and cashiers.
6. Have fun!

learners are given active roles, in which they have a chance to use their imagination and creativeness while practicing producing output. The activity is built in a way that enables meaningful interaction to take place; the learner must interact with their peers in order to engage in the play and fulfill their given roles by incorporating drama to the learning experience. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the core curriculum recommends using drama and play in EELT (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 28-29). The exercise engages the learners in working together in a meaningful manner, and this is something that the new core curriculum strongly emphasizes as well. Also, in the activity, the learners are required to produce and respond to very common and polite expressions that can be used in multiple real-life situations, which is perfectly in line with the regulations of the core curriculum (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 27-29). Furthermore, the structure and content of the exercise positions these common and polite expressions in a meaningful relationship with new linguistic items, enhancing their significance in interaction. The fact that the chosen food and drink items are delicious treats and not for example root vegetables, makes the activity even more appealing and motivating in the eyes of a young learner.

Table 15. Activity analysis for "Play: Let's go shopping!".

Parameter	Analysis
Interaction skills	Practices polite language use that is typical in everyday interaction (greeting, asking). Pupils are encouraged to practice responding naturally in interaction. Pupils learn to express their insights.
Text interpretation skills	Pupils learn to comprehend basic words and expressions they hear and see in their daily lives, focus on spoken language, opportunity for revision. Learners practice observing English language pronunciation through images, play and drama.
Text production skills	English language pronunciation, stress and intonation are practiced repeatedly and in various ways in situations that are familiar to the pupils through images, play and drama.
Action-orientedness	Does not focus on action-orientedness.
Engagement & playfulness	Engages the learner to participate in playful learning through imagination and meaningful interaction with others. Builds a foundation for joyful and playful learning, which increases motivation.
Requirements	The length of activity is depended on the number of learners in the group. The exercise requires careful and time-consuming preparation as multiple kinds of materials need to be acquired and formed. No significant requirements for the space, however an open space would support the children to move more freely.

However, the preparation of the activity requires a lot of work. Making the groceries and fake money, building a grocery stand and finding suitable toys takes time, and all these elements may not even be possible to find at an elementary school setting, for example. In addition, to complete the activity itself takes a significant amount of time, if the group consists of many learners. Indeed, the number of children in the group can make this task impossible to carry out, especially if they are approximately 3 to 4 years old, which means that their collaboration skills are still developing, and their attention spans are still very short. This exercise would be most appropriate and suitable to children who are 5 to 8 years old, as at these development stages the learners have "vivid imaginations" and they "benefit from imaginative and creative play", and children this age are more eager to work together (Christison and Murray 2010, 74). Hence, in terms of age-appropriacy, this activity is not as flexible and functional with very young English learners.

5.2.3. Moomin Language School application teaching methods

In the application, there are multiple different activities and tasks through which children can practice and revise new linguistic elements. The number of daily activities can vary from approximately 20 brief exercises to 5 more intricate tasks. Day 1 of each week has the largest number of exercises that focus mostly on word recognition, and the final days often emphasize the semantical features of the words by including tasks of categorization, for example. For the most part, these tasks revolve around the recognition of new linguistic elements, matching sound to visual clues, finding pairs, and categorization. As listed by Mezzi (2012, 19), exercises that are based on “guessing”, “either/or-questions” and “classifying” create a positive platform for playful engagement, which is important in maintaining young learners’ attention as well as motivation.

The tasks are interactive, which is one of the main elements in achieving a good learner fit in learning applications (Chapelle 2008, 588). There are tasks in which animation and sound effects are used to guide the learners to click the right items and match the right sound to a corresponding picture. These are all activities that usually young children find pleasant whereas older users dislike, meaning that the content is well-tailored to meet the specific needs of young English language learners (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 186). Indeed, the application does offer a wide range of different types of activities which helps young learners maintain motivation. For the most part, the activities and tasks are regarded as appropriate and suitable for young learners, and they are seen to meet the needs of the children as they are play-based and engaging.

Multiple audio-visual clues aid and guide the learner to proceed with the current activity as well as continue to the following ones. The layout of the application is simple but colorful and appealing, and therefore it is functional and accessible for young learners. Furthermore, the feedback is joyful and linked to visual clues: it is instant and clear, but also motivating, which is an important feature in learning applications (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 183). In fact, the learner can choose their favorite

Moomin character to be their personal guide in the game, for instance, Snufkin or Moominmamma, who cheers and encourages the learner while the child completes the tasks. The possibility to choose a character who gives them feedback creates a sense of autonomy, which is important in reinforcing motivation to play the game. The feedback is constructed in a way that benefits young learners' short attention span and need for support, as it is interactive and immediate. The Moomin characters also function as an aid to the teacher since usually the English teacher's role is to enthusiastically support and encourage the child's exploration with language (Whitehead 1999, 54). In the application, the Moomin characters serve this purpose.

Then again, one of the criteria that points to well-designed layout in ELT material is that the content is structured clearly so that the learner can have a clear view of their progress; what the learner has learned so far, and how much is still left (Soleimani and Esmaili 2016, 140). Moomin Language School application does not provide a clear view of the progress the learner has made and how much is still left, as the app proceeds week at a time. Every 4 or 5 weeks there is a "Test your skills" segment, in which the learner completes exercises that revise the linguistic elements learned in the previous weeks. In this way the learner is able to revise as well as concretely view their progress at least partially and receive an evaluation of their development, which is important when aiming towards learner-centered approach (Faravani and Zeraatpishe 2016, 54). Indeed, the assessment of learner's skills is one of the most crucial elements through which a good learner fit is achieved (2008, 588).

In contrast to the lesson plans, the application exercises all four skills of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening comprehension is part of every task, as the vocabulary is repeated, and songs/rhymes are played. The application contains speaking exercises too, in which the learner is expected to repeat words after the recording. During the lessons, learners are encouraged to listen and speak as well, but reading and writing are not an essential part of the weekly sessions and there are no instructions for the teacher to practice these two skills with the learners. Reading can

occur along with picture cards, as the words are written under the pictures. However, reading is not encouraged and appears in the picture cards as only an additional aid. In the application, there are tasks that engage the child with letters and words. There is an activity called “write”, in which the learner is expected to draw letters thus forming words, by dragging their finger on the screen and following the visual clues. This activity functions to exercise children’s developing literacy in a fun and engaging way. In addition, The Moomin characters function as a useful aid in developing literacy, since the application explains print and assists the child in writing letters and forming words of their own, and the child does not need as much support from an adult.

Also, where there is a significant lack of repetition and revision in the lesson plans, the application compensates for this void. The vocabulary is recycled multiple times, which supports the memorization of new linguistic items in a significant way. The application also offers more additional material to learners who complete the tasks more quickly, thus creating opportunities for differentiation. In this way the application and lesson plans complete each other, which supports the learning process of the child, making it an age-appropriate and suitable addition to early English language teaching.

5.3. Attitudes and experiences regarding Moomin Language School

This section analyses the views that the participants have towards early English language teaching, how Moomin Language School is evaluated from this perspective by the users, and what attitudes and experiences the participants have of using Moomin Language School in early English language teaching. The section ends with a discussion regarding the Technology Acceptance Model, to determine the attitudes that prevail towards Moomin Language School. All examples from participants 1 to 16 have been translated from Finnish to English, whereas examples from participants 17 and 18 have been cited directly as the participants answered the questionnaire in English. All

responses to open-ended questions in parts 2 and 3 of the questionnaire in their original language can be found in Appendix 5.

5.3.1. Views on EELT in relation to Moomin Language School

To begin with, the users of Moomin Language School were asked to list “things that are important to take into consideration when teaching a foreign language to young children (~ages 3-8)” in question 2.1. This question was formed for two reasons. First, to get the participants reflect the issues by themselves, and to use their own perceptions as a lens through which they can continue to analyze Moomin Language School and stay focused on the aspect of EELT as they are going through the rest of the questionnaire. Second, I wanted to find out what views the users of Moomin Language School have on early foreign language learning, and whether the participants’ perceptions would differ from the basic ideas and concepts introduced in chapter 2 of the study.

First, the selection of topics and themes, as well as the importance of interesting teaching material were mentioned in the answers by the participants. Appropriacy was seen as a key element in building child-friendly EELT material. According to the participants, the topics should be interesting, familiar, and appropriate to young learners. Participants noted that the selected vocabulary and phrases should be ones that are needed in everyday life and that they are sequenced in a clear manner:

(1) . . . for example, exotic animals are rarely needed in everyday language use, but they seem to be taught in many places. . . (16)

(2) . . . using only the theme-related vocabulary in each lesson (e.g. family members, colors and numbers). . . (14)

Many answers offered a range of possible activities that the participants perceived as being suitable in EELT. These included for instance games and crafts, and especially music was seen as an essential element in teaching. However, most emphasis was given to play and playfulness in early foreign language teaching. For instance, the benefit of playfulness was explained by saying that:

(3) Teaching should happen through play, so that children will be able to keep their concentration. (1)

(4) That learning is fun and playful and stems from the children themselves too. (12)

The functionality of use of the learning environment was also stated to be important. It was viewed that ease of use, flexibility, peaceful learning environments, as well as short sessions and repetition, are key elements in EELT. In total, all the adjectives that were used to describe what early foreign language teaching should be like were: *interesting, pleasant, happy, exciting, fun, flexible, individual, easy, fast, and playful*. In many of the answers, action-oriented methods were emphasized. One participant mentioned for example:

(5) Playfulness, small groups and peaceful learning environment, narrativity and action-oriented activities support the comprehension of children. (11)

Finally, a lot of emphasis was placed on considering the abilities and the developmental stage of the learners.

(6) . . . teaching should happen at the child's pace and be flexible and individual (6)

(7) Pace, variety, attention span, abilities (18)

(8) Methods that suit the age of the child, meaning that in every activity there should be methods that motivate children. (7)

(9) The different manners in which children learn new things (kinesthetic, auditive, visual). . . (16)

Indeed, many participants argued that the approach to choosing EELT teaching methods and materials should be learner-centered and aiming to fit the needs of the learning process and stage of the child, as well as support the ways in which young children learn a language.

After the participants were asked to list the most fundamental aspects to consider in early foreign language teaching, they were next asked to evaluate how well Moomin Language School meets these requirements. As can be concluded from Figure 8, most participants perceived that Moomin Language School takes into consideration the young age of the learners well. 12 of 18 participants responded that the service takes young learners into consideration "well", whereas 3

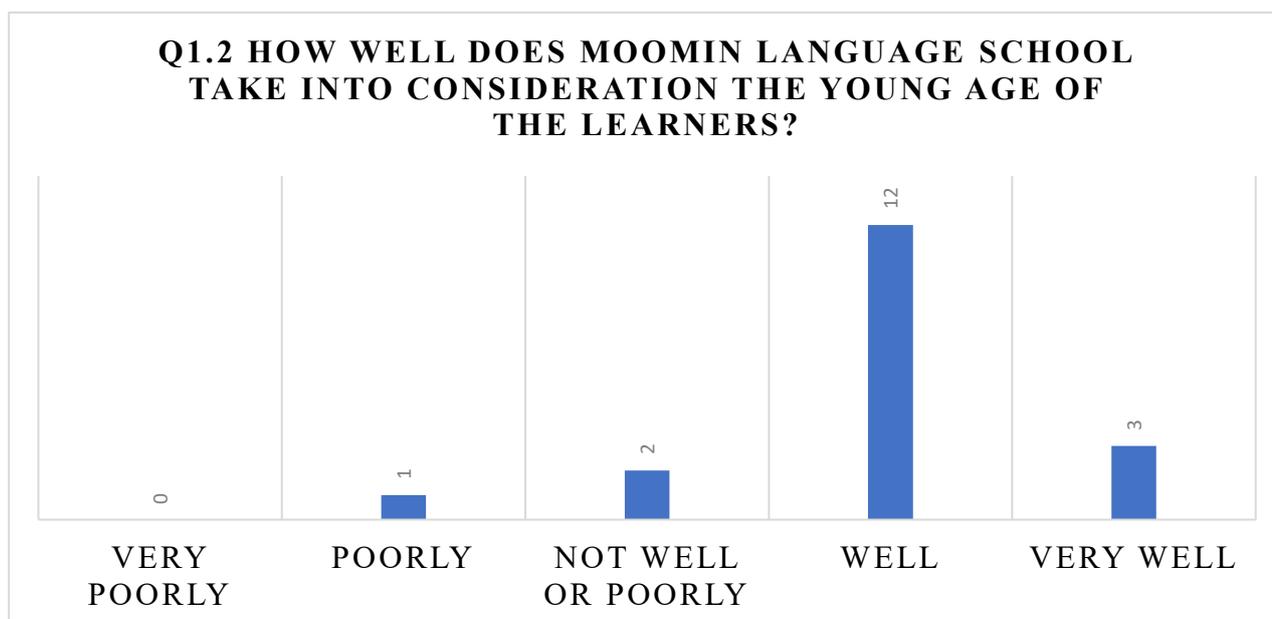


Figure 8. Participants’ evaluation of Moomin Language School from the perspective of young learners in question 1.2.

selected option “very well”, 2 “not well or poorly”, and 1 “poorly”. Hence, none of the participants saw that the service takes the young age into consideration “very poorly”. Two participants who answered that the service takes the young age of the learners into consideration “well”, commented that:

(10) Themes are very versatile. There are a lot of new words for children. In the app there are at times difficult sentence structures, but it is easy for the child to understand where they belong. The lessons have good rhymes and plays through which new things are learnt. (9)

(11) The game gets more difficult very quickly and understanding sentences is still difficult for 4-year-old children. (1)

The age-issue was also mentioned by two other participants, who noted that:

(12) I’d say that the material that I have taught (I used the app for about six months) is best suited for children who are no more than 7 years old. (7)

(13) It takes into consideration children who are 3 years old in a limited way, older children well (11)

Thus, both ends of the Moomin Language School target age range (ages 3-8) were seen as being neglected in the material. In addition, the participant who evaluated that Moomin Language School takes the young age of the learners into consideration *poorly* explained his/her response by stating:

(14) The app is similar to everyone, it does not accommodate to the age of the user. (10)

The criticism is pointed towards the age-appropriacy, which seems to be one of the most prominent themes that arose in the responses of the participants. However, it appears that despite these comments made on the age-appropriacy of the service, the general attitude towards the service is positive, and for example, the themes, vocabulary, rhymes, and plays received positive feedback.

5.3.2. Evaluation of Moomin Language School content and methods

All in all, Moomin Language School content and methods were perceived to be well designed. The option “well designed” received 25 responses, although the neutral option “not well or poorly designed” received 20 responses as well (Figure 9). In contrast, “very well designed” received 16 responses and “poorly designed” 3 responses, and none of the participants evaluated the material as

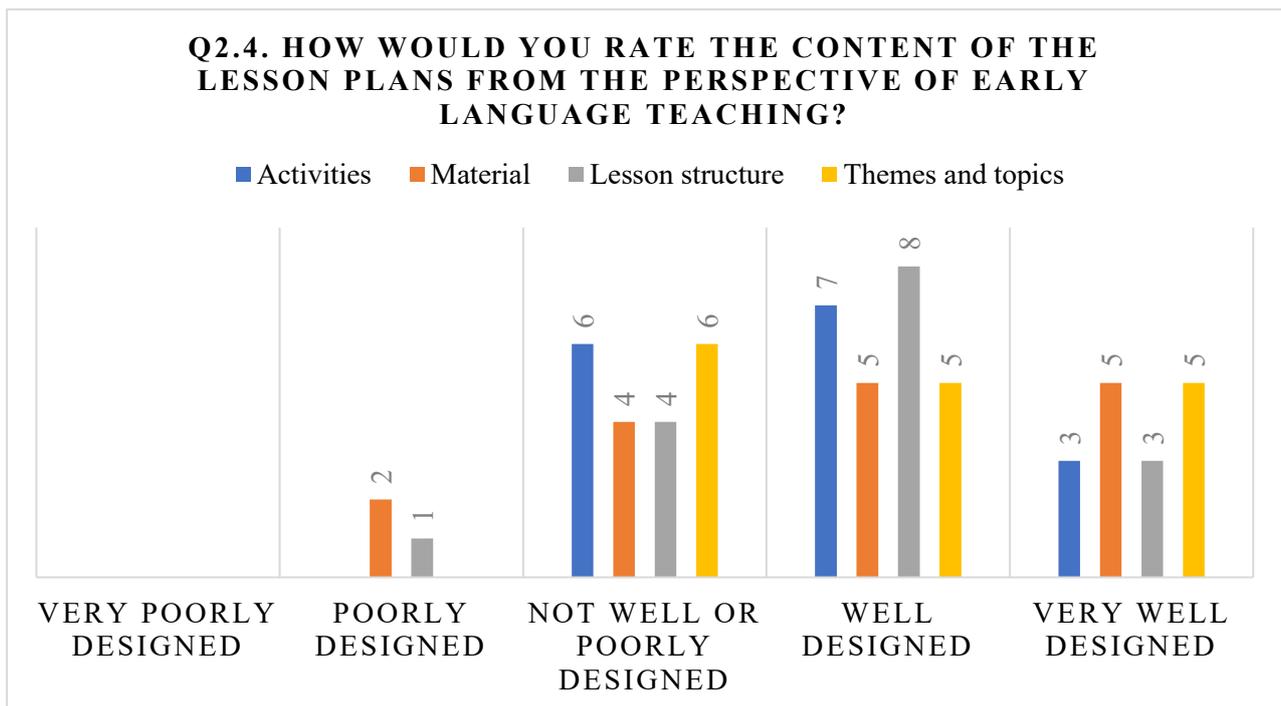


Figure 9. Participants’ evaluation of lesson plans from the perspective of early language teaching in question 2.4.

“very poorly designed”. It must be noted that two participants have not used the lesson plans at all, which means that their answers needed to be omitted from results. This means that for question 2.4, only 16 responses could be included in the analysis. Although the number of responses is low and not

many general conclusions can be made from the quantitative data, it appears that according to the participants, there is still room for improvement in the service, as the highest rank, “very well designed”, did not receive the majority of responses. Altogether only 3 participants wrote additional comments regarding the question. The participant who evaluated that both Moomin Language School material, as well as the structure of the lessons, are designed *poorly*, added that:

(15) The instructions, materials, etc. are in a rather difficult format since you need to scroll through many different webpages in order to get all the necessary information. Because of this, instructions, materials, etc. are difficult to print, and therefore the userbase gets even more limited. (14)

Whereas this response highlights the issues in functionality of the service from the teacher’s perspective, one participant made comments on the content of the service by stating:

(16) I think I would like to see more stories and role playing games from earlier on in the lessons. (17)

Next, the participants were asked to evaluate how easily the lesson plans can be applied to different circumstances. The overall feedback is positive, and on average the participants evaluated that the lesson plans are easy to apply to different circumstances with 22 responses (Figure 10).

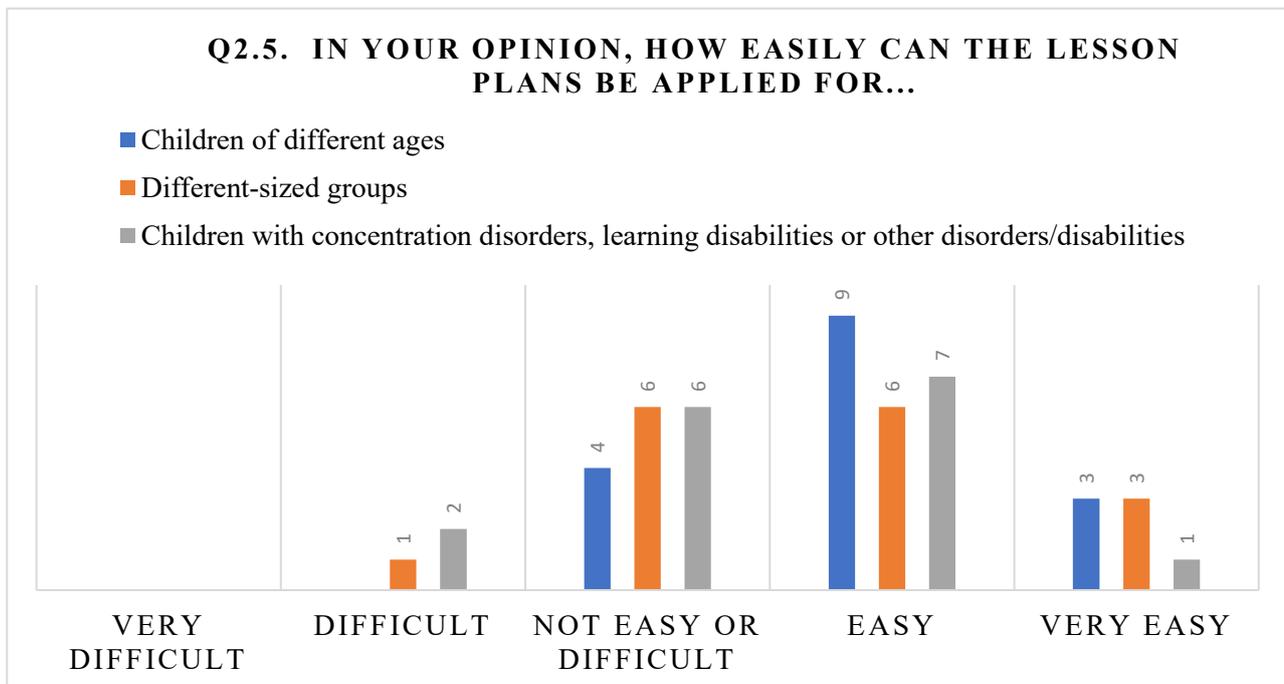


Figure 10. Participants’ evaluation of the applicability of Moomin Language School in question 2.5.

Option “very easy” received 7 responses, “not easy or difficult” 16 responses, and “difficult” 3 responses, whereas none of the participants saw that the lesson plans are “very difficult” to apply to different situations. However once again, it must be noted that as two participants have not organized any lessons using Moomin Language lesson plans, their answers needed to be discarded, and therefore the number of responses included in the analysis is 16. When compared to Figure 9, similar observations can be made. “Easy” received the majority of responses, whereas the highest rank “very easy” only received 7 responses. This means, that although the overall perception of the applicability of the service is positive, there is still room for improvement. One participant who saw that the lessons plans are *difficult* to apply to children with disorders or disabilities clarified his/her response by stating that:

(17) The progress of the lessons depends on the size of the group and how well you have prepared everything. (9)

Although the overall feedback of Moomin Language School is positive, as shown in Figures 8, 9, and 10, many participants added some suggestions for improvement.

Question 3.6 was the only question in the questionnaire that asked explicitly whether there was anything in the service that the participants would like to change, but many participants suggested improvements at various points throughout the questionnaire. Although most participants responded that they would not change anything in the service, 7 participants answered that they would like to see some changes. Particularly many suggestions were made to refine the application:

(18) So that the ”Days” would freeze, possibly in a way that the child can play only one Day at a time, instead of playing according to the time limit. Some children are very fast, and they play through multiple Days during the time limit. (6)

(19) Omitting writing letters completely. (9)

(20) More material according to age, speech recognition, more material to Speaking and Writing in the app. (10)

In addition, question number 3.4. “Have you experienced any problems in the use of the Moomin Language School -service?” was the only question that directly inquired whether the users have had

any problems with the service, and all the additional written answers were related to the technical aspects of the application. The reported problems were related to malfunction of the application; at times it seems to jam, freeze, or does not allow login according to the participants. In addition to the suggestions that were made to improve the application, some comments were made about other aspects of the service as well. One participant commented that:

(21) The app is fairly good, the instructions/materials for circle times should be easily printable, e.g. A4 format, printable instructions, which are easy to distribute to the teachers who use MLS and that are easy to glance through also during the lesson if need be. (14)

In addition to the practicality of the service from the point-of-view of the teacher, one participant pointed out that:

(22) The materials could be also without text (15)

The comment refers to the fact that the picture cards, which are available on the teacher's Tool on the website, include the words in English under the corresponding picture. It may be, that the text confuses young preliterate children, shifting their focus from the picture and semantic properties of the word to the spelling of the word. Also, one participant inquired in the last question in the questionnaire (question 3.8):

(23) Would it be some way possible to increase even more the optional elements that would support creating lesson plans that are based on the interests of the children? (11)

This suggestion refers to improving the lesson plans especially from the perspective of the thematic content of the curriculum so that it could better support the motivation of young learners by presenting topics that the learners find particularly interesting. All in all, the themes that arose in these parts of the questionnaire seemed to emphasize the practical and functional properties of Moomin Language School.

5.3.3. Attitudes towards Moomin Language School

As introduced earlier in chapter 2.3., according to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the attitudes of end-users can be determined on the basis of *perceived usefulness* and *perceived ease of use* of the computer system (Davis et al. 1989, 982-985). Meaning, that if the user perceives that the computer system “will increase his or her job performance within an organizational context”, and that the system is easy to use and “free of effort”, the system will likely be accepted. In order to investigate the attitudes of users towards Moomin Language School, the questionnaire included 4 questions, that explicitly and implicitly, as well as quantitatively and qualitatively, aimed to find answers to the questions of perceived usefulness and ease of use.

To begin with, the last part of the questionnaire explicitly asked:

- 3.1. Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service is easy to use in language teaching?
- 3.2. Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service has a positive effect on your job performance in language teaching?

All 18 participants saw that Moomin Language School is easy to use. In addition, all 18 participants believed that using Moomin Language School had a positive effect on their job performance. This indicates, that all the participants view Moomin Language School in a positive light, which signals acceptance of the service. The written answers to these questions provided some additional information about the attitudes of the users. For instance, it was noted that:

- (24) the app “frees” the role of the adult to be an observer (5)
- (25) A handy and motivating tool to enrich language teaching. One can get a lot of new ideas from the readymade lesson plans (9)

It appears, that although the participants reported many suggestions for improvement in the service, the overall attitude towards Moomin Language School is positive. Moreover, questions 3.3 and 3.7 aimed to inspect the attitude of the users from a slightly different point-of-view. Question 3.3 inquired: “Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service is suited for early language teaching?”, and question 3.7 asked: “Would you recommend the Moomin Language School- service

to other language teachers?” Once again, the answer to both questions by all 18 participants was yes, verifying the assumption that Moomin Language School is seen as a useful tool in early language teaching by its users. It was mentioned, for example, that:

(26) It is a pleasant alternative for daily drilling or organizing exams. (10)

(27) I think it is very supportive of most students no matter their pace. (17)

(28) The children think it is exhilarating and easy. When used daily it really teaches children a lot of words. (9)

Thus, the service is seen as a pleasant aid for the language teacher and a supportive tool for young learners by these participants.

The final question of the questionnaire was an open-ended question which aimed to collect any additional information from the participants that perhaps was not yet stated: “8. To conclude, what is your overall opinion of the Moomin Language School -service, or is something left unsaid? Feel free to speak freely!” Many participants made positive remarks about the application and exercises, and words such as *very good*, *easy*, *ok*, *well-made*, *interesting*, *excellent*, and *well-built*, were used to describe Moomin Language School. A few participants emphasized the practicality and pedagogical choices in the service, whereas some brought forward feedback from parents:

(29) Lesson plans are good and easy to carry out in the day-to-day life of kindergartens as they are planned beforehand. Children learn a new language in a fast manner and are excited about it. (1)

(30) A well-made service, that children like a lot. For the most part feedback from the parents has been extremely positive and based on the feedback learning a new language shows strongly at home. (4)

(31) Excellent service and tool – offers the opportunity to also modify methods in order to suit the state of alertness, age, skill, and developmental stage of children. (11)

(32) The service is good, but there are many elements to refine especially in upkeeping the userbase and in instructing the sessions (illogicalities, difficult to use, ambiguities, things could be done more easily from the user’s perspective.) (14)

As can be seen, the overall feedback from the participants is once again positive, although some suggestions for improvement are also expressed. One participant reported, that the service has ceased to function properly with the children at his/her job:

(33) Especially smaller children need adult's help, so finding a peaceful time is difficult. Children have started to lose interest over time, which is why we are giving it up in our kindergarten. (8)

Once again age-appropriacy is emphasized as causing issues in the use of the service. From the comments made by the participants, it can be concluded that although the overall attitude towards the service is prominently positive, there are elements that should be refined.

6. Discussion

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the following section, the results of the analysis are discussed in more detail. The results gathered from the analysis of Moomin Language School are compared with the results of the qualitative survey to see whether any common themes stand out in both analyses. From this comparison the answer to research question number 3, "How could Moomin Language School be improved on the basis of the results of this thesis?" can be concluded. These results are also discussed in relation to the results of previous studies. Finally, in the second section, limitations of the study, statements of open data, ethics, and conflict of interest, as well as suggestions for further studies are discussed.

6.1. Discussion of the results

In this section, the main findings of the analyses are discussed and compared with each other. First, the main findings concerning the thematic and linguistic content as well as teaching methods are discussed. Second, the results of the qualitative survey regarding the attitudes and experiences of users of Moomin Language School are deliberated.

6.1.1. Thematic and linguistic content of Moomin Language School

When the thematic and linguistic content is analyzed from the perspective of age-appropriacy, a few things can be concluded. First, the overall selection of the thematic content is suitable, relevant, meaningful, and age-appropriate to fit the needs of young foreign language learners of ages 3 to 8 years. This conclusion can be made also from the answers gathered by the questionnaire. For instance, the themes were described as versatile, and the thematic vocabularies were regarded as familiar and easy, consisting of, for instance, kinship terms and animals. Indeed, the thematic environment consists of themes that young children are close to and familiar with. As McQuiggan et al. (2015, 35-36) claim, young learners “find topics of which they have lots of knowledge and positive emotions towards interesting”. Therefore, the themes that Moomin Language School offers, for example, family members, toys, and animals, are likely to be seen as pleasant and interesting by young children. The service is relevant and modern, and it is designed to fit the vocabulary needs of children of the 21st century by including a vocabulary of technological devices in the curriculum. However, in the questionnaire, it was suggested that more optional material should be added to match the interests of learners. Indeed, learners who are at different stages of development ultimately find different things interesting. By including optional elements, the service would increase its flexibility and suitability to different age groups

The structure of the themes and related vocabulary is organized in an altering manner. Some intricate and distant themes precede more familiar and relevant themes, creating a sense of arbitrariness. In addition, although the selected thematic content of the curriculum is generally age-appropriate, relevant, and interesting to young learners, the gradation of themes is debatable. During the first year, Moomin Language School briefly touches upon several themes, but the revision of themes and the development of thematic vocabularies are not frequent. Although this makes it possible to introduce many themes for the learners during the first year, it does not allow a deeper and more intensive familiarization to each theme due to the lack of thematic sequencing and

organization. Then again, the application compensates the void of vocabulary recycling that is lacking in the lesson plans, by providing the learner with plentiful exposure to words. In this way, the lesson plans and application complete each other well.

Second, according to Mezzi (2012, 18), a realistic number of new words that can be taught to an 8-year-old foreign language learner, is 500 per year. Considering that in Moomin Language School the number of new words is the same for all children in the range of ages 3 to 8, the number of new words per year can be excessive to the youngest learners. In Peltola and Hamberg's study (2019, 83-84), some early childhood educators agreed that the number of words should be reduced in Moomin Language School. In addition to the number of words, it can be concluded that the curriculum does not follow the pattern of moving from simple and easy words to more advanced words, but the challenge level seems to vary throughout the curriculum, coinciding with the organization of themes and topics mentioned above. Moreover, some comments were made in the questionnaire that the application progresses at a fast pace introducing structures that young children have a hard time grasping. Then again, some participants saw the amplitude of new words as a very positive element in the service.

According to Faravani and Zeraatpishe (2016, 46) syllabuses are usually constructed based on complexity, meaning that simple linguistic constructions logically precede more complex structures. This relates to the matter of comprehensibility of input: for beginners, the input should contain comprehensible and simple structures and vocabulary (Beatty 2012, 15-16). Moreover, the core curriculum regulates that the objective of EELT is for the children to understand "the most common words and expressions" and be able to express themselves in typical situations (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 29). This means, that the thematic vocabulary should be selected on the basis of the word frequency and relevance from the perspective of young language learners. It appears that Moomin Language School content does not follow this pattern straightforwardly. Also, the vocabulary should contain words and short communicational phrases that the children are able to

memorize, repeat, and link to the surrounding environment (Hestetræet 2019, 224). It was mentioned by Faravani and Zeraatpishe (2016, 45) that the selection of vocabulary should be based on brevity, demonstrability, appropriacy, and relevance of the vocabulary. The selected vocabulary for each lesson and theme should suit the needs of young learners by choosing words that are both common and frequently used, but also easy to memorize and understand, and that are meaningful to the young learners (Hestetræet 2019, 222-223). As seen in the analysis of vocabulary teachability, the challenge level and relevance of vocabularies vary in the lesson plans.

Third, the audio material of Moomin Language School offers plenty of exposure to English in terms of songs and rhymes. They function as a convenient way to increase input, which is essential in second language acquisition: as mentioned earlier, young learners are able to produce the target language fairly soon, but only if they have been “exposed to language and listening comprehension” (Mezzi 2012, 16). The service includes 50 songs in the span of 50 lesson plans, therefore Moomin Language School’s first year does offer many opportunities for children to listen English and produce output in an engaging manner. Also, many participants praised the songs and rhymes in Moomin Language School, as songs and nursery rhymes were seen as beneficial to young English language learners. However, although the fruitful impact of using oral storytelling in EELT is widely recognized (Hestetræet 2019, 228; Bland 2019, 271), Moomin Language School offers only three audible stories. The need for more stories was also noted in the questionnaire by one participant. As mentioned earlier by Graham (2017, 928) sufficient and high-quality input is of great importance to second language acquisition. The benefits of using storytelling and oral stories in early English language teaching for children of different ages are well-known, which is why this activity type is extremely relevant and would suit both kindergarteners and 2nd graders, making it a very flexible exercise in terms of age-appropriacy. Hence, Moomin Language School curriculum would benefit from introducing more stories into the lesson plans.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier in section 2.4., whilst evaluating a curriculum, it is important to also examine what elements are excluded from the syllabus. Indeed, in the curriculum, there are no traces of English or American cultures. The only element referring to the US culture is the word ‘football’ introduced in the lesson plans, which is supported with a picture card in which a boy plays American football in a distinctive gear. However, in the themes or lesson plans, there is no mention of the origin of the English language, where people speak it or the culture of the native speakers. For example, there is no mention of British or American holidays, such as Halloween. What makes culture teaching even more essential in language teaching is the fact, that the new core curriculum emphasizes raising cultural awareness in education, and one of the objectives of the core curriculum is to support the growth “into cultural diversity and language awareness” by familiarizing the pupils with surrounding cultures so that they can “perceive and make use of linguistic and cultural stimuli” and “reflect on the importance and value of linguistic and cultural diversity to different communities” (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 27). The potential English and American cultures could bring to EELT is omitted in Moomin Language School contents.

The absence of culture may be explained by the fact that Moomin Language School curriculum is still a work in progress, and only the first year of a four-year curriculum is released. Therefore, it can be, that the cultural elements will be implemented in the curriculum in the following years. Also, as mentioned in chapter 3.1, the target age group of Moomin Language School is somewhat ambiguous, and as they state on their website that the service is best suited for children ages 4-6, culture teaching is not as relevant at this stage of development and therefore the current thematic content is very suitable to this age group. Nevertheless, in the current material there is no denying that culture has not been given the emphasis that the core curriculum requires, and as Moomin Language School advertises that it is also suited to primary schools and therefore to 1st and 2nd graders, it should contain culture teaching as recommended by the Finnish National Agency for Education.

6.1.2. Teaching methods of Moomin Language School

According to the analysis of Moomin Language School teaching methods, the activities and tasks are well-designed for young children in terms of age-appropriacy and they incorporate playfulness as well as action-oriented working methods in a versatile, innovative, and engaging way. To begin with, the curriculum for the first year offers a vast collection of exercises that can be used to practice new linguistic elements in EELT. Moomin Language School is clearly focused on providing interactive, playful, joyful, engaging, and action-oriented solutions for teaching English to young children in an age-appropriate way, and this conclusion is supported by the comments made by the participants in the questionnaire as well. The curriculum utilizes visual clues as an aid for comprehension and source of play, physical activity, and movement to engage the children in action-oriented tasks, and drama and role-playing to create meaningful interaction between the learners.

The emphasis on engaging and action-oriented working methods aligns perfectly with the regulations of the core curriculum, as it is stated that the methods for teaching in 1st and 2nd grades should be based on “joy of learning, varied and action-oriented working methods, and spoken interaction in everyday situations” (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 26). These elements were also widely praised by many participants, and these results coincide with the results of the study by Arnold and Rixon (2008, 46), in which the informants valued the level of enjoyment and engagement the learners had with the teaching material. The lessons were described as pleasant and fun by the participants in this study, and lesson plans were seen to offer new ideas to language teaching. Even though spoken interaction, including most common and polite expressions, are not emphasized as much in the linguistic content of the Moomin Language School materials, the prominence of spoken everyday language use becomes evident in the activities. Furthermore, the application functions as a beneficial addition in motivating and guiding the children in English language learning. Through the application young learners encounter plenty of revision, opportunities for both receiving input and producing output, as well as developing their emerging literal skills.

Furthermore, the design of tasks, as well as the layout, is tailored to suit the specific needs of young learners. By implementing motivating and immediate feedback, inviting animation, and plenty of visual clues and sound effects, the application offers an inviting and engaging platform for early English learning.

However, there are some elements that complicate the appropriacy, functionality, and suitability of the teaching methods to fit the needs of all development stages ranging from 3 to 8-year-old children. Indeed, the core curriculum also states that when selecting teaching methods, “the pupils’ age and stage of development must be taken into consideration” (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020, 29). As listed earlier by Murray and Christison (2010, 74), the stages of development can be categorized as ranging at age groups of 2-4, 5-7, and 8-10. Each stage of development requires specific methods for teaching to support the development of the child in the most suitable way. For instance, 2-4-year-olds prefer working alone and have very short attention spans, as opposed to 8-10-year-olds, who benefit from collaboration and enjoy learning about different ideas and cultures.

Moomin Language School is advertised to suit English teaching in kindergartens and the first grades of elementary school. However, for all these ages and therefore for children at different stages of development, Moomin Language School only offers one curriculum, one set of lesson plans, and one type of application. This was also stated in chapter 3.1, as it was mentioned on the Moomin Language School website that for the time being, they offer only one level of content. The structure of lessons, methods for practicing new linguistic elements, and the tasks in the application thus vary in terms of to whom the activity is best suited. Hence, if the same curriculum, lesson plans, and application were to be used both with a group of 3-year-old kindergarteners and a group of 8-year-old 2nd graders, the teacher would be required to modify the activities significantly, so that they would be appropriate to both groups of learners. This issue also came up in the questionnaire answers by some participants, and both ends of the target age range were seen as being neglected in the material. Similarly, in the study conducted by Arnold and Rixon (2008, 45-46) the appropriacy and maturity

level of the children were also issues, which the informants discussed in terms of the selected content of the teaching material. Although Moomin Language School does offer innovative teaching methods to approach EELT, it should also provide “several levels of the same lesson to accommodate individual differences in knowledge and ability” (McQuiggan et al. 2015, 40).

It appears that there are also some other issues with the functionality of some exercises. The length of some exercises is strongly linked to the number of children in the group, and some activities require lengthy preparation. This reduces the functionality, flexibility, and applicability of the service in different contexts and situations. Furthermore, the teacher’s Tool was experienced as being at times difficult to use, since the teacher is required to search and scroll through different pages to gather the material and instructions. Hence, the functionality of the Tool could be enhanced in terms of practicality and accessibility. From the analysis of teaching methods in the lesson plans it must be also noted, that the functionality of activities is dependent on a variety of factors, and the outcome of the activity may alter due to several different elements concerning, for instance, different contexts in which the activity is carried out.

6.1.3. Attitudes towards Moomin Language School

The results of this study seem to coincide with the results in the study conducted by Peltola and Hamberg (2018). The attitude towards Moomin Language School is positive, and the users see the service as easy to use. Also, the service was seen to add joy and playfulness to language teaching. The adjectives that were used to describe Moomin Language School were: *interesting, pleasant, happy, exciting, fun, flexible, individual, easy, fast, and playful*. All the words have positive connotations, and furthermore, they coincide with the adjectives that the participants themselves used to describe what early foreign language learning should be like: *interesting, pleasant, happy, exciting, and fun*. Surprisingly, even though the participants came from different educational backgrounds, they all emphasized similar elements in relation to EELT that were introduced in the theory section

of this study. The views the participants had on EELT in general, coincided also with the regulations of the core curriculum of what early foreign language teaching should be like. As mentioned in chapter 2.4.2, in addition to the attitudes of teachers, the attitudes of parents have a significant impact on whether a child will be motivated to use digital learning platforms. Therefore, the remarks about the positive feedback from parents were an interesting and surprising addition to the results. In addition to the positive feedback from parents, many participants also based their evaluation on how well and how motivated children are to use the service. For many participants, positive reactions from children seemed to support their positive attitude towards the service.

Furthermore, it appears that although the participants reported challenges in use, be they technical or pedagogical, it did not influence their prominent attitude towards the service. So, despite the fact that many suggestions for improvement were made by the participants, none of the participants had a negative attitude towards the service. Still, it should be remembered that the conclusions drawn on the basis of this attitudinal study cannot be used to generally describe the attitudes that the users of Moomin Language School have towards the service, and the results can only be used to describe how these 18 participants view the service.

Although the overall evaluation in the quantitative analysis of the service was positive, there seems to be some room for improvement. The majority of the participants saw that Moomin Language School takes the young age of the learners into consideration *well*, the lesson plan content is *well designed*, and the lesson plans are *easy* to apply to different situations. Hence, in the 5-point Likert scale, these responses signify option 4, and thus not the highest rank in the scale, 5. Although none of the participants chose option 1, which signifies the lowest quality, there is still room for improvement in the service to generate more responses for option 5. Many participants also chose option 3, which was a neutral option. Perhaps the results would have been different if a 4-point Likert scale would have been used instead, in which there is no possibility for a neutral response. The high number of neutral evaluations may also be due to the different educational backgrounds of the

participants, or the participants perceived as having too little knowledge of the lesson plans to give either a negative or positive evaluation. Nevertheless, due to the low number of participants, the results of the quantitative analysis need to be interpreted with caution. However, the open-ended questions provided plenty of qualitative data, through which the participants elaborated on the features they most value, and elements in the service they would like to see refined. Versatility, pleasantness, engagement, and playfulness of the material were praised by many participants, whereas technological malfunctions, age-appropriacy, challenge level, and practicality were features that generated suggestions for improvement.

6.2. Discussion of the study

In this chapter, the research process is discussed. The limitations of the study, statements of data and ethics, as well as suggestions for future studies are presented.

6.2.1. Limitations of the study

There are a few factors that limit the study. First, the questionnaire only received 18 responses. Thus, general conclusions from the quantitative data could not be made, and therefore this research method was unsuccessful in that aspect. Also, as Moomin Language School is a rather new service, it does not yet have an extensive number of long-term users. In addition, the questionnaire was ultimately longer than it needed to be. After the first questionnaires were sent out, the scope of the thesis was narrowed down and thus many questions were disregarded in the analysis. These questions made the questionnaire more time-consuming to fill, which may have affected the response rate of the survey. Also, when designing the questionnaire, I did not include a question of whether the participant had even used the lesson plans, which further decreased the number of responses to certain questions. Second, as Moomin Language School has not operated that long, I only had one year's worth of curriculum and 50 lesson plans to analyze. Moomin Language School's 4-year-curriculum is only

under development at the moment. This means, that only one part of Moomin Language School could be analyzed and evaluated. Therefore, the evaluation made in this study includes only a part of Moomin Language School and not Moomin Language School as a complete and ready-made 4-year-curriculum.

Also, as the educational background of the participants varied significantly, the evaluations they made about the content of Moomin Language School need to be perceived as reflecting their personal experiences and opinions. For instance, an early childhood educator sees language materials in a different light than, say, an English teacher. The former may focus on age-appropriacy and child-friendly teaching methods, whereas an English teacher might examine the input quality that the material offers. Hence, no general conclusions can be drawn based on the results of the questionnaire, as this study describes how this particular group of people feel about this particular service at this point in time. Also, an electronic questionnaire limits the way people can express their thoughts and ideas on the subject, when compared to an interview, for instance. Indeed, “people's real feelings are hard to grasp in terms of such dichotomies as "agree/disagree," "support/oppose," "like/dislike," etc., these are only approximate indicators of what we have in mind when we create the questions” (Barribeau et al. 1994-2012). However, questionnaires “tend to be weak on validity and strong on reliability”, which means the survey method used in this study does have an impact on the way the participants have answered the questions, and it needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results (Barribeau et al. 1994-2012).

6.2.2. Statements of open data, ethics, and conflict of interest

There are some issues that concern the data, ethics, and the conflict of interest in this study. Currently, I use the Moomin Language School service at my part-time job. This can make me biased and my view subjective regarding the service. As I use it myself regularly, my opinions can influence the analysis of the material. Also, as I am soon graduating to become an English and Spanish teacher, my

views on how a language is learned can impact the way I evaluate and examine language teaching material. The perceptions and attitudes I have towards how a language should be taught can further influence the way I draw conclusions of the results of the analysis.

6.2.3. Suggestions for future studies

During this study, many possible topics for future studies came to my mind. First, as Moomin Language School continues to release more lesson plans and application content, the service could be analyzed as a whole curriculum. The same research questions that I have used could be further utilized and enhanced in future studies to see how the design of the product has progressed. Also, this type of evaluative study could be done on other learning and teaching materials, applications, and services as well.

Before I selected the focus of my study, I considered conducting a questionnaire or an interview for children who use Moomin Language School. However, choosing appropriate interviewing methods for children ages 3 to 8 years seemed challenging, and I feared that children that young would not be able to reflect on the issues I specifically wanted to focus on in the material. However, it would be interesting to interview older children, for instance, 12 to 14-year-olds, who would have used Moomin Language School for a long period of time in their childhood, to find out how they remember the service. What connotations or associations do they make of it, and do they remember anything specific? Is the application memorable? It would also be interesting to find out the children's English level to see if there are any indications that would suggest that the use of Moomin Language School in early childhood has long-lasting effects on the language skills of children who have used it.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze and evaluate the content of the language learning service Moomin Language School from the perspective of early English language teaching (EELT). In order to holistically and objectively evaluate the content of Moomin Language School, the interest of this study was to both examine Moomin Language School curriculum in terms of age-appropriacy (research question 1) and to discover what kinds of experiences and attitudes the users of Moomin Language School have towards the service (research question 2), and how, on the basis of these results, Moomin Language School could be improved (research question 3). In addition, one of the interests of conducting this study was to gain more information in the field of early English language teaching and EELT materials.

The study was completed using two types of analysis: a language teaching material analysis executed through a close reading of the first year of Moomin Language School curriculum, and a qualitative survey to investigate the attitudes and experiences that the users of Moomin Language School have of the service. In both analyses, quantitative and qualitative research methods were used, although the qualitative method was more prominent due to the nature of the material. As only the first year of Moomin Language School was analyzed, this study can only be used to assess the first 50 lesson plans and the first year of application content of Moomin Language School, and not evaluate the curriculum as a complete product.

First, a language teaching material analysis was conducted through a close reading of the first year of lesson plans in Moomin Language School to examine both the thematic and linguistic content as well as teaching methods. The quantitative analysis revealed that during the first of the curriculum, children are introduced to multiple themes and topics, and thus a multitude of new English words. The qualitative analysis showed that the themes and vocabulary are prominently age-appropriate during the first year of Moomin Language School, however, both sequencing and the level of the thematic and linguistic content is debatable in terms of teachability and relevance of words from the

perspective of 3 to 8-year-old English learners. Moreover, in contrast to the regulations of the national core curriculum, the lesson plans do not entail culture teaching. Next, the quantitative analysis of teaching methods revealed that the emphasis in both individual lesson structure as well as in the span of the whole first-year curriculum, is prominently on action-oriented and playful teaching methods, as recommended by the Finnish National Agency for Education. However, once again, the age-appropriacy of the activities is debatable, and it was concluded that the age and number of learners in the group dictate the progress and success of the activity. The qualitative analysis conducted to investigate the Moomin Language School application showed, that the application supports the language learning process of young English learners by employing engaging tasks and amplitude of revision of vocabulary to increase both input and output. It appears that the lesson plans and the application complete each other well.

Second, a qualitative survey was used to analyze the experiences and attitudes that the users of Moomin Language School have of the service. 18 participants answered the electronic questionnaire; 16 from Finland and 2 from Greece. The participants were asked to define what early language teaching should be like, evaluate the content of Moomin Language School from various aspects, and share experiences and perceptions they have of the service. The qualitative approach to the analysis showed, that the themes which arose from the participants' responses focused on finding learner-centered, playful, and action-oriented methods to teach languages to young children, and that overall the participants found Moomin Language School as a suitable tool to teach foreign languages to young learners. Also, the participants' attitude towards the service was positive by all accounts, although many participants reported suggestions for improvement, and surprisingly many comments were directed towards the enhancement of the application. Interestingly, even though the participants came from different educational backgrounds, their views on early foreign language teaching were strikingly similar and aligned with the regulations of the core curriculum. Moreover, many comments made by the participants coincided with the observations made in the previous analysis section,

regarding the thematic and linguistic content as well as teaching methods in Moomin Language School. The quantitative analysis cannot be used to present any general conclusions and in this way this research method was not successful, as the number of participants was low. However, the quantitative data were used to give a more holistic picture of the answers of the participants.

Thus, Moomin Language School does take the young age of the learners into consideration well by introducing versatile themes, playful and action-oriented teaching methods, and an engaging gamified application to young English learners. The lesson plans and application support each other so that the learner can benefit from social, interactive, and independent learning methods. However, as the themes lack culture teaching, the challenge level and relevance of topics and vocabulary fluctuate, and the teaching methods vary in terms of age-appropriacy, there are elements yet to be refined in order to enhance the service to make it more suitable to young English learners of ages 3 to 8 years old. Furthermore, from the basis of the analysis, it appears that the users of Moomin Language School have a positive attitude towards the service, and they perceive it as a useful tool in early foreign language teaching. Although the attitudes were positive, there were many suggestions for improving the service; for instance, the technical aspect of the application, the content of lesson plans, and practicality of teacher's Tool. The hypothesis of this thesis was that Moomin Language School takes the young age of the learners into consideration by offering child-friendly materials and activities and that the attitudes and experiences of the service are mostly positive, although it is expected that the analyses will reveal elements in the service that require modifications. Thus, this hypothesis was proven to be rather accurate, and the aspects of the service that require enhancement became clear in the analyses of the teaching material and the qualitative survey. All in all, according to the results of this thesis, Moomin Language School could be improved by reorganizing the thematic structure, reassessing selected vocabulary, and by adding culture teaching, optional elements, and differently leveled activities to the lesson plans, to match the needs of young English learners at each stage of development. The results of this study can be used in designing, enhancing, and evaluating

the content of Moomin Language School and other early English language teaching materials. This study also offers a framework that can be used in similar studies in the field.

To conclude, one of the objectives of this thesis was to increase awareness and gain more knowledge regarding early English language teaching materials and methods. Evaluation of English language teaching materials is crucial in developing and enhancing language teaching practices. As the language education system in Finland is going through a major transition, in which both language teachers and primary teachers are searching for suitable ways to teach a foreign language to young learners, most often English, up-to-date, flexible and high-quality language teaching materials have become extremely important. In the process of adapting to the new situation, efficient and age-appropriate English teaching materials are in a key role in supporting and aiding the teacher and young learners. This thesis aimed to do its part to fill the gap in the field of early English language teaching material evaluation, but more research in the field is required to gain more comprehensive and extensive information to develop the materials further.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Moomin Language School Tool

Appendix 1.1. Teacher's view

Appendix 1.2. View of learner's progress

WEEK				
DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★	★ ★ ★
USED TIME: 0:02:01 SESSIONS: 1 RIGHT ANSWERS: 18 WRONG ANSWERS: 0	USED TIME: 0:02:28 SESSIONS: 1 RIGHT ANSWERS: 26 WRONG ANSWERS: 0	USED TIME: 0:02:44 SESSIONS: 1 RIGHT ANSWERS: 20 WRONG ANSWERS: 2	USED TIME: 0:02:41 SESSIONS: 1 RIGHT ANSWERS: 24 WRONG ANSWERS: 0	USED TIME: 0:01:59 SESSIONS: 1 RIGHT ANSWERS: 4 WRONG ANSWERS: 0

Appendix 2. Moomin Language School Application

Appendix 2.1. Learner's view



Appendix 2.2. Activity example



Appendix 3. Questionnaire in Finnish (adapted from the electronic version)

Moomin Language School -palvelun käyttö varhaisessa kielenopetuksessa

Tämän kyselyn tarkoituksena on kerätä tietoa käyttäjien kokemuksista ja asenteista Moomin Language School -palvelun käyttöä kohtaan varhaisen kielenopetuksen kontekstissa. Kyselyn vastauksia käytetään pro gradu -tutkielmassa, joka toteutetaan Englannin kielen ja kirjallisuuden tutkinto-ohjelmassa Tampereen yliopistossa kevään 2020 aikana. Kyselyyn vastaamiseen menee noin 15 minuuttia. Kysely koostuu kolmesta osiosta:

I Taustatiedot

II Moomin Language School -palvelun käyttö varhaisessa kielenopetuksessa

III Omakohtaiset kokemukset

Kysely on täysin luottamuksellinen ja siihen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Kaikki vastaukset säilyvät anonyymeinä. Osallistumalla kyselyyn annat tutkijalle luvan käyttää lomakkeella kerättyä aineistoa pro gradu -tutkielmassa. Mikäli haluat poistaa vastauksesi tai sinulle herää kysymyksiä tutkimuksesta, voit ottaa yhteyttä kyselyn laatijaan sähköpostilla. Suuri kiitos osallistumisestasi ja mukavaa vuoden alkua!

Osa 1: Taustatiedot

1. Koulutus: Lähihoitaja Sosionomi
 Kasvatustieteiden kandidaatti Varhaiskasvatuksen maisteri
 Kasvatustieteiden maisteri Muu: _____

2. Olen käyttänyt Moomin Language School -palvelua...:
 1-6 kk 7-12 kk Yli vuoden

3. Olen käyttänyt Moomin Language School -palvelua opettaakseni...:
 Englantia Suomea toisena kielenä Muu: _____

4. Koen olevani pätevä opettamaan vierasta kieltä Moomin Language School -palvelun avulla:
 Kyllä Ei

Lisätietoa: _____

Osa 2: Moomin Language School -palvelun käyttö varhaisessa kielenopetuksessa

1. Mitkä asiat on mielestäsi tärkeää ottaa huomioon, kun opettaa vierasta kieltä pienille lapsille? (n. 3-8-vuotiaat) _____

2. Kuinka hyvin Moomin Language School -palvelu (leikkituokiot + sovellus) ottaa mielestäsi huomioon lasten nuoren iän?

1 – Todella huonosti

2 – Huonosti

3 – Ei hyvin eikä huonosti

4 – Hyvin

5 – Todella hyvin

Lisätietoa: _____

3. Kuinka paljon Moomin Language School -palvelu (leikkituokiot + sovellus) mielestäsi harjoittaa kielitaidon neljää osa-aluetta? *Kielitaidon neljä osa-aluetta jaetaan aktiivisiin ja passiivisiin taitoihin: Aktiiviset taidot: puhuminen & kirjoittaminen. Passiiviset taidot: kuuntelu & lukeminen.*

1 – Todella vähän

2 – Vähän

3 – Ei paljon eikä vähän

4 – Paljon

5 – Todella paljon

a) Puhuminen

1 2 3 4 5

b) Kirjoittaminen

1 2 3 4 5

c) Kuuntelu

1 2 3 4 5

d) Lukeminen

1 2 3 4 5

Lisätietoa: _____

4. Miten arvostelisit leikkituokioiden sisältöä varhaisen kieltenopetuksen näkökulmasta?

1 – Todella huonosti suunniteltu

2 – Huonosti suunniteltu

3 – Ei hyvin eikä huonosti suunniteltu

4 – Hyvin suunniteltu

5 – Todella hyvin suunniteltu

a) Harjoitukset

1 2 3 4 5

b) Materiaali

1 2 3 4 5

c) Leikkituokioiden rakenne

1 2 3 4 5

d) Teemat ja aiheet

1 2 3 4 5

Lisätietoa: _____

5. Kuinka helposti leikkituokioita voi mielestäsi soveltaa...

1 – Todella vaikeaa

2 – Vaikeaa

3 – Ei helppoa eikä vaikeaa

4 – Helppoa

5 – Todella helppoa

a) eri-ikäisille lapsille?

1 2 3 4 5

b) erikokoisille opetusryhmille?

	1	2	3	4	5
c) lapsille, joilla on oppimis-, keskittymis- tai muita vaikeuksia?					
	1	2	3	4	5

Lisätietoa: _____

Osa 3: Omakohtaiset kokemukset

1. Koetko, että Moomin Language School -palvelua on helppo käyttää kielenopetuksessa?

Kyllä Ei

Lisätietoa: _____

2. Koetko, että Moomin Language School -palvelulla on positiivinen vaikutus työsuoritukseesi kielenopetuksessa?

Kyllä Ei

Lisätietoa: _____

3. Koetko, että Moomin Language School -palvelu soveltuu varhennettuun kielenopetukseen?

Kyllä Ei

Lisätietoa: _____

4. Onko sinulla koskaan ollut ongelmia Moomin Language School -palvelun käytössä?

Kyllä Ei

Lisätietoa: _____

5. Toimitko aina tismalleen leikkituokion ohjeiden mukaan?

Kyllä Ei

Lisätietoa: _____

6. Haluaisitko muuttaa jotain Moomin Language School -palvelussa (leikkituokiot + sovellus)?

Kyllä Ei

Jos kyllä, mitä? _____

7. Suositteisitko Moomin Language School -palvelua muille kielenopettajalle?

Kyllä Ei

Lisätietoa: _____

8. Mikä on yleisesti ottaen mielipiteesi Moomin Language School -palvelusta, tai jäikö jotain sanomatta? Sana on vapaa! _____

Appendix 4. Questionnaire in English (adapted from the electronic version)

Using Moomin Language School -service in early language teaching

This survey aims to collect information about the experiences and attitudes that the users of Moomin Language School have towards using Moomin Language School service in early language teaching. The information gathered from the survey will be used in a Master's thesis conducted in the English language program in Tampere University. To answer the survey you will need approximately 15 minutes, and it includes the following sections:

I Background information

II Using Moomin language School -service in early language teaching

III Personal experiences

The participation in this study is voluntary, the survey is completely confidential, and all informants will remain anonymous. By taking part in the survey you give the researcher your informed consent to use the anonymous data collected in the survey. The answers can be withdrawn without any consequences to the participant upon request. Please contact the researcher if you wish your answer to be removed by sending an email.

Thank you so much for your contribution!

Part 1: Background information

1. Education/degree: _____
 2. I have used MLS...: 1-6 months 7-12 months Longer than a year
 3. I have used MLS to teach...:
 English Finnish as a second language (S2) Other
 4. I feel qualified enough to teach a foreign language using the Moomin Language School -service:
 Yes No
- Here you can specify your answer: _____

Part 2: Using Moomin Language School -service in early language teaching

1. In your opinion, what things are important to take into consideration when teaching a foreign language to young children? (~ages 3-8) _____
2. In your opinion, how well does the Moomin Language School -service (lesson plans + application) take into consideration the young age of the learners?
 - 1 – Very poorly
 - 2 – Poorly
 - 3 – Not well or poorly
 - 4 – Well
 - 5 – Very well

Here you can specify your answer: _____

3. In your opinion, how much does the Moomin Language School -service (lesson plans + application) exercise the four skills of language? *The four skills of language are divided into active and passive skills. Active skills include a) speaking and b) writing. Passive skills include c) listening and d) reading.*

1 – Very little

2 – Little

3 – Average

4 – Some

5 – A lot

a) Speaking

1 2 3 4 5

b) Writing

1 2 3 4 5

c) Listening

1 2 3 4 5

d) Reading

1 2 3 4 5

Here you can specify your answer: _____

4. How would you rate the content of the lesson plans from the perspective of early language teaching?

1 – Very poorly designed

2 – Poorly designed

3 – Not well or poorly designed

4 – Well designed

5 – Very well designed

a) Activities/exercises

1 2 3 4 5

b) Material

1 2 3 4 5

c) Structure of the lessons

1 2 3 4 5

d) Themes and topics

1 2 3 4 5

Here you can specify your answer: _____

5. In your opinion, how easily can the lesson plans be applied for...

1 – Very difficult

2 – Difficult

3 – Not easy or difficult

4 – Easy

5 – Very easy

a) children of different ages?

1 2 3 4 5

b) different-sized groups?

1 2 3 4 5

c) children with concentration disorders, learning disabilities or other disorders/disabilities?

1 2 3 4 5

Here you can specify your answer: _____

Part 3: Personal experiences

1. Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service is easy to use in language teaching?

Yes No

Here you can specify your answer: _____

2. Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service has a positive effect on your job performance in language teaching?

Yes No

Here you can specify your answer: _____

3. Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service is suited for early language teaching?

Yes No

Here you can specify your answer: _____

4. Have you experienced any problems in the use of the Moomin Language School -service?

Yes No

Here you can specify your answer: _____

5. Do you always follow the lesson plan precisely?

Yes No

Here you can specify your answer: _____

6. Would you like to change something in the Moomin Language School -service (lesson plans + application)?

Yes No

If yes, what? _____

7. Would you recommend the Moomin Language School -service to other language teachers?

Yes No

Here you can specify your answer: _____

8. To conclude, what is your overall opinion of the Moomin Language School -service, or is something left unsaid? Feel free to speak freely! _____

Appendix 5. Summary of open-ended questions in questionnaire sections 2-3

Q2.1. In your opinion, what things are important to take into consideration when teaching a foreign language to young children? (~ages 3-8)

1	Opetuksen pitää tapahtua leikinkautta, jotta lapset jaksavat keskittyä. Lyhyet tuokiot sekä laulut.
2	Kiinnostavaa, mukavaa, iloista, innostavaa
3	Lapsen kielitausta, energiataso, oppimateriaalin sopivuus pienelle oppijalle
4	Leikinomaisuus, hauskuus, lasten kehitystaso.
5	kiinnostavat aihepiirit, looginen eteneminen, sopivat välineet
6	Lapsia motivoivat ja heitä kiinnostavat teemat ja aiheet, opetus lapsentahtista ja joustavaa sekä yksilöllistä
7	Ikätasoon sopivat metodit eli kaikessa tekemisessä mukana lapsia motivoivat keinot. Leikillisuus, pelit, musiikki, lorut, askartelu.. Paljon toiminnallisuutta
8	Se, että oma äidinkieli on hallussa. Lisäksi toistot lauluissa ja loruissa auttaa lasta oppimaan ihan huomaamatta
9	Toisto ja helppous. Tarpeeksi monella tavalla asioiden käsitteleminen. Leikin ja toiminnan kautta. Tutut asiat. Lorut, laulut ja leikki.
10	Helppokäyttöisyys, oikeantasoinen haaste, nopeus, joustavuus
11	Leikillisuus, pienryhmät ja rauhallinen oppimisympäristö, tekemisen tarinallisuus ja toiminnallistaminen lasten oivalluksia tukemassa
12	Että opettelu on vielä hauskaa ja leikinomaista ja lapsesta itsestäänkin lähtevää.
13	Leikillisuus, toisto
14	Kuvat apuna, selkeät sanat, saman ryhmän sanojen käyttäminen yhdellä kertaa (esim. perheenjäsenet, värit tai numerot). Lapsia kiinnostava aihe
15	funktionaalisuus
16	heidän kotikielensä, kiinnostuksen kohteet, hidaskäyttöinen eteneminen, saman asian toistaminen, toiminnallisuus, asian kiinnittäminen lapsen omaan kokemusmaailmaan, kuvat, "muistisäännöt" esim tarttuvat laulut, liikkeiden yhdistäminen sanoihin. Lasten erilaiset tavat oppia (kinesteettinen, auditiivinen, visuaalinen), arjessa tarvittavien sanojen ja lauseiden harjoittelu (esim viidakon eläimiä harvoin tarvitsee arkikielessä, mutta niitä tuntuu monessa paikassa opeteltavan), leikillisuus
17	Level of engagement
18	Pace, variety, attention span, abilities

Q2.2. In your opinion, how well does the Moomin Language School -service (lesson plans + application) take into consideration the young age of the learners? Here you can specify your answer:

1	Peli vaikenee todella nopeasti ja lauseiden ymmärtäminen on hankalaa vielä 4 vuotiaille lapsilla.
4	Leikkituokiot ovat mielekkäitä ja hauskoja. Sovelluksessa on joskus kohtia missä lapsi ei tiedä mitä pitää tehdä, esim. sanojen laittaminen oikeaan järjestykseen.
7	Sanoisin, että opettamani materiaali (käytin sovellusta n. puoli vuotta) soveltuu kaikkein parhaimmin maks. 7-vuotiaille.

9	Aihe alueet hyvin monipuolisia. Uusia sanoja tulee lapsille paljon. Sovelluksessa välillä vaikeita lauserakenteita mutta lapsen on helppo hoksata mihin ne kuuluu. Tuokioilla hyviä loruja ja leikkejä joiden avulla opetellaan asioita.
10	Sovellus on samanlainen kaikille, se ei mukaudu käyttäjän ikään.
11	Ikäryhmäm 3 v kanssa ottaa lasten nuoren iän huomioon rajallisesti, tätä vanhempien kanssa hyvin
16	En ole aina seuraamassa vieressä, kun lapsi pelaa. Paikalla on paljon lapsia, joten tähän ei vain ole mahdollisuutta.

Q.2.3. In your opinion, how much does the Moomin Language School -service (lesson plans + application) exercise the four skills of language? Here you can specify your answer:

1	Sovelluksen peleissä ei tarvitse puhua tai kirjoittaa. Erikseen sieltä löytyy kyllä pelejä joissa voi äänittää omaa puhetta. Niihin ei vain ole aikaa päivähoitossa.
2	En järjestä tuokioita.
9	Kirjoittaminen on täysin turha osio sovelluksessa. Kirjainten kirjoittaminen opetetaan väärin ja sitä on liikaa. Liian monessa osiossa.
10	Puhuminen hyväksyi myös väärät vastaukset sovelluksessa, kirjoitusta ei muistaakseni harjoiteltu ollenkaan?
17	Please note that this evaluation is for the first 56 lesson only!

Q2.4. How would you rate the content of the lesson plans from the perspective of early language teaching? Here you can specify your answer:

2	En järjestä tuokioita.
9	Opetellaan helppoja sanastoja jotka lapsille tuttuja. Sukulaisuus sanat, ruuat, eläimet tms.
10	En ollut leikkituokioiden toteutuksessa mukana, joten en voi arvostella niiden sisältöä.
14	Ohjeet, tarvikkeet yms. ovat hieman hankalassa muodossa kun joudut selaamaan montaa eri nettisivua saadaksesi kaiken tarpeellisen tiedon. Tämän myötä ohjeita, materiaaleja yms. on vaikea tulostaa, jolloin käyttäjäkunta rajoittuu entisestään.
17	I think I would like to see more stories and role playing games from earlier on in the lessons.

Q2.5. In your opinion, how easily can the lesson plans be applied for... a) children of different ages? b) different-sized groups? c) children with concentration disorders, learning disabilities or other disorders/disabilities? Here you can specify your answer:

2	En järjestä tuokioita.
9	Tuokioiden kulku riippuu ryhmien koosta ja kuinka hyvin on asian valmistellut. Meillä noin 20 min per ryhmä kerran viikossa.
10	En ollut leikkituokioiden toteutuksessa mukana, joten en voi arvostella niiden sisältöä.

Q3.1. Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service is easy to use in language teaching? Here you can specify your answer:

5	sovellus "vapauttaa" aikuisen roolia havainnoijaksi
9	Nyt kun ryhmät ovat alkaneet toimia kunnolla. Aiemmin ollut ongelmaa isojen ryhmien lataamisesta palvelimelta. Välillä yksittäiset profiilit jää jumittamaan samaan päivään.
10	Mikäli käytettävissä on useita laitteita, käyttäminen on helppoa. Mikäli laitteita on vähän, koordinointi vaatii paljon aikaa.

17	The instructions are very clear and the application is really easy to navigate
----	--

Q3.2. Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service has a positive effect on your job performance in language teaching? Here you can specify your answer:

2	LPst tekevät innokkaasti tehtäviä sovelluksella.
9	Kätevä ja motivoiva apuväline rikastuttamaan kielten opetusta. Paljon uusia ideoita valmiista tuokio suunnitelmista.
10	Peli oli lapsille motivoiva. Kieltenopetuksen tuloksien mittaamista ei ole 2. luokkalaisilla.

Q3.3. Do you think that the Moomin Language School -service is suited for early language teaching? Here you can specify your answer:

7	Sovellus tukee nimenomaan varhaista kieltenopetusta em. metodeja hyväksi käyttäen.
10	Kyllä, mikäli laitteita on tarpeeksi. Liian vähän laitteita, niin käytöstä tulee riitaa ja hyöty laskee.
17	I think it is very supportive of most students no matter their pace.

Q3.4. Have you experienced any problems in the use of the Moomin Language School -service? Here you can specify your answer:

1	Jotkut pelit menevät jumiin ja lapsi joutuu pelaamaan sama pelin uudestaan
2	Aina ei kirjaudu tai heittää ulos. Aina ei anna jonkun lapsen tehdä päivän harjoituksia vaan väittää, että ko. lapsi on jo aikansa käyttänyt.
3	nettiyhteydet tai päivittäminen ovat tökkineet
4	Sovelluksessa on välillä ongelmia, peli ei etene kuten pitäisi vaan junnaa paikoillaan tai heittää pelaajan ulos.
5	sovellus ei toimi moitteettomasti kaikilla laitteilla
9	Isojen ryhmien tietojen lataaminen viime vuonna oli ongelma viikottain. Uusien päivitysten myötä ongelma korjaantunut.
10	Muutama käyttökätkoa oli kokeilun aikana, muuten palvelu toimi erinomaisesti.
14	Palvelun käytössä on tiettyjä monimutkaisuuksia ja epäloogisuuksia, jotka ovat pahimmillaan aiheuttaneet useiden viikkojen käyttökätköksiä.
17	Some technical difficulties and some resistance from the parents

Q3.5. Do you always follow the lesson plan precisely? Here you can specify your answer:

1	Joskus sovellan jos huomaan lasten keskittymisen herpaantuvan.
2	En järjestä tuokioita.
3	Leikkituokioiden ideoita tulee välillä sovellettua omilla tavoilla.
4	Joskus aika ei riitä koko tuokion pitämiseen tai ei ole saatavilla kaikkea tarvittavaa. Aina ei myöskään ole sopivaa tilaa käytössä esim. leikkeihin. Joskus jotkut osat eivät vain tunnu sopivilta juuri silloiseen hetkeen.
5	aikataulu täytyy huomioida, eli paljon joutuu soveltamaan
7	Tuntisuunnitelmat saattavat elää hyvinkin paljon riippuen monesta tekijästä.
9	Sovelletaan tuokioilta osia, joita sopii meidän toimintaan. Sanastoa leikkejä tms.
12	Suurimmaksi osaksi teen suunnitelman mukaan, mutta välillä vähän improvisoidaan
17	All the sections and language content stay the same- greetings and circle time, theme tidy up, goodbye but sometimes the children ask to play different games than the ones suggested.

	Some groups like music more, so we might sing more songs or do a different craft instead of colouring in.
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Q3.6. Would you like to change something in the Moomin Language School -service (lesson plans + application)? If yes, what?

2	Minulla ei ole aikaa paneutua tuokioiden järjestämiseen, asiaan esiopetuksesta eikä aikani riitä kaikkeen.
6	"Päivien" lukittuminen, mahdollisesti niin, että lapsi voisi pelata max. yhden päivän kerrallaan, aikarajoitteen sijaan. Osa lapsista on hyvin nopeita ja naputtelee useamman päivän läpi peliajan puitteissa.
9	Kirjainten kirjoitus pois kokonaan.
10	Iän mukaan enemmän materiaalia, puheentunnistus, puheeseen ja kirjoittamiseen enemmän materiaalia sovellukseen
14	Sovellus on melko hyvä, leikkituokioiden ohjeet/materiaalit pitäisi olla helposti tulostettavissa, esim. A4- kokeinen, tulostettava ohje, joka on helppo jakaa kaikille MLS:ää vetäville ohjaajille ja jota on tuokion keskelläkin helppo vilkaista jos tarve niin tulee.
15	Materialit voisi olla myös ilman tekstiä
16	En osaa sanoa
17	As I mentioned above I think incorporating more stories and drama in the content (as I have seen so far)

Q3.7. Would you recommend the Moomin Language School -service to other language teachers? Here you can specify your answer:

9	Lapsista se on erittäin innostava ja helppo. Päivittäin toistettuna opettaa todella lapsille paljon sanoja.
10	Päivittäiseen drillaamiseen tai kokeiden pitämiseen mielekäs vaihtoehto

Q3.8. To conclude, what is your overall opinion of the Moomin Language School -service, or is something left unsaid? Feel free to speak freely!

1	Erittäin hyvä kokonaisuudessaan, pelit ovat mielekkäitä lapsille ja sovellus on helppokäyttöinen. Tuokiot ovat hyviä ja helppo toteuttaa päiväkotiarjessa kun ovat valmiiksi suunniteltuja. Lapset oppivat nopeasti uutta kieltä ja ovat innoissaan siitä.
2	Sovellus on ihan ok ja lapset tykkäävät. Itse en ehdi tutustua materiaaliin kaiken muun työni ohella.
3	Oppilaat tykkäävät opiskella Moomin Language Schoolin kanssa. Harjoituksissa on jokaiselle sopivia osioita.
4	Hyvin tehty palvelu, josta lapset pitävät kovasti. Palaute vanhemmilta on ollut pääsääntöisesti erittäin positiivista, ja kielen oppiminen näkyy palautteen mukaan vahvasti kotona.
5	Ihan huippuhelposti olen saanut apua pulmatilanteissa ja sovellus on oikein hyvä ainakin eskari-ikäisille!
8	Etenkin pienemmät lapset tarvitsevat aikuisen kaveriksi joten rauhallisen ajan löytyminen vaikeaa. Lapsilla kiinnostus lopahtanut ajan mittaan ja siksi ollaan luopumassa siitä päiväkodissamme
9	Monesti vanhemmat kehuu miten paljon lapset ovat oppineet uusia sanoja. 4v aloitettuna oppivat kuulema paremmin kun jos aloitettaisiin vasta koulussa.

10	Mielenkiintoinen lisä kielenopetukseen. Laitteiden määrä vaikutti itsellä paljon kokemukseen käytöstä: Muutama laite aiheutti ison työmäärän lasten vuorojen ja käytön koordinointiin, mutta peliä pelattiin tehokkaasti eteenpäin valvonnan alla. Iso määrä laitteita vähensi taas koordinoinnin taakkaa, mutta lisäsi epämääräistä käyttöä pelissä
11	Erinomainen palvelu ja työkalu - mahdollisuus tarpeen mukaan myös muokata toimintatapaa sopeuttaen lasten vireystilaan, ikään, osaamis- ja kehitystasoon. Olisiko jollakin tavalla mahdollista vielä enemmän tuoda valinnaisia elementtejä, jotka tukisivat lasten mielenkiinnonkohteiden mukaisten opetushetken rakentamista?
12	Todella hyvin mielestäni rakennettu kokonaisuus. Olen palvelua käyttänyt nyt toki vasta 3kk joten käyttökokemusta on melko vähän.
14	Palvelu on hyvä, mutta siinä (varsinkin käyttäjien ylläpito ja tuokioiden ohjeistuksen puolella paljon hiottavia kulmia (epäloogisuuksia, vaikea käytettävyyys, epäselvyydet, asiat voisi tehdä helpommin käyttäjän kannalta.)
15	Palvelu on todella monipuolinen ja rauhoittava oppimisväline
17	I think so far it is a great tool for early language teaching. In order to have any kind of informed opinion I would have to teach the 4 year course so that I can see the whole picture and I will be happy to answer this question when I have done so!