

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
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**DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING SUPPLEMENTARY ACTION-ORIENTED
LEARNING MATERIALS FOR THE *I LOVE ENGLISH 5* TEXTBOOK
MA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to design and implement a set of supplementary action-oriented learning materials for the *I Love English 5* textbook to encourage meaningful communication, cooperation and active participation in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The study follows an action research methodology, involving the development, classroom implementation, evaluation and revision of the created materials. Data were collected through classroom observations, student feedback and teacher feedback. The findings are analyzed in relation to their user-friendliness, to the effectiveness of the materials in promoting meaningful communication, cooperation and active participation, as well as the challenges encountered during implementation. The first chapter of the thesis reviews theoretical foundations of the action-oriented approach. The second chapter presents the design and implementation of the action-oriented learning materials, data collection methods and an analysis of data. The study concludes with pedagogical recommendations for integrating action-oriented learning materials into EFL teaching practice.

Keywords: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR, action-oriented approach, language teaching, action research, basic school

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR CV - Common European Framework of References for Languages and its Companion
Volume

NCBS - Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools

EFL - English as a Foreign Language

AoA - Action-oriented Approach

INTRODUCTION

Language education frameworks increasingly emphasize meaningful communication and learner agency. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020; hereafter CEFR CV), as well as the Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2011, 2023; hereafter NCBS) encourage a shift from traditional, form-focused instruction to learning that engages students in real-life, purposeful tasks. According to The Subject Field “Foreign Languages” (2023: 2), English as a foreign language (hereafter EFL) teaching should prioritize the use of language in authentic situations, support learner autonomy and implement methods that involve learners directly in the learning process.

However, current classroom materials do not always fully support these expectations. Widely used coursebooks, such as *I Love English 5* (Kurm & Soolepp 2016), cover the core language skills but often present activities that are based on repetitive structures or emphasize comprehension over purposeful action. As Harmer (2001) notes, such materials can limit student motivation and fail to create opportunities for meaningful, real-world communication. This highlights a gap between what the curriculum expects and what students experience in the classroom.

One way to bridge this gap is to use the action-oriented approach (hereafter AoA), as defined in the CEFR CV (2020: 29-30). AoA views learners as social agents who use language, alongside skills such as planning, problem-solving and critical thinking, to accomplish tasks with real-world relevance (CEFR Expert Group 2023; Piccardo & North 2019). Research has shown that AoA increases learner motivation, strengthens social agency and supports deeper cognitive engagement (Germain-Rutherford 2021; Folinazzo 2024). Mohammed Ismail and Prasanth Kumar (2023) have concluded that teachers recognize its potential to enrich language learning through purposeful and interactive activities. However, the limited availability of

suitable action-oriented learning materials creates a major challenge for teachers (Folinazzo 2024). Creating new materials from scratch would place an additional burden on teachers, whose workloads are already demanding.

Thus, this MA thesis aims to use AoA to address the gap between NCBS (2011, 2023) requirements and current textbook-based practice while also promoting learner autonomy and collaborative engagement. To achieve this, the study begins by analyzing the *I Love English 5* textbook to identify areas where AoA principles, such as authentic purpose, clear goals, real-world context and decision-making, can be integrated. Based on this analysis, a set of supplementary action-oriented learning materials are developed and piloted. The materials are designed to encourage meaningful communication, cooperation and active participation, while considering the students' interests, backgrounds and local context.

Therefore, the thesis seeks to demonstrate how AoA can enhance both curriculum alignment and engaging, socially meaningful opportunities for learners to use English as active social agents. The study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How user-friendly are the created action-oriented learning materials for students and teachers to implement?
2. Do the created action-oriented learning materials promote meaningful communication, cooperation and active participation in the classroom?
3. What challenges do students and teachers face when integrating an action-oriented approach into classroom activities?

To address these questions, the thesis employs an action research approach, which is used to identify problems in teaching or learning process and implement practical solutions for improvement (Burns 2005). It involves the stages of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The developed tasks were integrated into real classroom settings. The materials were evaluated through classroom observations, student feedback and teacher feedback to identify the tasks'

effectiveness in promoting meaningful communication, cooperation and active participation as well as to determine the challenges associated with their implementation. The feedback methods were chosen to allow a comprehensive evaluation from multiple perspectives. The feedback was then used to revise the materials.

The thesis is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter focuses on the theoretical overview of the AoA, outlining the key characteristics of the AoA, discussing its benefits and potential challenges, examining principles for designing action-oriented tasks as well as approaches to assessment. The second chapter presents the empirical part of the study. The chapter begins by outlining the aims of the research, the participants, the materials and methods used. This is followed by a description of the action research procedure, including the design and implementation of the learning materials. The chapter then explains the process of data collection and analysis, which is organized around the study's three research questions. The chapter concludes with a discussion and conclusion of the findings.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW: ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH

The first chapter gives a theoretical overview of the action-oriented approach and its application in language teaching. The chapter begins by outlining the key characteristics of the approach, followed by a discussion of its main benefits and possible problems. The chapter then addresses how action-oriented tasks can be designed in practice and concludes by examining assessment methods for such tasks.

1.1. Characteristics of the action-oriented approach

The CEFR is a widely recognized document that describes language learners' proficiency across six levels, providing a basis for curriculum development, teaching, learning and assessment in language education. It promotes language learning as communication, shifting teaching from linear syllabuses to real-life, task-oriented educational aims that foster autonomy and engagement (Council of Europe 2020: 28). Piccardo (2010) points out that the school's purpose is to prepare students for social and professional life. Thus, the teaching and learning process should be action-oriented and primarily guided by learners' real-life communication needs, aligning curriculum, teaching and assessment (Piccardo & North 2019; Council of Europe 2020; CEFR Expert Group 2023).

The AoA builds on the communicative approach, particularly its task-based language teaching version, by emphasizing the use of language to accomplish practical tasks (CEFR Expert Group 2023; Germain-Rutherford 2021; Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019; Piccardo & North 2019). According to Thornbury (2005: 79), communicative tasks foster authentic, spontaneous language use by engaging learners in goal-oriented interactions that require unrestricted language to achieve unpredictable outcomes. However, the AoA goes beyond the communicative approach. Germain-Rutherford (2021) emphasizes that in the AoA, communication is not the aim but a tool – alongside critical thinking, self-

reflection, creativity, and adaptability – to successfully complete a task. Piccardo and North (2019) describe tasks in the AoA as projects that demand genuine problem-solving and decision-making skills, allowing learners to take meaningful action.

The traditional “four skills” have been re-designed as “communicative activities” where “listening” and “reading” are grouped together as “reception”, and “speaking” and “writing” are re-defined as “oral and written production” and “oral and written interaction”. Students are seen as “social agents”, in the sense that they are actively involved in the learning process and learn to use the language, not just learn about the language (Piccardo 2014; Council of Europe 2020). Another type of communicative activity - “mediation” - has also been added. Mediation in the CEFR refers to the ability to promote understanding and communication by interpreting, explaining or reformulating information for others. The AoA, therefore, emphasizes purposeful, collaborative tasks that focus not on language itself but on achieving a concrete outcome or product (Germain-Rutherford 2021; Council of Europe 2020). The construction of meaning is central to this process and closely connected to mediation, as meaning is co-constructed by learners rather than transmitted from teacher to student (CEFR Expert Group 2023; Piccardo & North 2019).

To support this shift toward real-life, task-based learning, the CEFR CV (Council of Europe 2020) provides detailed “can do” descriptors that define what learners are able to do with the language at different proficiency levels, offering a framework for action-oriented learning and suggesting classroom tasks that reflect these descriptors. The CEFR divides language proficiency into a progressive scale of six levels (A1-C2), with descriptors that express learning aims in a clear and transparent way and reflect real-world language use (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019; CEFR Expert Group 2023).

In CEFR-inspired language learning, tasks are central because they provide meaningful, contextualized learning, developing and activating strategies and competences needed to

complete them (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019). Action-oriented tasks vary in nature but are always meaningful and related to everyday life. As stated by Piccardo and North (2019: 245-246), the main goal of the AoA is to prepare learners for real-life language use by engaging them in tasks that are as authentic as possible. In this context, plurilingualism is also recognized as an important aspect of communication. According to the CEFR CV (Council of Europe 2020: 30), it allows learners to use their full linguistic repertoire to support understanding and expression during task completion. Piccardo (2014) notes that priority is given to authentic materials, intentionally chosen from real-life sources such as newspaper articles, radio programs, advertisements, book excerpts and video clips, primarily to convey the meanings and themes being studied.

Thus, tasks are not designed specifically for language teaching but rather reflect everyday activities drawn from personal, public, educational or professional contexts (Piccardo & North 2019; CEFR Expert Group 2023). For effective engagement, Piccardo (2010; 2014) concludes that tasks should be set in familiar contexts with clear, culturally appropriate goals and learners must understand both the task's purpose and its linguistic and non-linguistic requirements. According to Collins and Hunter (2014, 2013), an ideal action-oriented task includes several key features: learners act as social agents in real-life contexts; the task has a clear purpose and defined goal; it leads to a concrete product; authentic texts and experiences support learning; challenges encourage critical and creative thinking; learners use both existing and newly developed skills; and they are given opportunities to make decisions and act strategically. Tasks do not practice isolated skills but are integrated and often result in a visible product (CEFR Expert Group 2023; Piccardo 2014). Examples include creative activities, skills-based activities, problem-solving tasks, routine transactions, discussions, presentations and action plans (Mohammed Ismail & Prasantha Kumar 2024).

A key feature of the AoA is the use of scenarios. The AoA provides a scenario-based context in which learners can apply and demonstrate their skills. The term “scenario” can have different meanings but in this paper a scenario refers to the entire learning process related to a particular task, including its introduction, the strategies and competences developed and the performance of the task itself. The task and its sub-tasks are therefore grounded in a scenario (Martinović 2025). North (2022) adds that a scenario summary places learners in a simulated context and explains their task along with the conditions and constraints for completing it, while learners act as themselves instead of role-playing fictional identities. Scenarios therefore support meaningful, learner-centered participation and provide a context for real-life oriented action (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019).

1.2. Benefits of the action-oriented approach

Building on the principles of the AoA, students deepen their learning by actively solving real-life problems and creating relevant projects. Germain-Rutherford (2021) claims that through this process they engage in meaningful communication while also working with cognitively demanding content through searching for, evaluating and organizing information to complete tasks. Piccardo (2010) states that through engaging in complex, collaborative tasks where speaking and action are intertwined, the language learner develops communicative ability. As a result, it increases their engagement and boosts academic success as researching, interpreting and explaining meaningful information helps learners comprehend and remember it better (Germain-Rutherford 2021).

Moreover, action-oriented tasks involve planning or problem-solving, which help students build practical skills they can use outside the classroom (CEFR Expert Group 2023; Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019; Piccardo 2010). Therefore, as stated by Germain-Rutherford (2021), the AoA creates an environment where skills such as critical

and creative thinking, resilience, intercultural competence and autonomy are developed. The CEFR Expert Group (2023) also notes that the collaborative approach helps create an inclusive classroom, where all students contribute in groupworks and use their language knowledge while brainstorming, planning and collectively creating outcomes.

According to Germain-Rutherford (2021) an AoA that is culturally inclusive – by considering the sociocultural values and perspectives of students and their communities – fosters improved learning outcomes and supports the development of a positive sense of self, where learners’ multicultural and plurilingual identities are respected. Piccardo and North (2019) also point out that the plurilingual approach encourages students to experiment with different languages and recognize connections between them. Therefore, culturally responsive and plurilingual elements enhance the AoA by fostering learner identity, promoting engagement and developing communicative competence. Communicating in the target language prepares students for real-world communication, however the use of the school language during group work does not hinder learning but rather enables deeper discussion that leads to improved performance in the target language (Piccardo 2014).

Despite these theoretical perspectives, few studies have focused on the practical implementation of the AoA and on students’ and teachers’ perceptions of it, particularly in elementary or basic school contexts. Folinazzo (2024), in their doctoral dissertation, examined the role of action-oriented tasks in supporting language use among 12 intermediate adult learners in Ontario by implementing researcher designed tasks in small groups and collecting qualitative data through video recordings, interviews, self-assessments and observations. The findings suggest that the AoA increases language awareness, motivation, learner autonomy and agency, while also fostering a positive attitude towards AoA.

Mohammed Ismail and Prasantha Kumar (2024) examined how Indian tertiary-level English as a Second Language (hereafter ESL) students view AoA and its advantages. They

created and carried out several AoA activities over a period of one month. 156 second year students were involved. At the conclusion of the intervention, students responded to a questionnaire to determine their attitude toward the AoA. The survey confirmed that students recognize the AoA as beneficial for promoting authentic language use, sociocultural and pragmatic development, greater autonomy and communication skills.

Mohammed Ismail and Prasantha Kumar (2023) also explored teachers' perceptions of the AoA in the same context. The study focused on ESL instructors working at the tertiary level in India and investigated their views on the effectiveness of the AoA in developing students' English language proficiency. Data were collected from seventy teachers using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The findings showed that teachers view the AoA positively, recognizing its potential to enhance language learning through practical and interactive tasks. Similar findings were reported by Rehner and others (2021), who conducted an online survey involving ninety French as a second language teachers to examine their planning, teaching and assessment practices. The study revealed that teachers perceive the AoA as promoting deeper student engagement, providing meaningful and authentic real-life contexts and offering a more contextualized and practical approach to language learning compared to traditional methods focused on rule memorization.

1.3. Potential problems of the action-oriented approach

While the AoA offers many advantages, it also presents certain challenges in practice. Piccardo (2010) points out that the main problem is the teachers' attitude towards the CEFR – they are often confused by its conceptual density, which in turn may affect their understanding and perception of the AoA. According to Folinazzo (2024) and Piccardo (2010) the document is often mistakenly viewed as a standardized assessment tool rather than the comprehensive, flexible and action-oriented framework for language teaching. Piccardo (2010) mentions that

some practitioners remain hesitant, as they need to build confidence in working with the CEFR as a whole – its key concepts, not only its evaluation scales or assessment grids.

The CEFR Expert Group (2023) argues that the gap in understanding of the CEFR remains as it receives limited attention in both initial teacher education and ongoing professional development. Martinović (2025) adds that teachers themselves note a lack of experience and professional training in applying AoA and scenarios in language classrooms. When teachers do explore the concepts of CEFR, it is often out of their personal interest, not because they received any professional development in that area (Piccardo 2010).

Piccardo (2010) further notes that some teachers consider this document a burden on their already busy professional schedules. As concluded by Martinović (2025), teachers might have difficulties in deciding when to implement the action-oriented tasks within their existing schedules and other teaching responsibilities. Harmer (2001) notes that textbooks tend to overemphasize grammar and rely on repetitive unit structures. Even when there are communicative methods and traditional task-based approaches in textbooks, they often remain narrowly focused and lack the real-life context and learner agency (CEFR Expert Group 2023). Folinazzo (2024) also adds that traditional textbooks often do not support the AoA and the limited availability of suitable teaching materials (scenarios) creates a major barrier for educators. Martinović (2025) notes that another barrier could be assessment, as effective implementation of action-oriented tasks requires clear alignment between learning objectives and assessment criteria, which may increase the complexity of teachers' planning processes. This highlights the importance of designing appropriate materials that support teachers in implementing action-oriented principles.

1.4. Designing action-oriented tasks

Designing action-oriented tasks involves creating learning experiences that connect communicative goals, real-life contexts and curriculum objectives. The CEFR CV (Council of Europe 2020: 30) defines a task as a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language as a tool to complete real-life actions. Unlike traditional language exercises, such tasks prioritize meaning making and culminate in a concrete outcome. This is closely related to task-based language teaching, where tasks are defined as meaning-focused activities with clear communicative purpose and outcome (Ellis 2003: 9-10). Within the AoA, tasks are typically embedded in a scenario, which provides the broader contextual framework for language use. Thus, the scenario presents a real-life situation, whereas tasks function as the specific communicative actions learners perform within that situation (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019).

There are different possible starting points in the design process. Teachers may begin with an idea for a scenario summary, develop a meaningful task and then align it with the curriculum or alternatively use the curriculum as a starting point for designing a scenario and a sequence of tasks (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019). In this sense, task design can be either scenario-driven or curriculum-driven, depending on pedagogical priorities.

Once the overall direction has been established, scenarios function as the organizational framework for task development. The action-oriented task template proposed by Fischer and others (2023; see Appendix 1) can serve as one possible starting point for a task design. Piccardo and North (2019) note that scenarios structure a sequence of sub-tasks which are less complex and more communication-focused than the final culminating task. Similarly, the CEFR Expert Group (2023) adds that scenarios provide a structured context for a series of lessons that build toward real-life-oriented tasks. Typically, the scenario concludes with the

production of an outcome, such as a presentation or completed product, followed by a reflection phase that supports learning consolidation (Mohammed Ismail & Prasantha Kumar 2024; North 2022).

According to Piccardo (2022), the first step is to provide a concise and clear overview of the final task. Next, the scenario should be divided into coherent, logically connected steps or subtasks; and finally, the purposes and goals must be clearly explained, including why the scenario is used and what skills learners are expected to develop. Piccardo (2022) further highlights the importance of writing the summary of a scenario in simple language to ensure student understanding.

The design and implementation of such tasks also involve a shift in the teacher's role. Piccardo (2014) states that learners take increasing responsibility for their learning, while the teacher fosters, encourages and orchestrates students' work. Piccardo and North (2019) also note that teachers support learners by ensuring successful task completion. In addition to designing realistic and engaging tasks, the teacher is responsible for anticipating potential difficulties, guiding the work organization, managing resources and providing targeted support when necessary.

1.5. Assessment

In the AoA, transparent assessment is integrated into teaching and learning through teacher, peer and self-assessment (CEFR Expert Group 2023). Teacher assessment focuses on how well a learner can perform in real-life situations by evaluating their proficiency through task performance – specifically, by identifying the competences they use and the level at which they apply them to complete the task (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019; Piccardo 2014; Piccardo 2010). The descriptors found in the CEFR illustrative scales determine whether the learning goals were achieved.

As pointed out by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (2019), the teacher chooses which descriptors will be the focus of the scenario – a practical assessment should include a maximum of four to five categories. Once the categories are chosen, a teacher must determine clear, concise and positively worded criteria that are definite, simple, and brief (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, 2019). Piccardo (2014) notes that the focus should be on what learners can do with the language rather than what they know about it. Assessment criteria should align with learning objectives, requiring teachers to understand what and why they are assessing, create their own assessment grids and ensure these grids correspond with teaching goals and institutional requirements (Piccardo 2014).

To take an active role in their learning and goal setting, the learner must also be provided with descriptive feedback, which is detailed and specific to their individual strengths, needs and progress (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019). It tells the students what they are doing well, how to improve, and what steps to take to achieve new goals (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers 2019: 41). According to the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (2019), descriptive feedback is based on clearly defined success criteria, highlights the learner's strengths and skills, is provided promptly, occurs throughout the learning process and helps the learner to become reflective about their learning.

In addition to descriptive feedback, peer assessment is also an effective approach to support student learning through active involvement in the evaluation process, shifting learners from passive recipients to active participants. It helps develop students' evaluative and critical thinking skills, deepens their understanding of the subject matter and can improve the quality of their work by exposing them to a range of peer responses (van Zundert et al 2010; Hamer et al 2015). Chin (2007) points out that peer assessment can take various forms, from simple activities in which students provide formative feedback to one another, to more structured

approaches in larger groups where learners offer either informal feedback or summative evaluations, such as assigning marks or grades. However, Coe and others (2020) note that students are often inexperienced in giving feedback, so teachers need to provide clear modelling and continued guidance.

The final means of assessment is self-assessment. Andrade (2019) defines self-assessment as the practice of examining one's own processes and outcomes to make adjustments that strengthen learning and improve performance. The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (2019) adds that self-assessment encourages learner autonomy by helping students reflect on their strengths, identify challenges and monitor their overall progress. Andrade (2019) suggests that self-assessment should be formative as without opportunities for adjustment or correction, the value of self-assessment is greatly diminished. Panadero and Alonso-Tapia (2013) note that effective self-assessment requires recognizing its value, having clear assessment criteria and working with a well-defined task. To support these conditions, various instructional aides are recommended, including modeling self-assessment, providing explicit instruction and guidance, offering cues about when to self-assess, giving learners practice in the process and creating opportunities to revisit and improve both the task and the final performance (Panadero & Alonso-Tapia 2013).

2. ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH IN ACTION

This chapter outlines the methodological framework of the study. The chapter begins by outlining the aims of the study, clarifying the objectives and research questions. It then describes the participants involved in the study, the materials piloted and the methods used to collect feedback. Finally, the chapter presents the analysis of the data and discusses the findings.

2.1. Aims of the study

The main aim of the study is to develop and implement supplementary action-oriented learning materials that align with selected units from *I Love English 5* textbook, the CEFR standards and the national curriculum, while incorporating real-life communication situations. In addition, the study aims to examine how these materials promote meaningful communication in English and their impact on students' cooperation and active participation in classroom tasks. To evaluate the effectiveness of the materials and achieve these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How user-friendly are the created action-oriented learning materials for students and teachers to implement?
2. Do the created action-oriented learning materials promote meaningful communication, cooperation and active participation in the classroom?
3. What challenges do students and teachers face when integrating an action-oriented approach into classroom activities?

2.2. Participants

The study was conducted at a county center municipal basic school, with approximately 700 students. The primary participants were 21 seventh-grade students studying English as a

foreign language. The participants have been the author's students for 2.5 years. In that school students are divided into English groups according to their English proficiency. The study's participants were from three different A2 level English groups, with these three groups representing learners with lower proficiency. Therefore, they particularly benefit from opportunities to practice English in meaningful, real-life contexts, which can help their communication skills, confidence and active participation in classroom activities.

To get more diverse feedback, some action-oriented materials were piloted in two additional schools. Both were small rural schools from two different counties. In total, this involved two teachers and 22 seventh-grade students. Feedback was collected from the teachers only.

2.3. Materials and methods

The developed learning materials included teacher materials and student worksheets. Both of which were piloted and feedback was collected thereafter. Initial feedback and students' responses to the tasks were collected by the author through classroom observation. Feedback from the author's students was collected through self-assessment worksheets and subsequent feedback discussions after each action-oriented task. Finally, the learning materials of units 2 and 11 were also piloted by the author's colleagues, who were provided with guiding questions for feedback.

2.4. Action research procedure

This section presents the action research procedure of the study. The study is framed as action research as it tests out new materials in the author's own classroom setting and involves systematic planning, implementation, observation and evaluation to improve teaching practice and student learning. The study can also be considered experimental, as the newly designed

learning materials were piloted not only in the main research setting but also with teachers and students from other schools.

The section first describes the design of the action-oriented learning materials, followed by an overview of how the action-oriented tasks were implemented in practice. Then, the methods used for data collection are explained and the process of data analysis outlined. Finally, it discusses the findings, providing an interpretation of the results and their implications.

2.4.1. Designing the action-oriented learning materials

The design process of the action-oriented tasks started with a systematic analysis of the *I Love English 5* textbook (Kurm & Soolepp 2016) to identify opportunities for AoA integration. The analysis of the textbook focused on the existing topics, vocabulary and task types presented in the textbook to determine how well the topics, vocabulary and task types align with the principles of the AoA as described in the CEFR CV (Council of Europe 2020). A qualitative content analysis was carried out considering how well they supported meaningful communication, learner interaction, collaboration and real-world relevance.

I Love English 5 has 167 pages and is composed of 20 units, including 16 main units and 4 revision units. The 16 main units share a similar structure, each mostly including matching activities, reading texts with comprehension questions, speaking activities, listening activities and writing activities. The topics are related to everyday life and the culture of English-speaking countries. The analysis revealed that *I Love English 5* covers the core language skills but mostly presents activities that follow repetitive structures or emphasize comprehension over purposeful action. The textbook contains a variety of vocabulary and grammar exercises, but fewer activities require learners to engage in extended communicative

activities or produce real-life products. Table 1 provides an overview of the textbook and its contents.

Table 1. Overview of the *I Love English 5* textbook (Kurm & Soolepp 2016)

Unit type	Main units	Revision units
Number of units	16	4
Pages for each unit	4-7	4-6
Main components	matching activities (2-3), reading texts (1-3) with comprehension questions, speaking activities (1-2), listening activities (1-2), writing activities (0-2)	Review activities consolidating material learned in the previous 4 units.
Topics	Summer Holidays, Books, Manners, The Vikings, Work, The Weather, Christmas, Entertainment, London, Superstitions, Big Wheel, Water, Ireland, Garden, Fish and Chips, Future	Mixed review of topics from the main units: - Show what you know (units 1-4) - Show what you know (units 6-9) - Show what you know (units 11-14) - Show what you know (units 16-19)
Skills focused on	vocabulary, reading, speaking, listening, writing, grammar	vocabulary, grammar, speaking
Activity types	controlled, semi- communicative	controlled, semi-communicative, integrated skills
Examples	<i>Translate the sentences. Ask and answer the questions. Retell one of the texts. Finish the sentences. Read the text and put the phrases in the right places.</i>	<i>Translate the sentences using the verbs make or do. Complete the sentences in the passive. Talk about your clothes. Answer the questions. Do the general knowledge quiz.</i>

Six units, particularly those addressing everyday activities and personal experiences, were identified as suitable for adaptation due to their contextualized vocabulary and familiar themes. The units ultimately selected were Unit 2 (*Books*), Unit 4 (*The Vikings*), Unit 8 (*Christmas*), Unit 9 (*Entertainment*), Unit 11 (*London*) and Unit 16 (*Ireland*). Those units were

chosen based on their thematic relevance, potential AoA implementation and suitability for developing collaborative, action-oriented tasks. The units allowed learners to engage in meaningful scenarios such as recommending books, planning trips and creating informational posters. The selected units also corresponded with the themes and goals set out in the Estonian NCBS (Põhikooli riiklik õppekava 2011, 2023). This stage provided the foundation for the design and implementation of AoA tasks.

Based on this analysis, six action-oriented learning materials were designed to supplement the selected textbook. The learning materials included teacher materials and student worksheets. The design process of the materials followed the key features of action-oriented tasks pointed out by Collins and Hunter (2013, 2014), such as learner agency, purposeful action, clearly defined outcomes, authentic resources, critical and creative thinking, competence development, strategic decision-making and learner autonomy.

The CEFR CV AoA task template (Fischer et al 2023; see Appendix 1) served as a basis for the teacher materials. Key elements of a scenario that were used in the task development were as follows: context, situation, learner and target audience roles, tasks and expected outcomes. A realistic summary of a scenario was first defined, followed by student roles and clear outcomes. Additional sections, such as *Relation with the textbook*, *Learning outcomes* and *Assessment* were added to the teacher materials (see Appendix 2) to provide teachers with additional guidance, clarify the connection between the tasks and the textbook content and support effective assessment of the activities. Table 2 presents the examples of the tasks and their expected outcomes. More detailed scenarios can be found in the final material set (see Appendix 7).

Table 2. Developed tasks and their expected outcomes.

	Task	Expected outcome
Unit 2 - <i>Books</i>	Create and record a group podcast episode that includes individual book presentations and a group discussion.	A recorded podcast episode that includes a clear introduction, structured individual presentations and a group discussion.
Unit 4 - <i>The Vikings</i>	Create an informative group poster that clearly describes how Vikings lived, focusing on different aspects of daily life and culture.	A collaboratively written and visually supported poster describing Viking life and culture.
Unit 8 - <i>Christmas</i>	Create and present an interactive booth about one country's holiday traditions at the International Christmas Fair.	An interactive booth, created collaboratively in groups, that is informative and visually attractive.
Unit 9 - <i>Entertainment</i>	Create and submit a section for the online magazine <i>What's Up, Teens?</i> that includes reviews or recommendations for theatre, movies, series, music or events and engages readers with an interactive element.	A collaboratively created visually appealing and informative magazine section about theatre, movies, series, music or events.
Unit 11 - <i>London</i>	Create a 5-6 minute informative group video that introduces international visitors to Estonia, your hometown and school in a clear, friendly and engaging way.	A well structured 5-6 minute group video introducing life in Estonia, the students' hometown and school.
Unit 16 - <i>Ireland</i>	Create and present a detailed two-day trip plan to Ireland, including the city, activities, meals and budget.	A collaboratively created and presented, visually attractive and realistic trip plan including the programme, budget, maps and images.

The student worksheets (see Appendix 3) were then designed to guide learners through the process and provide a clear structure for completing the task. The worksheets support students' autonomy, work organization and collaboration within their groups. Each worksheet follows a similar structure: task description - clearly defined goal - step-by-step instructions - guidance for planning and presenting the final product. The worksheet begins with a summary

of a scenario that places learners in a possible real-life situation (e.g. plan a two-day trip to Ireland). Such scenarios are characteristic of the AoA as they require students to use language to complete meaningful tasks. Collaboration with peers is incorporated into the worksheet through group work and the division of responsibilities. This promotes communication, negotiating ideas and making decisions together while completing the task. The worksheets guide learners toward a clearly defined outcome. The assessment criteria clarify the expectations for the final product and makes the assessment transparent. Finally, a self-assessment section was added to encourage learners to reflect on their participation, collaboration and language use during the task.

Given the emphasis on authenticity and purposeful action, it was also important to incorporate the use of the internet into the tasks. In today's digital world, learners must learn to find information online and, just as importantly, develop the ability to distinguish reliable information from inaccurate content. Using the internet allows students to engage with authentic materials, search for real-world information and complete tasks that reflect how language is used beyond the classroom. As the tasks are carried out in a classroom setting, the main role of the teacher at this stage is to act as a facilitator throughout the process. This includes guiding students towards trustworthy sources and ensuring that they complete the tasks independently rather than relying on tools such as ChatGPT.

Finally, careful attention was paid to the overall level and suitability of the materials. All the tasks were aligned with the CEFR descriptors, ensuring that the activities were both appropriately challenging and accessible. In addition, the vocabulary and themes already introduced in the textbook were incorporated into the tasks to match the learners' proficiency level. Attention was also given to the diversity of the tasks to ensure that different skills and competencies were engaged. The final tasks included podcasts, posters, interactive booths, online magazine sections, videos and planning a trip.

2.4.2. Implementation of the action-oriented tasks

The designed action-oriented tasks were implemented in real classroom settings with students from the target age group and proficiency level. The implementation took place during regular English lessons at the author's school. The tasks were implemented over a five-month period, from November 2025 to March 2026. During this period five of the six designed action-oriented tasks were piloted (Unit 2, Unit 4, Unit 8, Unit 9 and Unit 11). The cycle for each task included the stage of planning, acting, analysis and conclusion.

The duration of each task varied greatly - the longest task (Unit 8, *Christmas*) taking around eight 40-minute lessons and the shortest tasks (Unit 2, *Books* and Unit 11, *London*) taking around two 40-minute lessons. The duration depended largely on the complexity of the task, the number of stages involved and the amount of discussion and independent work required from the students. The lessons included an introduction to the task, group discussions, information search, completion of the worksheet and (sub-)tasks, presentation of the results and reflection. Table 3 provides an overview of the implementation period and the duration of the tasks.

Table 3. Implementation period and duration of the tasks.

	Period of implementation	Duration
Unit 4 - <i>The Vikings</i>	November 11th - November 24th, 2025	five 40 minute lessons
Unit 8 - <i>Christmas</i>	December 2nd - December 17th, 2026	eight 40 minute lessons
Unit 9 - <i>Entertainment</i>	February 3rd - February 10th, 2026	five 40 minute lessons
Unit 11 - <i>London</i>	March 10th, 2026	two 40 minute lessons
Unit 2 - <i>Books</i>	March 17th, 2026	two 40 minute lessons

At the beginning of each task, the teacher introduced the scenario and distributed the student worksheet. The learners were informed about their roles and the final product they were expected to produce. The tasks were mainly conducted in small groups to encourage

collaboration and communication. Students were required to discuss ideas, make decisions together and create a final product. With each new action-oriented task, the students were given increasing independence.

The teacher gradually reduced the amount of detailed instructions and encouraged students to rely more on the step-by-step student worksheet and discuss the task with their peers. In addition, digital tools were used in every project. Thus, students were also able to seek information and support from the internet when needed, rather than relying solely on the teacher. The aim of this approach was to strengthen students' autonomy and active participation in the lesson. During the task implementation, the teacher acted primarily as a facilitator, providing guidance only when necessary.

2.4.3. Data collection

Multiple methods were used to collect data and evaluate the implementation of the tasks. Both qualitative and informal feedback was collected from students and teachers through observation notes, guiding feedback questions and reflective discussions, focusing on task clarity and overall student response.

The initial pilot was conducted with the researcher's own students with the aim of evaluating the tasks' clarity, engagement and effectiveness in promoting authentic language use and learner autonomy. During the implementation, classroom observations were carried out and notes were taken on the following aspects: students' reactions to the task and their understanding of the instructions, as well as their motivation, collaboration and active participation. These observations provided insight into how the tasks functioned in practice and were used to revise the materials.

Following each action-oriented task, student feedback was gathered through classroom discussions and self-assessment worksheets. The leading questions for the classroom discussions were the following:

1. What did you like most about this task? Why?
2. What was difficult or boring about this task? Explain.
3. What did you learn?
4. What should we change or do better next time?

The students' answers to these questions led into an in-depth discussion, providing valuable insights into their experiences, opinions and suggestions for improvement. During the discussions, additional and more specific follow up questions were asked to elicit more detailed responses. All students were given the opportunity to contribute and they expressed their views openly.

The students' self-assessment worksheets (see Appendix 4) consisted of a series of statements related to student's engagement, collaboration and language use, which students rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The statements focused on aspects such as motivation, participation, contribution to group work and use of English. The collected responses provided additional insight into students' perceptions of their learning process and complemented the data gathered through classroom observations and discussions.

To receive more varied feedback, colleagues were also invited to implement selected tasks in their classrooms. After completing the tasks, the teachers were provided with some feedback questions (see Appendix 5). Both participating teachers answered these questions using voice recordings, which were then analyzed by the author and used to identify key themes and patterns.

The data collected in this study were systematically organized into a structured table to support the analysis. For each task, the table (see Appendix 6) was divided into five thematic

categories - clarity of instructions, engagement, student independence, challenges and material design - which were identified based on the aims of the study. For each theme, data from two or three sources were included (the researcher's observations and the student feedback or the researcher's observations, the student feedback and the teacher feedback). The multiple perspectives allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how the learning materials functioned in real classroom settings.

Based on this analysis, necessary revisions were made to enhance the tasks' relevance, accessibility and alignment with the AoA before compiling them into the final supplementary material set (see Appendix 7). The next stage of the action research cycle would involve implementing the improved versions of the materials, however, this falls beyond the scope of the present study.

2.4.4. Data analysis

The following section presents a detailed analysis of the learning materials and the feedback gathered from the students and the teachers. The analysis is organized thematically rather than by individual unit and structured according to the study's research questions. All participants are referred to using pseudonyms in the examples.

2.4.4.1. User-friendliness of the designed action-oriented materials

The user-friendliness of the designed action-oriented materials is assessed in terms of design features, clarity of instructions, support for student independence and ease of implementation for teachers.

Material design

The design of the materials was generally effective in supporting the learning process, particularly due to the use of clear, step-by-step structures. The observations and the feedback

from both the students and the teachers indicated that the student worksheets helped guide learners through the tasks and provided a logical framework for completing activities. In most units, the materials were described as clear, visually supportive and easy to follow, which contributed to successful task completion and increased student engagement. A participating teacher noted:

The worksheets look visually very attractive, are consistent in style and clearly belong to one set. The information on the sheets is clear and easy to understand. The worksheets are colorful and have just enough pictures. Very suitable for teenagers. (Laura)

At the same time, several areas for improvement were identified. A common issue across units was the amount of text on the worksheets, which some students found overwhelming or difficult to engage with. In addition, certain elements, such as unclear instructions (e.g. difficult vocabulary used), missing examples or insufficient scaffolding (e.g. lack of sentence starters), reduced the effectiveness of the materials. Some students also tended to overlook certain sections of the worksheet, suggesting that layout and emphasis could be improved. Therefore, the feedback highlighted the importance of simplifying language, reducing worksheet load and providing practical support, such as examples, sentence starters and clear task requirements. The revision of the materials was guided by these aspects.

Clarity of instructions

The clarity of instructions across the units was generally evaluated positively by both the teachers and the students. Classroom observation revealed that instructions provided by the teacher, as well as those included in the worksheets, were mostly perceived as clear, understandable and enough for completing the tasks. In units *Books*, *The Vikings* and *London*, the students were able to follow the tasks with minimal confusion and the purpose and expected outcomes of the activities were clearly understood. This was further supported by student feedback, which indicated that the language used in the materials was mainly accessible and that worksheets guided the whole process well.

However, some challenges still arose, particularly related to more complex or unfamiliar concepts. For instance, in the *Christmas* and *Entertainment* tasks, students struggled with the idea of an interactive element. As a result, most students often required additional explanation and teacher support to successfully integrate this element into their work. In addition, on the *Entertainment* student worksheet, some vocabulary caused difficulties (e.g. *age-appropriate*, *appealing*, *accurate*) and several students asked for clarification of the meanings and their equivalents in Estonian. The findings therefore suggest that clarity of the tasks was achieved, but further simplification of the language could improve effectiveness. The vocabulary used on the worksheets was later reviewed and simplified where necessary.

Student independence

Student independence varied significantly across the tasks. In earlier units, such as *The Vikings* and *Christmas*, all the students relied heavily on teacher support, often turning to the teacher as their primary source of support rather than using the step-by-step worksheet provided. Although the materials were designed to guide students through the whole process, observations showed that learners were not yet accustomed to working autonomously and required frequent redirection to the worksheet. A similar trend was noticed by the two other teachers, who mentioned that most students tended to rely on teacher guidance rather than independently consulting the worksheet.

Though, a visible progression towards greater independence was observed in later units. In the last two tasks, *London* and *Books*, most students demonstrated a higher level of autonomy, dividing roles more effectively and following worksheet instructions with minimal teacher intervention. Student feedback supported this development, with learners reporting that they were able to complete these tasks independently and that the worksheets provided sufficient guidance. The findings suggest that while the materials support independence,

students need time and practice to develop the skills necessary for autonomous learning. Gradually reducing teacher support and reinforcing the use of written instructions increases this development.

Ease of implementation for teachers

Ease of implementation for teachers was generally perceived as high across the implemented materials. The author of the study had no significant challenges during the implementation process. The lesson structure, task instructions and sequencing were clearly outlined, which supported successful completion of the tasks and effective scaffolding for the students. Once the materials were ready, minimal preparation was required from the teacher to carry out the tasks as all necessary instructions and resources were already provided within the materials. As a result, the overall teacher workload was reduced, particularly in terms of lesson planning and material preparation.

The teachers who used the materials from unit 2 (*Books*) and unit 11 (*London*) reported no issues with the clarity of either the instructional teacher materials or the student worksheets. Regarding the teacher materials, neither the author nor the participating teachers noticed any inconsistencies. The teachers agreed that the materials support task implementation effectively and are sufficiently detailed to guide even those who are not familiar with the AoA.

One suggestion concerned the assessment section. Although it is outlined separately, it was proposed by the teachers that the inclusion of assessment matrices could further structure the evaluation process, making it more consistent, reliable and easier to apply in practice. Despite the suggestion, assessment matrices were not adopted in the final material set. The author considered the existing assessment section sufficiently clear and flexible, allowing teachers to adapt evaluation to different classroom contexts.

Overall, the findings indicate that the materials are easy to implement in practice, supported by clear instructions, logical structure and adequate pedagogical guidance.

2.4.4.2. Meaningful communication, active participation and cooperation

Meaningful communication

Meaningful communication was supported through tasks that required learners to use language for a clear purpose rather than simply practicing isolated forms. The materials included activities that encouraged the exchange of information, the expression of personal opinions and collaborative problem-solving, creating a genuine need for interaction. In several tasks, the learners were also asked to relate content to their own experiences and viewpoints. For instance, in the *Books* and *Entertainment* units, the students were given the freedom to choose what they wanted to write and discuss, such as their favorite books, films or genres, which fostered personalization and deeper engagement. The author's observation revealed that the most meaningful communication, however, took place during the International Christmas Fair, where students had to present their work fluently and respond spontaneously to visitors' questions. As a result, communication resembled real-life interaction.

However, a key limitation was that much of the communication during all the task completion processes took place in the students' mother tongue rather than in English. The tasks supported interaction and meaningful exchange of ideas successfully but the use of Estonian reduced opportunities for English language production and practice. The students admitted that they often applied Estonian because it allowed them to communicate more quickly and confidently. Therefore, while the tasks were effective in promoting communication, their potential for developing English proficiency was only partially realized due to the frequent use of the mother tongue.

Nonetheless, the use of the mother tongue should not be viewed entirely negatively, as the CEFR CV highlights the importance of plurilingualism and recognizes that learners may use any language they know to support deeper understanding and effective communication.

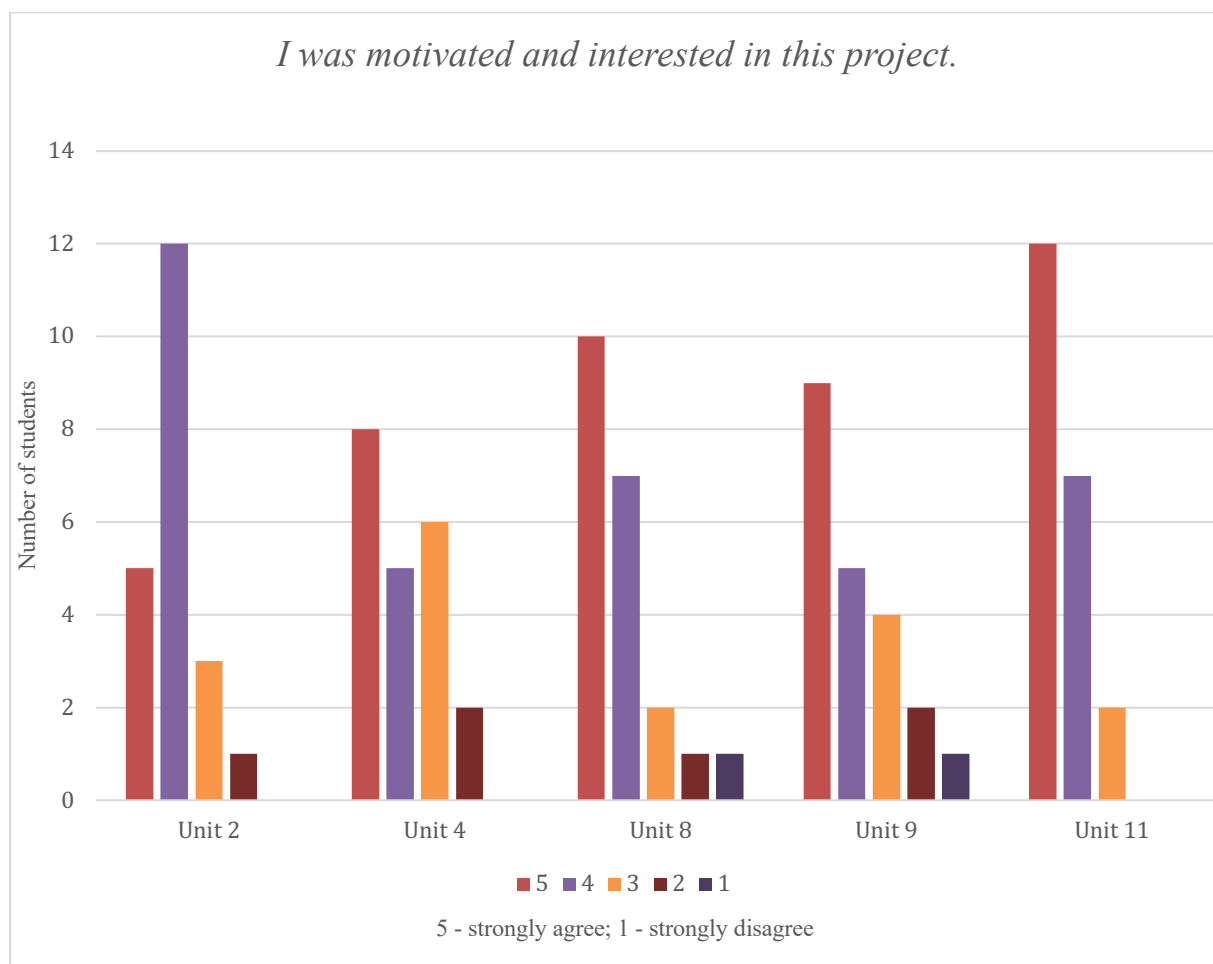
Active participation

Beyond communication, the learners' active participation provides deeper insight into their engagement with the materials and activities. Classroom observation showed that student engagement was high across most units, suggesting that the materials and tasks were generally motivating and relevant. The students remained focused, participated actively and put a lot of effort in their work. Units such as *Christmas*, *Entertainment* and *London* were especially successful in promoting active participation as they included creative, collaborative and real-life elements. The teacher who piloted unit 11 (*London*) materials reported:

Students immediately started working with great enthusiasm and it seemed that they liked the idea of the task. They immediately discussed what to talk about in the video, how and where to film their clips and how to edit the video together in a fun way. (Sandra)

Student feedback reinforced these observations as the learners expressed enjoyment in activities such as recording videos, designing posters and participating in a fair. In the post-task discussion, most students stated that they enjoyed making informational posters and taking part in the fair, even though it was initially intimidating. They noted that the fair provided meaningful opportunities to use English, which is why they would like to do it again in the future. Chart 1 shows the students' self-assessed motivation in all the piloted tasks.

Chart 1. Students' self-assessed motivation in all the tasks.



Yet, some limitations were also identified. Student engagement appeared to be influenced by both learner ability and task design. Less proficient students sometimes struggled with the relatively independent nature of the action-oriented tasks and required more structured guidance and support from the teacher. Lower levels of engagement were also observed in the *Entertainment* and *The Vikings* tasks, which involved a more individual mode of work. In these activities, the students divided the topics among themselves and produced separate texts that were later just combined into a shared poster or Canva page. Furthermore, in the *Entertainment* and *Christmas* tasks, the students expressed a preference for choosing their own topics rather than having them assigned by the teacher. Writing-heavy tasks, such as those included in *The Vikings* unit, were likewise perceived as monotonous and less engaging by the students. This

was reflected in some of the learners' comments: *there was way too much writing, it made the task hard and a little bit boring.*

A similar issue regarding student engagement was also noted in a different context. One of the participating teachers commented that during the implementation of unit 11 (*London*) materials several students remained passive, as they were reluctant to show their faces or voices in a video:

I observed that some students were uncomfortable with appearing on the video, which created a challenge and raised the question of how these learners could be meaningfully included in presentation-based tasks. (Sandra)

In conclusion, these findings indicate that student engagement is highest in tasks that are collaborative, creative and allow for real-life language use, while more individual, writing-heavy tasks with limited student choice tend to reduce engagement. It also highlights the importance of differentiation, ensuring that tasks are adapted in a way that allows all students to participate meaningfully.

Cooperation

Cooperation played an important role in promoting meaningful communication and active participation. In all the tasks, the students had to work in pairs or groups, dividing the roles fairly and supporting each other throughout the process. Most students appreciated the possibility of working together with their peers, which is why the tasks were perceived as motivating. For instance, when asked about what made *The Vikings* task interesting, one of the students answered: *I was able to work with people I didn't choose, so it was interesting to do things differently than usual.* Another student reported that they managed to complete a task successfully because *no one was lazy and did everything they could.* Effective collaboration was also stated by one of the teachers:

Students enjoyed working in groups. They quickly divided roles among themselves, discussed their ideas and plans together. They helped each other during the work and shared the tasks between group members. No one was left behind. (Laura)

The clear distribution of roles within groups appeared to support equal participation and reduce the likelihood of students remaining passive during task completion.

Overall, cooperation was a key factor in fostering meaningful communication and active participation, as it encouraged shared responsibility, peer support and engagement in task completion.

2.4.4.3. Challenges

Student-related challenges

Several challenges were identified across the tasks, relating to both pedagogical and practical aspects of implementation. One of the main issues was the students' difficulty in meeting specific task requirements, such as using grammar structures (e.g. the passive voice) and adhering to task specifications, especially regarding the required length of texts or recordings. For instance, although a specific duration was set for the *London* video task, some students produced shorter outputs than expected.

Some students also reflected that speaking fluently in English and presenting in front of an audience was a significant challenge, as illustrated by one student's comment after the Christmas fair task: *I found it difficult to speak fluently and confidently because I was nervous, especially in front of strangers*. This highlights the need for more structured support, such as planning time, language prompts and guided practice to help learners develop fluency and confidence before presenting their work.

Another challenge was related to student readiness for independent and collaborative work. Many students initially struggled with making decisions, planning tasks or working without teacher instructions. This sometimes led to uncertainty, over-reliance on the teacher or difficulties in task completion, while some students also experienced challenges in working effectively with their peers. Classroom observations revealed instances where students

hesitated to proceed without teacher input and required additional guidance in organizing their work, including dividing tasks among group members and coordinating responsibilities within their groups.

Overall, the findings reveal that the tasks can be demanding for learners both linguistically and organizationally. While they supported meaningful learning, they indicated gaps in the students' language control, autonomy and collaborative skills. This suggests that the teacher could provide more structured scaffolding, for instance through clear models, detailed instructions and examples of expected outcomes. Moreover, in the early stages of implementing the AoA, explicit guidance in group work organization and role distribution could support collaboration, while gradual reduction of teacher support develops learner autonomy over time.

Teacher-related challenges

One of the main challenges encountered by the author during the implementation of the materials concerned finding an appropriate balance between learner autonomy and scaffolding. While the tasks were designed to promote student independence, it was often hard to determine how much support to provide without either over-scaffolding or under-scaffolding the learning process. In some cases, too much guidance reduced opportunities for problem-solving whereas insufficient support led to confusion.

Another challenge was supporting students with special educational needs within the same task framework. As a result, additional differentiation was sometimes necessary to ensure that all learners could participate meaningfully. This included simplified instructions, the use of translation tools or individual guidance from the teacher. Balancing these individual needs while maintaining the flow of whole-class activities required ongoing adjustment from the teacher.

The other participating teachers noted issues related to assessment and inclusivity. For example, assessing students who were absent during certain stages of task completion or presentation days proved difficult. Some learners were also uncomfortable appearing in videos or speaking in front of strangers. These findings highlight the importance of teacher decision-making, particularly in relation to scaffolding and differentiation, even when working with carefully designed materials.

Finally, the participating teachers admitted that they have received minimal training in implementing the AoA, which resulted in lower confidence in implementing the tasks and uncertainty about how to effectively support students throughout the process. One of the teachers said:

Overall, a very good idea and an interesting task, but I may need to develop my own skills to carry it out more effectively and in a more professional way. Maybe I could have supported or guided the students better in this process. (Sandra)

The lower confidence was expressed especially in relation to shifting responsibility from the teacher to the students. This reflects the fact that teachers are often accustomed to leading and structuring the learning process themselves, making it challenging to adopt a more facilitative role that places greater autonomy on learners.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that while the materials themselves are well designed, their successful implementation depends on teachers' ability to manage scaffolding, differentiation and assessment challenges.

2.4.5. Discussion

The study investigated the design and implementation of action-oriented learning materials in EFL teaching, with a particular focus on student engagement, learner autonomy and collaborative language use. The discussion section is structured according to the study's research questions.

User-friendliness of the designed action-oriented materials

Action-oriented tasks are learning activities structured as a sequence of sub-tasks that progressively lead learners towards a meaningful culminating task. According to Piccardo and North (2019) a scenario is a framework that organizes these sub-tasks into a coherent and logical progression. Thus, the key elements of a scenario were used to design the materials in this study. The feedback from students and teachers confirmed that this framework provided a clear structure for completing the activities. The scenario-based design contributed to the overall clarity and coherence of the materials. The progression from one task to another helped learners understand the purpose of each activity and their relation to the outcome. For teachers, the structure provided a clear roadmap for lesson delivery and reduced the need for additional planning.

At the same time, however, the effectiveness of this scenario-based structure depended on appropriate scaffolding. As noted by Piccardo (2014), learners are expected to take increasing responsibility for their learning, while the teacher's role shifts towards fostering, encouraging and orchestrating their work. A more detailed discussion of the user-friendliness of the designed action-oriented materials, including their key advantages and limitations, is presented in the following sections.

Meaningful communication, active participation and cooperation

Language teaching frameworks (CEFR 2020; NCBS 2011, 2023; The Subject Area “Foreign Languages” 2023) highlight the importance of using language in authentic communicative contexts that reflect real-life interaction. The analysis of the *I Love English 5* textbook (Kurm & Soolepp 2016), however, showed that activities are often repetitive and focus more on comprehension than on meaningful, action-oriented language use. This supports Folinazzo’s (2024) claim that traditional textbooks do not support the AoA and the limited availability of suitable teaching materials can be a challenge for teachers. In response to this gap, a set of supplementary action-oriented learning materials were developed to strengthen the communicative and task-based approach in the classroom.

From Germain-Rutherford’s (2021) theoretical perspective, the AoA emphasizes purposeful, collaborative tasks that lead to concrete outcomes. Similarly, Piccardo and North (2019) argue that such tasks prepare learners for real-life communication by engaging them in authentic, goal-oriented language use. In addition, action-oriented tasks should reflect learners’ everyday experiences and be situated in familiar contexts to ensure engagement (Piccardo 2019; 2014; Piccardo & North 2019; CEFR Expert Group 2023). Based on these principles, the materials developed in this study included topics related to students’ interests, experiences and cultural background. Classroom observations and student feedback indicated that engagement was higher when tasks focused on familiar and personally relevant themes. This suggests that meaningful communication is supported not only by authentic outcomes, but also by content that learners perceive as relevant and motivating.

Students engaged in tasks that required communication for clear purpose and resulted in tangible outcomes, such as posters, presentations and podcasts. For example, during the video and podcast tasks (units 11 and 2), the students needed to negotiate content and organize their ideas in English before recording, which increased spontaneous language use. The

students also reported that they appreciated using English in real-life situations rather than simply completing traditional textbook exercises. Furthermore, they confirmed that the tasks helped them develop skills, such as writing reviews, presenting their work and using digital tools, they considered useful for later life. This supports Piccardo's (2010) view that schools should prepare students for life beyond the classroom.

In relation to cooperation and active participation in the classroom, the findings suggest a generally positive impact of the materials. Piccardo (2010) explains that engaging in complex, collaborative tasks where speaking and action are connected helps develop communicative ability, while Germain-Rutherford (2021) adds that such tasks can also increase learner engagement, motivation and academic success. The findings of this study support these claims, as students worked actively during group tasks, contributed ideas and collaborated effectively with their peers. This may be explained by the task designs, which required learners to rely on one another to complete the activities successfully.

Classroom observations further confirmed that the tasks required them to communicate for a clear purpose and produce shared outcomes. For instance, during the *London* unit, learners collaboratively planned, filmed and edited videos, which involved negotiation of ideas and spontaneous language use. In the *Christmas* task, students designed materials for a school fair, which encouraged both creativity and peer interaction. These activities appeared to increase engagement and motivation as students reported enjoying the opportunity to work together and use English in authentic situations. This is consistent with Mohammed Ismail and Prasantha Kumar (2024), who found that students view AoA as beneficial for promoting authentic language use and communication skills.

The CEFR Expert Group (2023) also notes that collaboration supports an inclusive classroom environment in which all students can contribute and use their language knowledge during the task completion. The study showed that students managed to divide roles within

groups, assign responsibilities and share ideas. The participating teachers observed that students frequently helped one another, ensuring that no one was left behind. Student feedback also indicated that collaborative work was engaging and generally problem-free. The tasks, therefore, contributed to a more inclusive classroom, as students with different language abilities were able to participate and contribute.

Challenges

Despite these positive outcomes, the findings also revealed several challenges. Task effectiveness varied, as not all learners benefited equally from the action-oriented activities. Some students experienced difficulties with group organization, while others lacked confidence in autonomous or presentation-based tasks. In some cases, more confident learners tended to dominate task completion, whereas less confident students took on more passive roles. The teachers also noted that some groups required additional guidance in organizing their work and distributing responsibilities evenly. This suggests that the success of action-oriented tasks depends on appropriate scaffolding and consideration of learners' differing levels of autonomy and confidence. On this matter, Piccardo and North (2019) emphasize the teacher's role in anticipating difficulties, structuring tasks and providing targeted assistance during task completion.

In addition, some students were unsure how to begin the (sub)task and required repeated teacher clarification before proceeding. Others expressed anxiety when tasks involved public performance or self-recording. Such reactions may be expected when learners are not yet accustomed to these forms of output as part of classroom activities, indicating the need for clear instructions and a supportive learning environment when implementing unfamiliar task types.

Another challenge concerned teacher preparedness for implementing the action-oriented tasks. The participating teachers reported limited training and experience in managing

such activities. This aligns with Martinović's (2025) findings, which also highlight a lack of professional preparation for applying the AoA in classroom practice. Similarly, the CEFR Expert Group (2023) notes that CEFR principles are often underrepresented in both initial teacher education and ongoing professional development.

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that action-oriented learning materials have strong potential to promote meaningful communication, collaboration and engagement in EFL classrooms, especially when linked to learners' interests and familiar contexts. However, the findings also showed that their effectiveness depends on several factors, including task design, learner autonomy, scaffolding and teacher preparedness. This suggests that while the AoA aligns well with contemporary language teaching frameworks, its successful implementation requires careful adaptation to classroom realities and sufficient support for both learners and teachers.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was conducted in a limited classroom context over a relatively short period of time, which restricts the wider relevance of the results and does not provide insight into the long-term effects on the students' language development. In addition, the study relied on student and teacher feedback, which reflects subjective perceptions and experiences. Finally, the implementation of the materials may have been influenced by the participating teachers' limited prior experience with the AoA.

Future research could explore the long-term impact of action-oriented learning materials on students' language development and communicative competence. Further studies conducted in different educational contexts with larger participant groups could provide a broader understanding of the applicability of the AoA in EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSION

Previous studies and language teaching theoretical perspectives have highlighted the importance of meaningful communication and collaboration in foreign language learning (Council of Europe 2020; Piccardo & North 2019; Germain-Rutherford 2021). Within this context, the AoA has been presented as a way of engaging learners in purposeful, real-life language use through collaborative action-oriented tasks. As stated by Piccardo (2010) and Germain-Rutherford (2021) action-oriented tasks involve planning, problem-solving, creative thinking and intercultural competence, which prepares students for life beyond the classroom. However, Folinazzo (2024) has also pointed to challenges related to the limited availability of suitable action-oriented materials and the practical implementation of the approach in classroom settings.

This thesis explored the potential of the AoA to promote meaningful communication and collaborative learning in the EFL classroom through the design and implementation of supplementary learning materials for the *I Love English 5* textbook. Three research questions were formulated:

1. How user-friendly are the created action-oriented learning materials for students and teachers to implement?
2. Do the created action-oriented learning materials promote meaningful communication, cooperation and active participation in the classroom?
3. What challenges do students and teachers face when integrating an action-oriented approach into classroom activities?

To answer these questions, an action research approach was employed and data were collected through classroom observations, student feedback and teacher feedback.

The findings suggest that the created action-oriented materials generally supported meaningful communication, collaboration and learner engagement, particularly when tasks

were connected to students' interests and familiar contexts. The students appeared more actively involved during tasks that related to books and entertainment, contributing ideas more frequently, participating more willingly in group discussions and showing greater enthusiasm in completing the final outputs. The students also valued opportunities to use English in real-life situations, which is why tasks such as recording videos and participating in a fair were perceived as particularly meaningful and motivating, allowing learners to use the language beyond traditional classroom exercises.

At the same time, the study revealed several challenges related to learner confidence, group dynamics and student independence, highlighting the importance of careful scaffolding and support when implementing the AoA in practice. These challenges were evident when less confident students hesitated to take active roles in group work, when some groups struggled to organize tasks and responsibilities effectively, and when students required additional guidance in managing unfamiliar activities. The teachers, on the other hand, reported feeling unprepared in implementing the action-oriented tasks. They noted a lack of prior training and experience with the AoA, which made it challenging to guide group work and support learner autonomy.

Overall, the present thesis concludes that the created action-oriented learning materials have great practical value by bridging the gap between traditional textbook-based instruction and more authentic, communicative language use. By encouraging collaboration, purposeful interaction and learner engagement, such materials help teachers create meaningful classroom experiences. However, their successful implementation requires careful planning, attention to learners' needs and sufficient teacher support, especially when introducing less familiar or more complex task types.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. AoA task template



CEFR Companion Volume implementation toolbox

Action-oriented Approach – task template

The following task template can be used in professional development. Teachers / teacher trainees should first familiarise themselves with the VITbox module on the "Action-oriented Approach and the Learner as a Social Agent", where they will find further information concerning the different elements below, before working with this template.

Key elements of a scenario that need to be considered in task development in an action-oriented approach:

1. Context:
2. Situation:
3. Roles:
 - a. of the learner(s) / test-taker(s):
 - b. of the target audience:
4. Tasks:
 - a. overall task
 - b. and build-up tasks
 -
 -
 -
 -
5. Target group:
6. Expected outcomes

Appendix 2. An example section from the teacher materials

UNIT 11. LONDON.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The outcome is a collaboratively planned, filmed and edited informative group video (5-6 minutes) that introduces international visitors to Estonia, the students' hometown and everyday school life.

RELATION WITH THE TEXTBOOK

This project is connected to Unit 11, which focuses on sights and places around the world. The unit introduces vocabulary related to landmarks, natural attractions and cities, which students practice when describing and presenting destinations. It includes activities about Estonia (SB p 68-69 ex 3-4) and a text about London (SB p 70-71 ex 7), which serve as models for talking about places, highlighting key sights and sharing cultural information.

The grammar focus of the unit is the use of the definite article "the". The project builds on this by giving students opportunities to use it in a natural, real-life context when referring to specific places, monuments and geographical features. By creating their own descriptions and presentations, students reinforce both the vocabulary and grammatical structures from the unit in a meaningful and communicative way.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the project, students will be able to ...

- explain key aspects of life in Estonia, their hometown or their school in clear and simple English;
- use appropriate vocabulary and grammar to describe places, routines and culture;
- collaborate with peers to plan, film and edit a coherent group video.

CONTEXT

Our school is preparing to welcome students and teachers from abroad who want to learn more about our country, hometown and school. The goal is to help visitors feel informed, comfortable and excited about their visit through a short introductory video.

Each pair/group will focus on one of the aspects: school, local area or life in Estonia. These clips will then be put into one.

SITUATION

International visitors will watch the video before or during their visit. The video should give them a friendly introduction to local life, school routines and cultural habits, helping them understand what to expect.

ROLES

- a. each learner is:
 - a planner: helps decide what information to include and how to structure the video;
 - a researcher: gathers facts, ideas and visuals about the topic;
 - a speaker/narrator: presents information clearly on camera or as a voice-over;
 - a camera operator/editor: films and edits the video;
 - a coordinator: helps ensure the video is clear, well-paced and complete.
- b. target audience roles
 - viewers: international students and teachers visiting the school and hometown.

TASKS

1. overall task
 - Create a 5-6 minute informative group video that introduces international visitors to Estonia, your hometown and school in a clear, friendly and engaging way.
2. build-up tasks
 - choose/draw one topic (local area, school, life in Estonia)
 - decide what key information international visitors need to know
 - plan the structure of the video and assign group roles
 - write a short script or keywords for narration
 - film and edit the video, adding visuals such as images, maps or subtitles
 - present the finished video to the teacher/class

ASSESSMENT

Students' work will be assessed in three main areas:

1. Video content and presentation
 - The video clearly explains the topic
 - Information is accurate, relevant and easy to understand
 - Visuals support the message
2. Group work and cooperation
 - Tasks are shared fairly
 - All students contribute actively
 - The group works well together
3. Oral communication
 - Speech is clear and understandable
 - Students use appropriate vocabulary and grammar
 - The presentation is engaging and confident

To get a grade 5, students should:

- meet all video requirements with clear, accurate and creative content;
- show excellent teamwork and organization;
- speak fluently and understandably in English;
- use visuals.

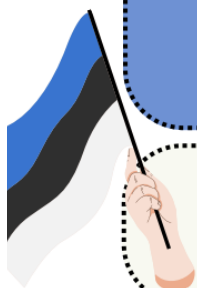
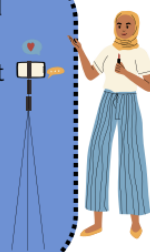
The student worksheet and self-assessment are on the following pages.

Appendix 3. An example of a student worksheet

WELCOME TO ESTONIA VIDEO PROJECT

Our school is preparing to welcome students and teachers from abroad who want to learn more about our country, hometown and school. The goal is to help visitors feel informed, comfortable and excited about their visit through a short introductory video.

. Each pair/group will focus on ONE of the aspects: school, hometown, Estonia (2-3 minutes).
These clips will then be put into one 5-6 minute long video..



GOAL

A well-structured 5-6 minute group video introducing life in Estonia, our hometown and school.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

STEP 1. FORM YOUR GROUP AND CHOOSE A TOPIC.

OUR TOPIC:

STEP 2. AS A GROUP, RESEARCH INFORMATION AND FACTS ABOUT YOUR TOPIC.

Write down 10-12 most important facts about your topic.

Make sure they are informative and understandable for foreigners.

NOTES:

STEP 3. AS A GROUP, PLAN YOUR VIDEO.

Decide:

- what information you want to include in the video
- what order you will present it in
- where and how you will film it
- who will talk about what

STEP 4. PREPARE VISUALS.

Plan what visuals you will use in the video, such as:

- photos
- maps
- titles/subtitles
- special effects

STEP 5. FILM YOUR VIDEO.

- Record your video using a phone or tablet.
- Speak clearly and confidently.
- Make sure everyone says something in the video.

You can either show yourself in the video or do a voice-over. Both are allowed.

STEP 6. EDIT YOUR VIDEO.

Edit your video to:

- keep it 2-3 minutes long
- add images, maps or text if needed
- make the video clear and well-organized

STEP 7. CHECK!

Watch your video together and check:

- ☐ clear sound and image
- ☐ fluent and understandable English
- ☐ 10-12 most important facts about our topic
- ☐ everyone says something in the video

**STEP 8. SHARE YOUR VIDEO.**

Appendix 4. Self-assessment worksheet

SELF-ASSESSMENT. RATE EACH STATEMENT FROM 1 TO 5.

1 - strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree

• I WAS MOTIVATED AND INTERESTED IN THE PROJECT.	1	2	3	4	5
• I WORKED WELL WITH MY GROUP.	1	2	3	4	5
• WE DIVIDED THE WORK FAIRLY.	1	2	3	4	5
• I SHARED IDEAS AND LISTENED TO OTHERS.	1	2	3	4	5
• I HELPED PLAN THE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE VIDEO.	1	2	3	4	5
• I PARTICIPATED IN THE VIDEO.	1	2	3	4	5
• I SPOKE CLEARLY IN THE VIDEO.	1	2	3	4	5
• I FELT CONFIDENT SPEAKING ENGLISH ON CAMERA OR IN A VOICE-OVER.	1	2	3	4	5
• I HELPED WITH FILMING AND/OR EDITING THE VIDEO.	1	2	3	4	5
• I AM PROUD OF OUR FINAL VIDEO.	1	2	3	4	5
• I FEEL MORE CONFIDENT USING ENGLISH IN REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 5. Feedback questions for teachers

Clarity and structure:

1. Were the task instructions clear and easy to follow?
2. Is the purpose of the activity obvious to students?
3. Are the expected outcomes or goals well-defined?
4. Did anything in the materials confuse you or seem unnecessary?

Engagement and motivation

1. Do you think students will find this activity motivating or relevant? Why or why not?
2. Is there any element that might reduce motivation or cause frustration?

Collaboration and interaction

1. How well do the materials support meaningful student collaboration?
2. Are the roles clear enough?
3. How could the activity better balance participation among group members?

Pedagogical fit and improvement

1. How well does the task align with action-oriented or communicative teaching principles?
2. What changes would make this activity more effective or user-friendly?
3. Do you have any suggestions for extension or follow-up tasks?

Appendix 6. Analysis of the tasks

UNIT 4 – THE VIKINGS

5 x 40 min (more than planned)

THEME	MY OBSERVATIONS	STUDENT FEEDBACK
Clarity of instructions	- teacher instructions clear - worksheet clear, no difficult vocabulary	- purpose and outcome clear - example posters showed before the project helped/inspired
Engagement	- students were engaged throughout the process (focused and interested) - teams worked well together, roles and work divided fairly - random pairs work well together - a lot of effort was put into the posters	- liked to search for images, design the poster, draw, use the Internet - team worked well together, work divided fairly - everyone had their own role; planning and designing the poster all together - learned and remember more about the Vikings - would have liked to do the poster in computer instead
Student independence	- worksheet supports student independence - a lot of guidance from the teacher (starting from how to do research to how to design the posters)	- the worksheet helped choose topics - didn't use the worksheet much because the teacher explained everything already
Challenges	- how to make sure students use passive voice as well? - students not used to working independently (even designing the poster can be difficult as they are used to the teachers always telling them what to do)	- too much writing (monotonous, takes a lot of time)
Material design	- add on the worksheet the pages of the textbook where they can find information about the Vikings - remove the requirement to use passive voice? - 5 sentences about each topic instead of 8	- helped

Appendix 7. The final supplementary material set

You can find the final learning material set [here](#).

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Gerlys Marleen Nano

Designing and Implementing Supplementary Action-Oriented Learning Materials for the *I Love English 5* textbook

Õpiku *I Love English 5* juurde tegevuspõhiste lisamaterjalide loomine ja nende rakendamine

Magistritöö

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Lehekülgede arv: 59

Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva lõputöö eesmärk on õpiku *I Love English 5* juurde tegevuspõhiste lisamaterjalide loomine ja nende rakendamine, et soodustada tähenduslikku suhtlust, koostööd ja aktiivset osalust inglise keele tunnis. Töös püstitatakse järgmised uurimisküsimused:

1. Kui kasutajasõbralikud on loodud tegevuspõhised õppematerjalid õpilastele ja õpetajatele?
2. Kas loodud tegevuspõhised õppematerjalid soodustavad tundides tähenduslikku suhtlust, koostööd ja aktiivset osalust?
3. Milliseid väljakutseid kogevad õpilased ja õpetajad tundides tegevuspõhise lähenemise rakendamisel?

Uurimisküsimustele vastamiseks kasutati tegevusuuringu metoodikat, mis hõlmab materjalide loomist, rakendamist klassiruumis, hindamist ja täiendamist.

Lõputöö koosneb kahest põhiosast. Esimene peatükk käsitleb tegevuspõhise lähenemise teoreetilisi aluseid. Teine peatükk kirjeldab tegevuspõhiste õppematerjalide loomise ja rakendamise protsessi ja andmekogumismeetodeid. Viimaks analüüsitakse kogutuid andmeid ja esitatakse pedagoogilisi soovitusi tegevuspõhise lähenemise integreerimiseks inglise keele õpetamisel.

Uuringu tulemused näitasid, et loodud materjalid olid üldiselt kasutajasõbralikud ning toetasid tähenduslikku suhtlust, koostööd ja õpilaste aktiivset osalust, eriti kui ülesanded olid seotud õpilaste huvidega. Samas ilmnesid ka mitmed väljakutsed, sealhulgas õpilaste erinev enesekindlus, inglise keele tase ning raskused töö iseseisval korraldamisel. Õpetajad tõid esile oma vähese ettevalmistuse ja kogemuse puudumise tegevuspõhise lähenemise rakendamisel.

Märksõnad: Euroopa keeleõppe raamdokument, CEFR, tegevuspõhine lähenemine, keeleõpe, tegevusuuring, põhikool

Lihtlitsents

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

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