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TEACHING THE ENGLISH ARTICLE SYSTEM BASED ON *I LOVE*
ENGLISH 4

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study is to analyze the English coursebook *I Love English 4* and recommend exercises, which are more oriented towards teaching the English article system to the students of Grade 6. The first chapter of the thesis provides an overview of the different grammar-teaching approaches and methods suitable for young learners specifically. The section then continues to discuss teaching grammar in context, based on the four language skills. Furthermore, the English article system will be introduced in this section, as well as the techniques and problems that could arise in teaching this system to young learners. The second chapter includes an overview of the structure of *I Love English 4*. The overview also introduces the coursebook's topics and provides an analysis on how grammar is taught in general. Exercises explicitly about articles are then analyzed, based on theoretical findings. Exercises that are not explicitly about articles will be analyzed with the aim of highlighting how these exercises can be used to teach articles more specifically and with more intensity. Finally, recommendations based on the existing exercises of *I Love English 4* will be provided. The recommendations are based on the analysis and the theoretical section of the thesis. These recommendations could be of use to teachers who find that their students' article use in English could be improved.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLT - Communicative Language Teaching

EFL – English as a foreign language

ILE 1 – I Love English 1

ILE 2 – I Love English 2

ILE 3 – I Love English 3

ILE 4 – I Love English 4 (including both the WB and SB if not stated otherwise)

L1 – first language

SB – Student's book (textbook)

WB – Workbook

INTRODUCTION

The correct use of the English articles requires knowledge of rules of the article system and consistent practice, which might not always be achieved solely with coursebook exercises. Given that articles have an important role in forming grammatically correct sentences in both written and spoken English, teachers of English as a foreign language (hereinafter EFL) should focus attention on developing and improving their students' correct use of articles. EFL teachers should opt for various activities through which students eventually comprehend the role and function of articles. Such exercises should aim to teach articles in context with other language skills, reading, speaking, writing, and listening. The main focal point presented in this thesis is how articles can be taught in context by modifying the existing exercises and activities of the Grade 6 coursebook *I Love English 4* (2014) (hereinafter *ILE 4*) by Ülle Kurm and Ene Soolepp, a set of English study materials widely used in Grade 6 of Estonian basic schools.

The author of the thesis has taught English to the students of Grade 6 for the past two years. These years have demonstrated that one of the most prominent English language grammar errors that students make is associated with articles (see appendices 1 and 1.2). These errors have been most apparent in their written work, as well as spoken English in casual conversations. Although mistakes and errors are regarded as “normal elements in language learning” (National Curriculum 2014: 8), they should nonetheless be analyzed. Error correction and analysis allow teachers to help students learn better as it changes students' conscious version of a rule that they previously used unsuccessfully (Krashen 2013: 1). The *I Love English* sets, as well as all other coursebooks, might help the teacher structure their English lessons better; however, the common belief is that teachers do not have to rely solely on coursebooks. Instead, teachers may modify the existing coursebook activities and exercises according to the needs and interests of the students and the teacher.

The main aim of the thesis is to recommend ways of teaching articles in a way that students become more aware and conscious of article use. This will be done by analyzing the *ILE 4* set to gather an understanding of how grammar is taught in general; what types of article exercises the coursebook includes and finally, compiling recommendations on how teachers can employ the existing exercises to teach articles in context with other language skills. The ultimate objective is that students gain a better understanding of the English article system. The research question states as follows: in which ways can the *ILE 4* be employed to teach the article system to the students of Grade 6 through the four language skills?

Based on the previous *ILE* coursebooks, articles should be a familiar topic to Grade 6 which makes it important to consolidate the knowledge they have acquired so far on articles. As Grade 6 is the final class of the second stage of study in Estonian basic schools, it is vital for teachers to have a clear overview of the possibilities of helping students for their further studies in English which logically will become more challenging every year and will require more effort and involvement from students.

The National Curriculum for Foreign Languages of the Republic of Estonia (2014: 2) (hereinafter National Curriculum) states that the most vital part of language studies is the skill of being able to use the language, as opposed to solely knowing how language is structured. The objective of teaching English as a foreign language (language A) and the English language structures is to “develop students’ age-appropriate foreign language competence, i.e., the ability to understand and interpret the content presented in a foreign language, both orally and in writing, as well as understanding and valuing different cultures besides one’s native culture” (National Curriculum 2014: 1). Furthermore, present-day language instruction should be administered towards communication needs and emphasizes learners’ communication objectives to develop the communication competence (National

Curriculum 2014: 2). The communication competence is achieved by developing the four constituent language skills – reading, listening, speaking, and writing (National Curriculum 2014: 2). The communication competence includes three components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic (National Curriculum 2014: 8). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001: 130) (hereinafter CEFR) states that the primary concern of the linguistic competence is the “range” of language at the learner’s disposal which should gradually broaden by attempting to use more complex language. The sociolinguistic competence expects students to be able to use the language appropriately in different situations and the pragmatic competence improves students’ abilities to understand and be able to create their own texts (National Curriculum 2014: 8). Celce-Murcia (1991: 466) adds to the mentioned competencies and emphasizes the discourse competence which has to do with the selection, sequence, and arrangement of words and structures as means of expressing a message. As a teacher, it is important to assure the development of the communication competence via improving the four constituent language skills both individually and combined.

By the end of Grade 6, students are expected to “have mastered the necessary skills for further studies which enhance their self-confidence in learning foreign languages and communicating in them” (2014: 1). Although the National Curriculum illustrates other competencies as well, the focal point of the thesis revolves mainly around the development of the communication competence. Furthermore, the learning outcomes of Grade 6 declared by the National Curriculum (2014: 10) emphasize the importance of developing all language skills evenly yet focus even more so on writing and understanding texts through independent reading. The learning outcomes do not mention the knowledge of language structure topics in specific, yet there is reason to believe that Grade 6 is expected to know enough about the structure of English to be able to communicate, understand essential content and write short

texts within the theme's studies. The required level of language proficiency by the end of Grade 6 is A2.2 for all proficiency skills. For example, the National Curriculum (2014: 26) states that the speaking level of A2.2 expects students to be able to talk about their interests, activities, express attitudes, start and end conversations. A2.2 proficiency level speakers are expected to use some simple grammar constructions yet make frequent mistakes in basic grammar rules (National Curriculum 2014: 26). All in all, it should in most cases be clear as to what the learner is trying to say. It can be argued that the knowledge of the basic use of articles is necessary for the students of Grade 6 to achieve the A2.2 proficiency level.

To discuss the topic of articles, the definition, as well as the role of grammar in the English studies of Grade 6, must first be clarified. According to Herring (2016) and Pullum & Huddleston (2002: 3), grammar refers to the way words are used, classified, and structured together to form coherent written or spoken communication. Furthermore, the grammar of a language describes principles and rules governing the form and meaning of words, phrases, and clauses. A more simplified definition could be that grammar is a set of rules by which a language functions correctly. On the topic of how to teach grammar to students of Grade 6, the National Curriculum (2014: 8) states that "the structure of the language is studied in context and grammar rules should be learned stage-by-stage" indicating that students should not be overwhelmed by complex grammar rules when learning a grammar topic. This statement allows to assume that in teaching articles to the students of Grade 6, article rules can be presented and explained but should be illustrated and followed by language activities based on all language proficiency skills which ultimately develop the communication competence as well.

The topic of articles pertains to the category of parts of speech and is therefore regarded as a grammar topic. The articles' roles are to mark whether a noun is specific or general in its reference. Based on the guidelines of the National Curriculum, articles could

be regarded as a part of language structure and teaching them should be integrated with context. Pica (1983: 231) argues that “article use may have more to do with communication and communicative competence than with grammar and linguistic competence.” Thus, article teaching should be done with the aim of achieving coherent speech of written form in English, not for the sole purpose of knowing their function in the grammar of English.

The first chapter of the thesis focuses on the literature review which provides overviews about the approaches and methods of teaching grammar to students aged from 11-12, teaching grammar in context, the structure of the English article system, the techniques of teaching articles, problems arising in teaching articles, planning, and organizing article exercises and activities, as well as ideas on how to modify the existing exercises, etc.

The empirical section will present the research question, as well as the methodology of conducting the analysis. An analysis will be provided on the mentions of articles in the previous *ILE* sets, as well as how grammar is taught in general in *ILE 4*. Furthermore, exercises explicitly on articles in *ILE 4* will be analyzed, showing the main patterns of the structures of these exercises. The analyzed article exercises will further be analyzed through Whitman’s (1974) model of teaching articles, offering an organized way on how to plan out lessons and activities specifically on articles. Whitman’s model is suitable for teaching the basics of the English article system, as it delves into the function of determiners in general, and articles more specifically, yet excludes the many complex intricacies and exceptions which might not be suitable for Grade 6 students to learn yet. The model is compiled in a way that goes systematically from simple to complex, which is essentially what the National Curriculum suggests (2014: 8). Further on, activities and exercises which are not explicitly about articles will be analyzed, with the objective of teaching articles through the development of the four language skills, as opposed to teaching them as an isolated grammar

topic. Finally, modified exercises and games will be recommended, based on teaching articles through other language skills. These recommendations are based on the existing *ILE 4* exercises. The recommended activities aim to offer students the opportunity to participate more actively in the learning process. Furthermore, the activities should create a foundation for a more learner-centered learning environment, giving students more autonomy and responsibility for the material they acquire (Darsih 2018: 33). These recommendations could serve as an aid for teachers who require additional article exercises for their students.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

To create recommendations for teachers who wish to dedicate more time on teaching articles, many aspects must be taken into consideration. There are no right or wrong methods of teaching articles; however, the author of the thesis has proposed ways to teach articles based on the age range of Grade 6 students, the guidelines of the National Curriculum, as well as language theorists. Section 1.1 differentiates between language learning and language acquisition. Section 1.2 focuses on the approaches and methods for teaching grammar to Grade 6 students, intending to determine suitable grammar teaching approaches and methods for this specific age range. Section 1.3 discusses teaching grammar in context by integrating grammar learning with other language skills. Section 1.4 gives an overview of the English article system, as well as teaching it – its main rules and intricacies. This section also provides a model for teaching articles in a more organized and systematic manner. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the possible problems that may arise in teaching articles, as well as learning them, and finding possible solutions. Finally, section 1.5 will provide ideas for planning and organizing article learning activities, based on ideas and recommendations that have already been mentioned throughout the literature review. Grade 6 students will be referred to as young learners, as proposed by theorists. To clarify terminology used in the literature review, an approach refers to the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified and a method refers to the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 15). A technique refers to how teaching methods are implemented in the classroom which takes the form of exercises or activities (Rhalmi 2018: para. 8).

1.1 Language learning vs language acquisition

Language acquisition and language learning have two separate roles. Teaching articles to the students of Grade 6 could be facilitated if students were provided a natural learning environment. In that case, the use of articles could be acquired naturally; however, students might lack the ability to explain why they opt for a certain article or support their article use with a grammar rule. On the other hand, if students are in a language environment where the rules of articles are consciously learned by drilling and constant repetition, students would perhaps be able to explain why such an article is used in a certain situation. Krashen (2013) has stated that there are two different ways of developing a language, it is either acquired or learned. Krashen's Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis (2013: 1) states that "language acquisition occurs subconsciously, and the acquirer is not aware of it happening". This can happen while having conversations, reading books, watching movies, or simply being in the language environment that is being acquired.

On the other hand, language learning is a conscious process – something that generally happens in EFL lessons. When discussing the differences between acquisition and learning, it can be said that learning is technical, and acquisition is personal. Learning is based on formal instruction, whereas acquisition is based on meaningful interaction. Learning is rule-driven, whereas acquisition is based on rule-discovery. Furthermore, learning is based on activities about the language, whereas acquisition is based on activities in the language (Schütz 2018: para. 8).

Conclusively, in the context of teaching articles to students in Grade 6, it could be argued that language learning is what mostly happens. One scenario in a language learning environment could be the following - students are presented with article rules, followed by explanations from the teachers, followed by doing exercises individually, in pairs, or groups.

When discussing language acquisition and language learning, it is also necessary to

discuss teachers' language instructions and whether their language instruction is regarded as implicit or explicit. Instruction refers to the way teachers teach, including their techniques, lesson planning, methods, approaches, etc. In other words, instruction can refer to explicit i.e., rule-driven, or implicit i.e., rule-based instruction. Purpura states (2004: 24) that rule-based learning does not necessarily mean a coursebook must include only grammatical metatalk and linguistic terminology. Instead, it can mean teaching implicitly and inductively by attracting the learner's attention with a certain topic. In the case of explicit grammar instruction in an EFL environment, students can acquaint themselves with the intricacies of English grammar and syntax which implicit grammar instruction might not touch. For example, the topic of articles includes many exceptions and usually, students are instructed to memorize them because these exceptions can be considered intricate and specific. This instruction can certainly be more time-consuming yet could provide the learner with the knowledge that they perhaps would not have learned in an implicit language environment.

In conclusion, there are different ways of developing the knowledge of languages depending on the language environment students are in. In the case of language learning, students are exposed more to grammar rules and discovering the roles and functions of certain grammatical features. Although language learning is what generally happens in an EFL lesson, students should nonetheless be encouraged to discover platforms where language can be acquired naturally, such as watching movies, playing video games, reading books, traveling to foreign countries, etc.

1.2 Approaches and methods of teaching grammar

Communication in a foreign language can be regarded as the main aim of learning a foreign language, according to the National Curriculum (2014). Young learners should gradually attain an awareness of grammatical features and their role in forming grammatically accurate sentences in communication. Approaches and methods of teaching

grammar to Grade 6 should coincide with what guidelines have been offered by the National Curriculum (2014). Despite what grammar teaching approach or method an EFL teacher opts for, the goal for the teachers should generally be the same – to teach and guide students in a way that students achieve their learning outcomes and developing the communication competence.

Cameron (2001: 107) discusses the difference of teaching the grammar of EFL both implicitly and explicitly to young learners. Cameron (2001: 96) states that the intricacy of young learners, such as students of Grade 6, is that they are just beginning to get familiar with “formal institutionalized scientific concepts” such as metalinguistic terminology of English grammar. Cameron’s statement allows one to believe that grammar teaching should be kept basic and simple in teaching young learners.

Grammar can be taught without explicitly referring to grammar rules. Communicative language teaching i.e., the communicative approach (hereinafter CLT) is highlighted by the objective of learning how to communicate in the target language without any explicit mention of grammar rules (Cameron 2001: 107). Such an approach aims to resemble young learners’ acquisition of their native language, where language learning happens naturally. On the one hand, CLT highlights the importance of communication in the target language, which can be useful for real-life situations outside of the classroom, such as asking for directions in a foreign country. On the other hand, CLT focuses on little to almost no explicit grammar instruction in foreign language classrooms. Considering that children pick up languages very quickly and can achieve good results in a short time, CLT lacks the direct input and output of grammar. Thus, the use of correct grammatical structures, or the omission thereof, will most likely happen subconsciously and incidentally in spoken and written English.

Although communicating through a language is the main aim in a foreign language

classroom, students often seem to “bypass the aspects of grammar” (Cameron 2001: 107). The communication between two EFL students is encouraged yet can contain inaccuracies in grammar. This calls for the need of developing grammar employing skilled planning of tasks and lessons, as well as refer to grammar explicitly. Referring to grammar explicitly and implementing the rules of grammar in activities and tasks can help students notice grammatical patterns of the foreign language before they can start to subconsciously use these patterns (Schmidt 1990 & Van Patten 1996). Van Patten (1996) suggests teachers first direct young learners’ attention to manipulate newly attained language information, as opposed to producing new grammatical forms on their own.

For students to notice grammatical patterns, a structure of sequencing grammar learning activities has been formed and referred to by many theorists. These patterns include noticing, structuring, and proceduralizing (Batstone 1995). Noticing is an active process during which learners become more aware of a new pattern, notice the link between form and meaning; however, do not produce this pattern themselves yet. Noticing could be done with visuals, comparing, and contrasting activities, classroom instructions, questions, requests, timelines, underlining critical points, etc. (Dendrinos 2015: 15). This phase could require more input from the teacher to make the noticing process interesting and appealing to the young learner. The second phase, structuring, is intended to help students reorganize the new pattern, as well as making it a part of their internal grammar. Internal grammar refers to the grammar that is learned subconsciously and indirectly (Dendrinos 2015: 17). The structuring phase generally requires practicing the form and meaning. Practice is generally controlled and allows teachers to draw students’ attention to errors made and focus on expressing meaning appropriately. Dendrinos (2015: 19) offers different ideas for structuring such as interaction activities, language games (e.g., *Hangman*), meaningful repetition drills e.g., rhymes as well as controlled written practice e.g., finding the correct

word order of sentences. Finally, proceduralization takes place which Dendrinos (2015: 20) describes as the stage where learners are given the chance to use the newly learned patterns. Once again, this phase requires teacher's attention to error correction as well as effective communication. Activities suggested in this phase are e.g., problem-solving, telling a story based on visuals, content and form error correction that the teacher deliberately makes, role-playing, etc. (Dendrinos 2015: 21).

Teaching grammar without context can ruin students' motivation. Teachers are encouraged to have a range of form-focusing techniques, so they can constantly take advantage of learning opportunities that arise when learners need grammar to take their language learning forwards and can highlight grammatical features of stories, songs, dialogues, etc. (Cameron 2001: 110). For example, when assigning students grammar tasks from their coursebooks, teachers should be able to illustrate grammar through these tasks. Cameron (2001: 110) further states that the method that proves efficient in teaching grammar to young learners revolves around the concept of learner-centeredness, active participation from students, meaningful tasks, as well as analyzing students' capability of comprehending grammar.

1.3 Teaching grammar in context

The standpoint of the National Curriculum (2014: 19) is that the grammar of EFL is not learned individually, but rather integrally with other language skills. Teaching grammar integrally in context with other language skills allows students to make better connections between the meaning, form, and use of grammar. Although without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed (Wilkins 1972: 111-112). This introduces the idea of teaching grammar by integrating all four language skills, as well as focusing on learning new vocabulary in parallel. Learning in context could also mean learning a grammar topic through other grammar topics e.g., superlatives with the definite

article. Grammar integration with context permits teachers to plan theme-based lessons, as opposed to grammar-based lessons. This could be done via providing students with authentic texts, which are produced to communicate, rather than practice the language (Tomlinson 2012: 162). Authenticity refers to texts where language has been used in a varied and rich way, illustrating how the target language is typically spoken (Tomlinson 2012: 161).

Collerson (1997: 51) has proposed a thought-provoking idea related to teaching grammar in context:

Sometimes children have no idea why they have to write in a particular way; they may be doing so simply because that is what the teacher has asked for. However, if they have some understanding of how their writing is based in a particular context, of what its purpose is, and how specific features of language function in that kind of text, they can improve their choice of words and grammatical structures. (Collerson 1997: 51)

Collerson's idea highlights the necessity of not just teaching grammar for the sake of it, but rather integrating it with explanations and illustrations showing why and how language functions the way it does. Following from Collerson's idea, Nunan (1998: 101) argues that "grammar is often presented out of context in textbooks where learners are given isolated sentences which they are expected to internalize through exercises, involving repetition, manipulation and grammatical transformation." Furthermore, the exercises in textbooks are often created to provide learners with formal mastery of language, however, do not focus on developing the skill of language communication (Nunan 1998: 102). Through gap-fill exercises, learners might not see the systematic relationship that exists between form, meaning, and use (Nunan 1998: 102). Instead, Nunan (1998: 102) proposes that teachers need to supplement "form-focused exercises with an approach that dramatizes for learners the fact that different forms enable them to express different meanings". Nunan (1998: 101) has further stated that languages are not learned one grammatical item at a time. Rather, these grammatical items are to be introduced in a way that students perceive their relationships and close interactions. As opposed to constantly being exposed to new grammar, students are urged to discover the language for themselves, and gradually being

able to apply previously learned grammatical patterns to produce meaningful sentences (Cowan 2008: 34).

1.4 Teaching the English article system

The English language has two articles – the indefinite and the definite article. These articles are classified as determiners, which is a wider category of the English language structure. McEldowney (1977: 101) classifies the different English articles - the indefinite article *a/an* meaning *anyone*, the definite article *the* meaning *the special one* or plurality e.g., *the apples*. To put it simply, McEldowney talks about three concepts to understanding articles better; *a* and *an* are used to mark choice, *the* is used to mark specification, and \emptyset^1 to mark generalization. However, Whitman (1974: 253) states that “most English teachers share a similar misconception regarding the article which is embodied in thinking that *a/an* is the indefinite and *the* is the definite article.” Instead, he proposes the article structure be categorized between the specified, unspecified, and the \emptyset (Whitman 1974: 254). The misconception lies in thinking that *a/an* and *the* are virtually the same things, only differentiated by a dimension of definiteness and indefiniteness. Although both articles are completely different syntactic entities and except for the fact that they both occur in similarly structured sentences, they are unrelated to each other (Whitman 1974: 254). He regards the *a/an* as a quantifier that determines whether the noun phrase is singular or plural, whereas *the* is a determiner which is used to refer to a known person or group.

1.4.1 Techniques for teaching articles

The rules for the use of English articles cannot be changed; however, the way these rules are illustrated and introduced to young learners can be done in various ways to soothe the complexity of this topic. Many studies have been conducted on EFL learners whose L1

¹ No article

has no article system. The author will refer to these studies as a comparison to Estonian students learning articles given that the Estonian language also lacks an article system, and the findings of these studies could also apply to the students of Grade 6. This section will not discuss any article activities in specific. It will rather provide an outline on how teachers could implement article teaching techniques in a way that allows students to become familiar with articles, their function, and use.

Whitman (1974: 253) has offered a model for teaching articles. The model can be beneficial in planning out lessons and activities on articles as it delves into the function of determiners and articles more specifically. Whitman's model is outlined by introducing articles as determiners of quantity and gradually moving on to definiteness. The table provides an abbreviated version of the model and the example sentences have been modified by the author.

Table 1. Model for teaching articles (based on Whitman 1974: 253-259)

Step of the model	Example
1. singularity and plurality	Helen has a book <i>vs</i> Helen has two books
2. generic plurality	All plants are green <i>vs</i> plants are green
3. count and non-count nouns (including mass nouns)	Helen ate a lot of apples <i>vs</i> Helen drank a lot of water
4. determiners	Helen read a book <i>vs</i> the book was called <i>Nukitsamees</i> .
5. quantity and determiners	One of these books is red <i>vs</i> one of the books on that table is blue
6. generic use of articles	An elephant never forgets/Elephants never forget

Whitman's (1974: 253) model presents a systematic way of teaching articles, which can be applied to teaching articles in Grade 6 EFL lessons. The model moves from easier to more complex nuances. The first step highlights the distinction between singularity and plurality, in which the singular quantifiers *a/an* and *one* are contrasted to the plural quantifiers *two, three, some, a lot of, all*, etc. (Whitman 1974: 258). The first step could also

be integrated with teaching demonstrative pronouns to illustrate the singular and plural contrast. The second step aims to contrast the difference of sentences with *all* and without *all*. The objective is to illustrate to students that with or without *all*, the sentence essentially means the same thing; however, the learner is still restricted to count nouns (Whitman 1974: 259). The third step introduces the difference between semantic and syntactic differences between count and mass nouns. For instance, the teacher could call attention to the fact that mass nouns occur with some non-numeral plural quantifiers (e.g., *a lot of sand*), yet, on the other hand, take no plural endings and occur with singular forms of the verb (e.g., *there is a lot of sand here*) (Whitman 1974: 259). The fourth step can be firstly introduced by asking the learner a *which*+NP (noun phrase) question such as *which books are black?* and introduce a determiner as something that specifies answers to such questions e.g., *these books* (Whitman 1974: 260). The demonstrative adjective *these* can thus first be introduced and gradually move on to the intricacy of *the*, which is a determiner marking specificity and definiteness, but can be introduced as a third type of demonstrative adjective e.g., *which books are green? The books on the table* (Whitman 1974: 260). The fifth step can be executed with students learning drills on contrasting objects in the classroom by first distinguishing their quantity and adding a determiner. Finally, examples, as well as explanations, of the use of the generic articles can be highlighted.

1.4.2 Possible problems in teaching articles to Grade 6 students

The main problem relating to article teaching is the complexity of the article system for those whose L1 lacks an equivalent system. Furthermore, distinguishing between definiteness and indefiniteness, as well as countability and uncountability can also cause confusion. Finally, deriving from the author's teacher practice experience, students often do not hear nor pay attention to the use of articles in spoken conversations (such as in listening excerpts).

Estonian students learning EFL may find the article system difficult because their mother tongue (L1) has no equivalent system. Albeit the lack of an article system in Estonian, it is nonetheless possible and common to express whether the referent is identifiable or not (Pajusalu, Nahkola & Hint 2017: 66). Given that the Estonian language lacks specific words to express opposition of the known and unknown, it is primarily the demonstrative pronouns that can be used for this purpose (Pajusalu 1997: 147). Although there are no grammatical articles in Estonian, linguistic devices for marking definiteness of an NP exist nonetheless such as *üks* (one) being *see* (this), for example, the numeral *one* has grammaticalized into an indefinite article via being an indefinite pronoun in many languages, including Estonian (Pajusalu et al. 2017: 67). Several ways can be implemented to ease the complexity of the Estonian language lacking a similar article system as English when teaching articles to students in an EFL environment. For instance, students can be taught Estonian demonstrative pronouns and the English articles in parallel, deriving from the suggestion of teaching EFL grammar with L1 explanations (Ur 2016: 31). Demonstrative pronouns and articles share some common features which can be illustrated to students in the following table compiled by the author of the thesis.

Table 2. Differentiating definiteness and indefiniteness.

MARKING INDEFINITENESS		MARKING DEFINITENESS	
English article <i>a/an</i>	Estonian numeral <i>üks</i>	English article <i>the</i>	Estonian demonstrative pronoun <i>see</i>
Give me a cup of coffee.	Anna mulle üks tass kohvi.	The lady at the back smiled at me.	See naine tagapool naeratas mulle.

Such a table can be used to illustrate the differences between Estonian and English uses of the article and demonstrative or article-like pronouns, as Pajusalu (1997: 150) refers

to them. Due to the many intricacies and exceptions in the article system, it is perhaps reasonable to keep explanations short with younger students; however, comparing example sentences of EFL with their L1 could simplify their understanding of article usage (Ur 2016: 31). Chesterman (1991: 41-62) has proposed a continuum that illustrates the degrees of definiteness and indefiniteness. The continuum illustrates the \emptyset as being the most indefinite, *a* being more definite and *the* being the most definite. The example of “I ate a pizza from the new Italian restaurant” vs “I ate pizza” illustrates the different degrees of definiteness. Both example sentences are indefinite yet convey a completely different meaning. The first sentence can be explained as eating a specific pizza, whereas in the case of the second example sentence it simply conveys to the reader/listener that this person ate pizza, without any specific reference to the sort or origin of the pizza.

Besides the aspect of definiteness and indefiniteness, another factor making articles complex to learn is distinguishing countable and uncountable nouns. Harb (2014: 89) states that although countability is seemingly practical and easy to understand, it withholds complex nuances e.g., “nouns that may take the plural form *-s* are countable such as *boys*, *girls*, *children*, whereas the nouns that may not take the plural form are uncountable such as *mud* or *money*”. The many variables involved in determining the countability of a noun can be complex, especially for Grade 6 students which is why it is important to illustrate the rules constantly.

Finally, articles can cause miscomprehension, unless teachers direct students to focus more on article usage, e.g., during listening exercises where dialogue is being heard. For example, dialogues or conversations naturally include at least some use of articles. However, native speakers, such as the people acting out the listening excerpts of *ILE 4*, often pronounce articles in a weak form and EFL learners thus fail to recognize, let alone distinguish them (Parrott 2000: 32). Furthermore, Parrott (2000: 32) argues that the main problem of

miscomprehension lies in students having to put more effort into understanding what other people say or write if they fail to notice or understand the signals that articles give and the help they provide in processing information. A solution to this problem could be to consistently help learners to understand the use of articles in texts, continued by introducing the most accessible and generalizable principles. As mentioned, Grade 6 has already had an encounter with articles from previous years' English coursebooks *ILE 1, 2* and *3*; however, unless a teacher consistently and continuously analyzes *ILE 4* texts and their article use with their students, there could be a mere chance that students themselves will question article use.

Moreover, the omission or absence of an article is not often noteworthy in a real-life conversation outside of school. This is one of the logical reasons why teachers might not devote as much time to drawing students' focus to the article system (Master 2002: 216). Master points out the comment of a student who said the following "without being pointing out, I probably never pay much attention to the usage of articles. The reason is that articles were taught at early stages, and thus I assume them as an easy thing." This comment could also apply to the students of Grade 6. They could find articles to be a seemingly easy topic, especially since this topic has already been mentioned in previous grades. Also, as *ILE 4* includes grammar topics pertaining to a higher language proficiency level such as tenses, the passive and active voice, reported speech, etc., learning articles could appear an effortless topic.

1.5 Planning and organizing article learning activities

The aim of planning and organizing article learning activities is for students to be active learners and listeners who take responsibility for their learning. This can be achieved in different ways. The main keyword for planning and organizing article learning activities is learned-centered and language-based, as well as context-based teaching. The principles of

the latter are pointed out by the National Curriculum Appendix 2: Foreign Languages (2014: 3) - learners must actively participate in the study process; there is an accord between the content of the study materials used in language teaching and learners' interests; different forms of active learning (e.g., pair work and group work) are implemented, and teachers' roles gradually change from intermediaries of knowledge to partners who guide students in the process of acquiring knowledge. Furthermore, opting for cooperative learning activities, the teachers' role in the classroom becomes more passive and they have the opportunity of guiding students more. Language lessons should generally be preceded by systematic planning and organizing of study activities. The National Curriculum (2014: 8) proposes that when planning study activities, basic didactic principles should be followed such as "from near to far" and "from familiar to unfamiliar", "from simple to complex", "from concrete to abstract", etc. When planning activities more concretely, it is recommended by the National Curriculum that they be based on group and pair work to achieve students taking responsibility for their learning processes.

In general, when planning out tasks, Ur (1988: 17) suggests forming a clear objective accompanied by the necessity for active language use. Instead of the main objective being "getting the language right", the objective should be to solve a problem, exploring, getting to know one another, etc. (Ur 1988: 17). Furthermore, active language use is important to observe while students do tasks. Often, in the case of assigning creative and explorative tasks, students perhaps focus more on achieving other study skills, yet the acquisition and learning of the English language are not as efficient. To avoid this situation, Ur (1988: 18) suggests that teachers design their language learning tasks with clear linguistic and non-linguistic objectives and oblige students to engage repeatedly with the grammar constructions that are being learned in the process of achieving these objectives. Ur (1988: 19) also considers it important to arouse interest in students; otherwise, there will be a lack

of intrinsic motivation among students. For this, it is important to take into consideration several factors such as the choice of topic, visual focus, open-endedness, personalization, pleasurable tension, entertainment, and play-acting. These factors will be taken into consideration when recommending modifications for teaching articles.

When talking specifically about planning exercises about articles, Pica (1983: 231) believes that teaching articles should have more to do with the communication competence, as opposed to the linguistic competence, and thus suggests activities that tune students into the topic of articles, such as the food-ordering activity (e.g., *can I have the chicken quesadilla, please?; can I have a glass of water, please?*). This activity could be suitable for the first lesson on the topic of articles. Pica (1983: 231) also suggests using dialogues to provide students with examples of article use, as well as the effect of incorrect article use and the meaning differences that incorrect article use can cause.

Azar (1999: 114) and Chiew Har (2011: 134) believe that articles should be learned within the wider topic of count and noncount nouns. Azar (1999: 114) suggests a game named “My Grandfather’s Store”, played with a group of people. The game essentially includes each person saying in turns “I went to grandfather’s store and bought “. The first person saying that must end the sentence with something starting with the letter *A*. The second person must repeat what the first person said and continue with saying something that starts with the letter *B*. The game goes on until the end of the alphabet. The whole point of the game is to not just memorize what the previous person has said but also pay great attention to the use of articles.

Chiew Har (2011: 134) has offered an idea of using our surroundings such as our home or nature as means of learning articles. For example, students could be encouraged to walk around their home or in nature and fill in a non-count and count noun column by sorting out the appropriate nouns into the respective columns. Consequently, teachers could start

introducing the correct use of articles and other determiners with these given nouns that they added in columns. As an extra exercise, students could create sentences on their own which demonstrate their knowledge of the distinction between the definite and indefinite article.

Kolln (2003: 166-167) and Chamot et al. (1999) have proposed using cloze passages from which articles have been removed and students must fill in the appropriate articles, however, their proposed activities differ slightly. This exercise could be done in pairs or in groups to ensure active listening and focusing on form. An example of a cloze passage is the following:

Dorothy was little girl who lived on farm in Kansas. Tornado struck farm and carried her over rainbow to land of Munchkins. Soon afterwards she met scarecrow who wanted brain, tin man who wanted heart, and lion who wanted courage. One way to Emerald City four friends met wicked witch who cast spell on them in the field of flowers. Which wanted magic shoes that Dorothy was wearing. When they reached city, as you recall, they met wizard. Story has happy ending. (Kolln 2003: 166-167)

This kind of activity will most likely highlight article errors; however, it allows the teacher to be in an observer role and analyze students' errors, or even assign a student to do the error analysis themselves and later that assigned student could elicit the errors to the students doing group work. This could give the teacher reassurance that students know what their errors are and what the correct article use is instead.

The version of a cloze passage activity proposed by Chamot et al. (1999: n.d.) involves activating previously learned knowledge by reminding the students of the basic rules of article use. Students could then be given a cloze passage with omitted articles. In groups of three or four, students have the cloze passage in front of them and assign each group member to be the representatives of *a*, *an*, *the* and zero article. The students could proceed to read the cloze passage and whenever an article should be added, the representative of that article stands up. This type of activity also trains students' selective attention, as they must focus on when it is their turn to stand up.

Finally, Saslow (2013: para. 7) offers an idea for the practice of grammar – exercises where students must talk about themselves. This type of activity can be efficient for error

analysis as students usually write a thorough text in English and mostly none of these written pieces are entirely correct which gives teachers an idea of what the common article errors are among their students' written English language.

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted that language learning, as opposed to language acquisition is what primarily happens in an EFL classroom. Although the thesis is oriented towards teaching articles as a part of the English language structure, it is vital to focus language teaching on the overall aim of learning a foreign language – developing the communication competence. Although the development of foreign language grammar in young learners can be a long and complicated process, the overall belief is that language aspects should be learned step-by-step, without rushing. Thus, the overall objective should be to create a foundation of basic grammar knowledge from which students can derive patterns, comparisons, and contrasts, as well as encourage the motivation of learning a foreign language and curiosity of discovering more about the intricacies of this language. Moreover, grammar should be taught contextually to ensure that learners' language use improves more than the awareness of the language and the use of metalanguage. Teaching grammar in an isolated manner can cause more confusion to young learners. Overall, the greater aim should be to urge students to discover the foreign language themselves, to see the relationship between form, meaning, and use, and to gradually develop students' communicative proficiency. When discussing articles specifically, aspects of countability, uncountability, definiteness, and indefiniteness can logically confuse learners whose L1 has no equivalent article system. Illustrating article rules via real-life examples and L1 translations could make the understanding of articles and when to use them simpler for EFL learners.

2. ANALYSIS OF *I LOVE ENGLISH 4*

This chapter consists of analyses of the *I Love English 4* exercises, based on the theoretical findings in the previous chapter. Section 2.1 underlines the main motive for the current analysis, the aim thereof, and states the research question of the current thesis. Section 2.2 discusses the methodology on how the analysis is conducted and what the supposed outcome should be. Section 2.3 provides an overview of the structure of *ILE 4*, as well as the relevance of the topics related to the National Curriculum (2014). Furthermore, this section offers an overview of grammar topics in *ILE 4*, i.e., how grammar, in general, is presented in *ILE 4* e.g., presentation of grammar rules, example sentences, etc. Section 2.4 provides an overview of explicit mentions of articles in previous *I Love English* sets, as well as determines Grade 6 students' previous familiarity with articles. Section 2.5 analyzes how Whitman's (1974) model of teaching articles can be applied to the said article exercises in *ILE 4*. Section 2.6 analyzes and discusses how articles could be taught in context with other language skills, as directed by the National Curriculum (2014). Finally, section 2.7 provides practical suggestions for article-learning activities based on the existing *ILE 4* exercises with the objective of focusing more intensely on article usage among students. All exercises from the *ILE 4* are illustrated in the appendix and referred to. The authors of the *ILE 4* set, Ülle Kurm and Ene Soolepp, have granted the author of the thesis permission to illustrate examples of exercises in written form or as pictures.

2.1 Research question

The purpose of the present research is to discover how articles can be taught in the context of the four language skills by modifying the existing exercises and activities of the Grade 6 coursebook *I Love English 4* (2014), a set of English study materials widely used in Estonian basic schools. The research question states as follows: in which ways can the *ILE*

4 be employed to teach the article system to the students of Grade 6 through the four language skills?

The main aim of the analysis is to provide recommendations for teachers who wish to direct more focus on the teaching of articles. The objective of these recommendations is for teachers to approach teaching articles in the confidence that their students will have solid knowledge on the English article system, giving a substantial preparation for students' future English courses, which gradually will become more demanding and complex. *ILE 4* was chosen to be analyzed because the author has used this set of materials to teach the students of Grade 6 and is most familiar with.

2.2 Methodology

The article errors of the students of Grade 6 were the main trigger for starting this research to determine how their article use could be improved. In two years of teaching Grade 6 students, the author assumed that their use of articles is either incidental, meaning that they use articles without awareness, or they omit the article entirely. Grade 6 students will enter the third stage of study in their next school year and will leave for another school from their current school. Thus, assuming that their English studies will logically become more complex throughout their school years, the author wished to contribute to the improvement of their aware article use in the form of creating article exercises that revolve more so around articles.

A survey was conducted among 23 EFL teachers whose answers diagnosed article use to be a complex topic to both teach and learn in basic schools. The survey was formulated as an e-mail and was sent to Estonian English teachers' e-mail lists. The questions of the survey are provided in appendix 2. Based on this survey, English teachers find that the article system is a complex topic, and more attention should be drawn to teaching them, especially in basic schools. Some say that articles are not focused on sufficiently enough in the *ILE 4*,

and teachers usually find extra material for this topic based on their preference and the needs of students or modify an existing exercise to focus more on article usage. Some teachers also agree that although articles are taught starting from Grade 3, it is a topic that must be thoroughly reviewed every school year.

Following the survey, the author explored the material in the students' previous coursebooks *ILE 1*, *2* and *3* with the objective of attaining an overview on how much focus is oriented towards teaching articles and what article exercises are present. Overall, articles are explicitly introduced already in *ILE 1*. *ILE 2*. The *ILE 3* makes more thorough mentions of articles and includes more article exercises than *ILE 4*. Based on these findings, the author derived that the students of Grade 6 should have some knowledge on article use in English.

The author then proceeded to skim through the *ILE 4* and discovered that article exercises in are scarce and article use is not as explicitly referred to as the author had hoped. Thus, the first idea was to determine how more focus could be centered on teaching articles through *ILE 4*. The author then began to research for activities, exercises, as well as article teaching techniques specifically, which could be implemented based on suggestions from the National Curriculum (2014). The National Curriculum reflects an unequivocal point of view that grammar, including articles in this case, must be taught in context with other language skills, which contribute to developing the communication competence. Deriving from the latter, the author began their research on which grammar methods and approaches to implement for articles to be taught with more efficiency.

The activities and exercises were compiled in a way that they develop students' correct use of articles amidst the four language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The types of activities and exercises revolved around the present-day language instruction which is directed towards communication needs and focuses on learners and their communication objectives (National Curriculum 2014: 2). The activities and exercises all

support students in becoming active and independent learners by implementing group work, pair work, theme-based learning, finding information independently in lessons, etc.

2.3 General overview of the structure and grammar topics in *I Love English 4*

The *I Love English 4* set is compiled by Ülle Kurm and Ene Soolepp, published by Kirjastus Studium. It is created specifically for the A2.2² proficiency level in accordance with the CEFR. This set is in accordance with the topics and learning outcomes stated in the National Curriculum (Tera 2015: 22) and supports the development of all language skills through listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities (2015: 2). According to Tera (2015: 22), the set has been compiled based on British English and is compliant with the latest edition of *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2015). The set consists of 20 units which are all age-appropriate and relatable topics such as “Family, Halloween, Behaviour” or topics that have been integrated with English such as geography topic “Scotland” and mathematics, natural sciences, and technology topics such as “Chores, We Care, DIY”, etc.

The *ILE 4* places more emphasis on writing tasks than the previous three sets. The National Curriculum (2014: 10) has also stated that writing should be focused more on in Grade 6, compared to previous years of English studies. Reading texts are generally found in each unit of the SB. Each unit consists of a longer text along with pre-, while- and post-reading comprehension tasks such as true or false exercises, answering questions, finding, and translating unknown phrases or words, etc. Speaking tasks in *ILE 4* are generally highlighted by interview-type exercises which should lead to dialogues or conversations between students. Many speaking tasks are a continuation of the reading tasks where

² According to the CEFR, the A2.2 proficiency level is described as „waystage” or „elementary“. A speaker with this level can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance. Furthermore, they can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters and can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need (CEFR 2003: 185)

students are encouraged to retell a story based on a similar plot as the main reading text in the units. There are approximately two to three listening exercises in each unit. The process of doing listening exercises can be modified by the teacher according to her or the students' preferences. For instance, teachers could give students the task of listening to an audio extract with the aim of hearing how many times the definite or indefinite article was used and what types of nouns the articles were used with and ultimately elicit why such articles are used with such nouns.

Grammar is generally taught both explicitly and implicitly in both the SB and WB. The SB generally focuses more on introducing new expressions and new vocabulary related to the topic of the unit, whereas the WB focuses more on grammar exercises on the topics of past continuous, past simple, adverbs of frequency, uncountable and countable nouns, articles, superlatives, and comparatives, reported speech, passive, and active voice, etc. As mentioned in the literature review, grammar can be taught in a rule-based way, meaning that students notice or detect a grammar rule for themselves and then practice the language, or in a rule-driven way, meaning that the teacher provides students with a general rule which can then be applied to grammar exercises.

Zagura (2015: 10) states that grammar in *ILE 4* is presented to students by using the inductive method as students are expected to derive the appropriate grammar rule based on given examples. Furthermore, Zagura (2015: 10) finds that the occasional grammar tables, such as *Write the missing pronoun* give students the chance to create a systematic order of language structures for themselves. In some cases, the deductive approach can be highlighted in the *ILE 4* as some grammar topics that are new to Grade 6 students are introduced via tables and blue rule boxes. Students are directed to figure out certain language structures for themselves based on previously learned knowledge. Grammar exercises are also in the form of fill-the-gap and multiple-choice exercises which usually culminate with exercises that

require students to form learned language structures in the preferred context (Zagura 2015: 10).

In conclusion, most grammar topics presented in *ILE 4* should be familiar to the students of Grade 6. Grammar rules, as well as examples of implementing these rules, are presented concisely and systematically both in English and Estonian. Grammar rules are generally presented in blue boxes and are distinct from exercises. These rules are usually followed by simple exercises demanding the implementation of the rules provided in the blue boxes. The grammar exercises are varied e.g., fill-the gap, Venn diagram exercises, answering questions, finish-the-sentence exercises, etc. These grammar exercises offer teachers a wide variety to choose from.

2.4 Explicit mentions of articles in the previous *I Love English* sets

Articles should not be an unfamiliar and completely new topic to the students in Grade 6. One of the reviewers of the ILE sets, Ingrid Tera (2015: 3) has stated that the *ILE 4* authors' intentions are to consolidate, and revise material learned from previous years, assuming that the previous *I Love English* coursebooks have been used in students' previous years of English studies.

The first mention of articles is in *I Love English 1* (2011), meant for Grade 3. Articles are mentioned explicitly by offering article rules and highlighting the difference between *a* and *an*. For instance, *I Love English 1* explains that the indefinite article is required in front of singular but not plural nouns, e.g., *a cat* versus *cats*. *I Love English 2* (2012), meant for Grade 4, focuses more on other grammatical structures such as the present simple, the verb *like*, *there is/there are* structures, etc. Articles are present in this set but are generally acquired implicitly (e.g., in listening excerpts and reading texts) as explicit article exercises are absent in this set. *I Love English 3* (2014), meant for Grade 5, presents the topic of articles in one of the last units of the coursebook, most likely a unit meant as revision. *ILE 3* is the

coursebook that Grade 6 students worked with in their previous year and therefore articles should be familiar to them. A rule of thumb has been illustrated in the previous coursebook of English studies, in *I Love English 3* (Kurm, Soolepp 2014: 116-117). This rule of thumb states some rules of the use of the indefinite and definite article and follows with gap-fill exercises. Pictures of the spoken rules and exercises can be found in appendix 3. Teachers can refer to this rule of thumb for revision of article use.

2.5 Exercises explicitly about articles in *I Love English 4*

ILE 4 is not abundant with explicit article exercises. Most article exercises are present in parallel with other grammar topics which require articles. Generally, unit 9 highlights the topics of singularity, plurality, articles + determiner *some*, as well as modal verbs *can*, *may*, and *must* (Tera 2015: 10). Exercise 5 of unit 9 in the WB (see appendix 4) is explicitly about articles and is related to the topic of countable and uncountable nouns which explains why the determiner *some* has been integrated. The aim of this exercise could be for students to determine the difference between marking plural countable and uncountable nouns (e.g., *water*, *shoes*, *sand*, *cats*) and singular countable nouns. By doing this exercise, students should be able to understand the function of *some* and what its role is in comparison to the definite article. This exercise could be a logical continuation from the previous exercise 4 (see appendix 8) where students are required to write words in the right column – countable or uncountable. Although there are no other explicit article exercises in unit 9 of the SB, many exercises presenting new vocabulary (e.g., nouns related to the topic of the unit) could be used as warm-up exercises for learning which nouns take the articles, and which take a determiner.

Exercise 3 of unit 10 in the WB (see appendix 5) is a gap-fill exercise that requires students to fill in the gap with the correct article *a*, *an* or *the*. Given that every fifth unit of the WB and SB is meant as a revision unit, it is logical why the article exercise is present

here. The aim of the exercise could be to differentiate between definiteness and indefiniteness, based on what is being talked about. For example, the first sentence could cause students to wonder why it is correct to say *let's go to the beach*, instead of *let's go to a beach*. Ur (2016: 31) suggests teaching EFL grammar with L1 explanations. Thus, the explanations for using either article in this exercise could be drawn attention to by illustrating the use of the Estonian demonstrative pronouns versus the English articles. Since the instruction of the exercise offers students the choice of omitting an article by saying *Use a, an or the where necessary*, students should also be able to use the zero article, which is used in different cases, such as with proper nouns, or mass nouns with an indefinite reference. The use of the zero article requires a knowledge of its functions, as it plays a role in marking the indefiniteness of the referent with plural or uncountable nouns. From a language learning perspective, the zero article can be problematic because of the complexity of determining whether the student has deliberately used the zero article or whether the gap has simply been left empty (Master 1992: 1). Therefore, this current exercise most likely requires revision of the rules of all article types beforehand.

As young learners are just beginning to get familiar with the metalinguistic terminology of English grammar, teachers should only illustrate those rules which directly apply to the sentences in this exercise (Cameron 2001: 107). Given that neither of the article exercises mentioned includes example sentences, it allows one to assume that the topic of articles is nothing new to students, however, problems of article use can arise, nonetheless. Although these exercises highlight a deductive approach, the present article exercises could be modified in such a way that the inductive approach is more prominent. The following illustration offers an insight into how present article exercises in *ILE 4* can be used to teach article use step-by-step and in a systematic way going from simple to complex (National Curriculum 2014: 8).

2.5.1 Illustrating Whitman's article teaching model based on *I Love English 4* article exercises

Whitman's model for teaching articles (1974: 253) offers a beneficial guide in planning out lessons and activities on articles (see table 1 on page 21). Exercises 5 and 6 of unit 18 (see appendices 6 and 6.1) will be used as examples for introducing articles as determiners of quantity and moving gradually to the definiteness of articles. The aim of these exercises could be to practice the use of articles based on the vocabulary related to the unit. The unit introduces the topic of chores in the form of expressions e.g., *rake the leaves*, *mow the lawn*, *cleaning the cat's litter box*, *spend the week* which gives students the indication on where the definite article is appropriate when talking about chores. The rest of the unit makes no explicit mention of articles.

Whitman's model of teaching articles directs students to first try to distinguish for singularity and plurality. Based on exercise 5 of Unit 18, students could first be guided to find whether the nouns, which should be preceded by articles, are singular or plural. In the case of the first sentence, *we haven't got dishwasher or microwave*, students should have no trouble in determining that *dishwasher* and *microwave* are singular nouns here. An additional step could be that the teacher elicits the correct type of indefinite article and if necessary, reminds students of the basic article rule, assumably learned already in Grade 3—*a* or *an*, depending on whether the noun starts with a vowel or consonant.

The second step (Whitman 1974: 253) highlights teaching the generic plurality by using correct determiners. Teachers could give an example of *all plants are green* vs *plants are green* and consequently discuss the difference between the two sentences in both the students' L1 and English, suggested by Ur (2016: 31). This step can be applied to the second sentence of the exercise “our neighbors don't spend their time mowing the lawn” vs “neighbors don't spend time mowing the lawn”. Students could figure out the difference between the two example sentences in groups or pairs – i.e., the first one refers specifically

to *our* neighbors, whereas the second sentence does not determine whose neighbors are being talked about. The inductive approach can be highlighted by this step of the model as students are asked to work the rule out for themselves, as suggested by Ur (2012: 6).

Thirdly, Whitman (1974: 253) suggests teaching the difference between count and non-count nouns which in the case of this exercise can be done in groups by instructing students to find all the count and non-count nouns mentioned in the current exercise. Teachers could use the blackboard for drawing two columns of *a* and *an* where students come and write all words to the corresponding columns. Azar (1999: 114) suggests the game of “My Grandfather’s Store” (see page 28) which in this step infuses the use of articles and noncount and count nouns.

Fourthly, Whitman (1974: 260) suggests discussing determiners with students with the objective of differentiating the indefinite and definite article and their functions of determining the specificity and definiteness of nouns. This difference can be visible when illustrating the following sentences from exercise 5 to students: “there is a modern church not far from where we live. There are often concerts in the church”. In the case of removing the articles from the two sentences, students could be directed to first discuss the specificity and definiteness of the word *church* in the example sentences. Once rules and brief theory have been presented and discussed, the cloze passage exercise proposed by Chamot et al. (1999) could be executed (see page 28). In short, their proposed exercises aim to activate prior knowledge on articles to be able to make new connections and relations more easily. The exercises explicitly on articles are certainly not the main focal point of the unit, however, to achieve the learning outcomes of unit 18, all language skills are taught integrally, including grammar. The grammar techniques mentioned in each step emanated mostly from the concept of learner-centeredness and theme-based lessons, as suggested by the National Curriculum (2014).

In conclusion, given that the present article exercises in *ILE 4* do not include example sentences, it allows one to assume that the topic of articles is nothing new to students, however, problems of article use can arise, nonetheless. All explicit article exercises follow the same pattern as they are all fill-the-gap exercises. Most exercises are composed in a way that requires students to differentiate between definiteness and indefiniteness. Furthermore, Whitman's model of teaching articles is a technique that can be implemented with any article exercise or be useful with any other article exercise. Whitman's model allows for a more structured and organized methodology of teaching articles, which essentially covers the main points necessary for Grade 6 students to learn the basic uses of the English article system. Whitman's model highlights the didactic principle of going from simple to complex. Despite the many exceptions that the article system encompasses, it seems logical to first focus on consolidating the basic rules of article use and gradually proceeding to more complex aspects.

2.6 Teaching articles based on other grammar topics

Articles are logically found in almost every exercise of the *ILE 4*. However, to teach and learn the meaningful use of articles, context should be included. Context could mean the use of authentic texts, listening dialogues, real-life situations, etc. Teaching articles in context could also mean learning articles implicitly through reading, listening, writing, or speaking. After all, the goal is to not teach articles isolated from other topics. Otherwise, students might not see the systematic relationships that exist between form, meaning, and use (Nunan 1998: 102). Teaching articles in context illustrates to students how and why articles function the way they do in sentences. In the case of *ILE 4*, articles are most prominently distinguishable within topics such as superlative adjectives, uncountable and countable nouns, prepositions of place, etc. However, even these grammar topics always revolve around a much wider topic and usually requires the

knowledge of thematic vocabulary as well.

Exercise 1 on page 9 (appendix 7) of the WB is on the topic of comparatives and superlatives, the latter of which requires awareness of using the definite article. The exercise consists of eight sentences and six adjectives which are to be added into the gaps. The adjectives include three comparative and three superlative adjectives which are irregular (*good* and *bad*). Students are expected to know the difference between the article use with comparatives versus superlatives. A pre-task for this exercise could be reading the text on page 15 of the SB (appendix 7.1), which includes many occasions of the use of adjectives *good* and *bad*, as well as their comparative and superlative forms. Students could first read the text, find all adjectives, as well as their comparatives and superlatives, and practice the use of the definite article in spoken or written sentences. The aim is for students to find a pattern of the use of the definite article through reading in the context of the comparatives and superlatives. Ur (2016: 26) suggests grammar explanations be kept short, simple, and illustrative, referring only to the “need to know” facts. In this case, teachers could provide students explanations such as all superlatives in English require the definite article if the superlative comes directly before a noun, followed by illustrations e.g., discussing someone’s or something’s obvious characteristics or attributes, such as height or cost, as being superior to that of others. Furthermore, teachers could use students to compare each other’s football skills by having students elicit answers such as “Tambet is good at football, Marta is better at football than Tambet, but Mathias is the best at football.” It might be the case that at the beginning of the exercise students will make errors by omitting the *the* before the superlative adjective, in which case teachers should analyze these errors later. All in all, as opposed to learning articles as an isolated topic, a theme-based lesson would give teachers the freedom of teaching articles integrated with another topic, and through the development of certain language skills.

The importance of teaching the use of articles alongside count and noncount nouns is recognized by Whitman's (1974) model of teaching articles. Exercise 4 of Unit 9 of the WB (see appendix 8) includes a table that asks students to write the words either in the countable or uncountable table and translate them. The vocabulary used in this exercise is based on the overall topic of the unit – *Family*. This exercise could be taken out of the context of the WB and used as an example exercise to demonstrate which countable and uncountable nouns take articles and which do not and what the grammatical reasons are behind that. Chiew Har (2011: 134) proposed a type of exercise that requires students to sort out appropriate nouns into columns of the indefinite articles *a* and *an*. This exercise could be done in a classroom or outside of school. Taking language learning outside is also suggested by the National Curriculum (2014: 17). Students could be given some time to find objects outside and decide whether those objects are countable or uncountable. Then, students fill in the table with appropriate nouns; some additional realia could also be brought along to show other students. Realia could also be useful for teachers to introduce and explain the concept of mass nouns concerning articles. Once back in the classroom, students could in groups demonstrate their findings and discuss whether what they found outside are considered count or non-count nouns engaging in conversations e.g., “what is this?” and students should be prepared to answer with the correct article e.g., “this is a mug”, “this is water. In addition to using articles, students are also practicing their speaking skill. As a post-task, exercise 5 of Unit 9 of the WB (see appendix 4) requires students to fill in the suitable gaps. Although Nunan (1998: 102) argues that through gap-fill exercises students might not see the systematic relationship between form, meaning, and use, this exercise could nonetheless be used to accentuate the use of determiner *some* with mass nouns (uncountable) and article *a/an* with countable nouns.

Unit 18 outlines the topic of chores and adverbs of frequency. It includes a reading

text, as well as dialogues to listen to. Students are expected to use sentence constructions such as “I usually clean the bathroom”, “I sometimes rake the leaves”, etc. The chant on SB page 105 mentions several household chore expressions such as “washing the dishes”, “mopping the floor” and “cooking a meal.” A transcript of the chant can be found in appendix 9. Having heard the chant for the first time, the students are perhaps more focused on conveying the meaning, the sounds, or voices they hear in the audio file. Repetition of the chant has the potentiality to increase students’ processing time which enhances the clarity between syntactic forms (Chang & Read, 2006). In this case, repetition is useful especially for those whose English proficiency level is lower than others’. For example, the teacher could repeat the chant several times and ask students what chores the children do that were mentioned in the chant. This could activate their awareness and elicit an answer. Based on their answer, the teacher could correct their article use if they have misused or omitted an article.

A post-task for the previous exercise could be exercise 4 in Unit 18 of the WB (see appendix 10). Students are asked to study a diagram and read sentences about the characters Bob and Lily. A Venn diagram includes the chores of both Bob and Lily and some chores overlap with the previously mentioned chant. Having listened to the chant and understood that articles are necessary when talking about chores, this current exercise could put to test students’ knowledge on articles so far. Students are required to first study Bob and Lily’s chores and then in pairs fill in their own Venn diagram and speak about their chores. Students should be reminded to use articles when speaking about their chores. This is an exercise where the teacher has a passive role and gives instructions but does not centre the attention on explaining article rules. This exercise could also be done in a flipped classroom instructional strategy where students all prepare a speech about their daily or monthly chores and proceed to present it to their classmates. Their

classmates can practice active listening by taking notes or by assigning them to be teachers and diligently listen to any article errors that the presenters make. Later the errors can be analyzed as a class.

2.7 Recommendations for teaching articles based on *I Love English 4*

The following recommendations are compiled based on *ILE 4* with the aim to help teachers teach articles via developing students' communication competence through speaking, listening, writing, and reading. These recommendations should give teachers the confidence that their students will have solid knowledge on the English article system. Also, if EFL teachers feel that their students misuse or omit the articles in English, these recommendations offer ways of teaching articles in a more thorough and systematic way. The following activities are mainly to be done in small groups or pairs to ensure more active participation and active listening. Ur's (1988: 18) suggestions on creating grammar tasks have been taken into consideration for creating recommendations for teaching articles (see page 26). Moreover, Ur (1988: 86) has offered many grammar teaching activities, on which some of the following article exercises will be based. However, the author has decided to change the nuances of the game procedures and necessary materials. The author has used examples from the *ILE 4*.

2.7.1 Teaching articles through speaking

The game *the indecisive customer* is based on the topic of countable and uncountable nouns, and the corresponding articles. The name of the game is meant to create intrigue and induce motivation in the student. This recommendation can be applied to exercise 3 of Unit 17 of the SB (see appendix 11). The whole unit is outlined by communication, daily life situations, going to the grocery store, ordering from restaurants, etc.

The objective of the game is to develop the use of correct articles, as well as the quantifier *some* via the speaking skill as well as the study skill of active listening. Students are expected to actively use language by taking turns in playing different roles which hopefully avoids the situation where one student gets bored compared to the other. The whole game is meant to be role-play. Furthermore, the aim is to give students a realistic situation where their use of language has a meaning and without the aim of “getting it right” the first time (Ur 2016: 30). The teacher’s role is to observe and listen for errors, which could be analyzed after the game.

The play-acting game requires teachers to first attain objects similar to those shown in the exercise which will be used as realia. The use of realia can relate to Ur’s (1988: 19) recommendation of emphasizing visual focus, to arouse interest in students. If there is no possibility of using realia, it is also suitable to just point to the items in exercise 3 on page 101 of the SB (see appendix 11). Items can be added by the teacher or students for a longer duration of the game.

As a pre-task, adding items to the existing list provided in the SB is a good opportunity to activate knowledge on the vocabulary of this topic. Students are expected to create a situation where they are in a store or restaurant and must order or ask for something that is either listed in the exercise or on the table as realia e.g., “can I have a cup of coffee, please?” This question should evoke a two-sided dialogue, based on the sentence structures provided under the items in exercise 3. The seller then repeats the item(s) that the customer asked for “a cup of coffee. Here you are!”

The second round will become more challenging as the person wanting to buy items will gradually add more things to their wish list until the memory of the seller, who must repeat all the customer’s orders, gives up. Thus, the result is that the customer lists as many items to buy as the seller can repeat. This exercise should create open-endedness

in the sense that students themselves can modify how they want to conduct the dialogue. Sentence templates in the exercise are simply for aiding students. Once the dialogue has finished, students will change roles. An example of a typical dialogue is as goes. The teacher should first play it through with a student:

“Hello!”
 “Hello.”
 “I’m here to buy some things. I would like a cup of coffee, please”.
 “A cup of coffee. Here you are”.
 “Thanks. I would like a cup of coffee, and a bar of chocolate, please”.
 “Alright. A cup of coffee and a bar of chocolate.”
 “Oh, sorry, I would like a cup of coffee, a bar of chocolate, and an ice cream”.
 “A cup of coffee, a bar of chocolate and an ice cream”
 “I’d like a cup of coffee, a bar of chocolate, an ice cream, and a box of chocolates.”

The exercise should also create a pleasurable tension in students given that they must prepare their dialogue to some extent. Furthermore, the fact that the teacher is observing them could also induce motivation to perform with motivation. Although realistic and authentic role-play activities are recognized by many theorists such as Tomlinson (2012: 162), Collerson (1997: 51), and Nunan (1998: 102), there are some limitations to bear in mind. For example, students who are not as confident in speaking English could feel pressured with this exercise. Less confident students might also lack enthusiasm or emotion in this exercise which could decrease the overall motivation in the pair. Furthermore, this exercise could require much guidance from the teacher, especially from students with a lower proficiency level. Thus, the example dialogue should be done very thoroughly and vividly.

2.7.2 Teaching articles through writing

The authors of *ILE 4* have compiled the coursebook in ways that offer many possibilities for students’ writing skill development. The goal in teaching grammar through writing is producing well-formed sentences and using grammar structures to convey meanings (Ur 1988: 6). This section aims to provide recommendations for more diverse

writing activities through which students develop their writing skill in English. The proportion of written work, including orographic skills and creativity, should be gradually increased by the second stage of study, according to the National Curriculum (2014: 11). Taking this into consideration, written tasks in the *ILE 4* WB should be purposeful for the learning of articles as well.

Tera (2015: 24) has stated that each unit in *ILE 4* has a writing topic which teachers can use for writing tasks e.g., “talk/write about chocolate in your life”, or “make a list of some of the most important information about yourself.” These writing tasks give students the possibility of thinking outside of frames and putting their fantasy to work. *ILE 4* includes poems and chants at the beginning of each unit. Usually, these poems and chants are short and are expected to be listened to altogether with the whole class at first, however, these tasks can be used for further practice on articles. The writing activity is based on exercise 1 of Unit 16 of the SB (see appendix 12). The objective of the writing activity is to use appropriate articles, as well as the free composition of noun phrases in writing. This writing activity has been inspired by Ur’s (1988: 53) suggested grammar activities.

The pre-task is for students to brainstorm for ideas in groups, based on questions such as: “what are the first things that come to your head when listening to/reading the poem? What can we do to save the Earth? How can we contribute to the cleanliness of our surroundings?” etc.

The writing activity *Flash-poem* then begins by students reading the poem on page 94 of the SB. Students are given³ the title of *The environment* which is directly related to the current unit. Students are then urged to write noun phrases describing an association that this topic of the unit has for them. The brainstorm done as a pre-task can help find associations. Each group will then state their associations they have with the phrase *The environment* and

³ A variation of this part of the activity is that students choose the title themselves.

the teacher will write them down on the board. These suggestions could be something like the following:

The environment.
Cleaning the nature.
Picking up a can.
Throwing it in the trash.

The result of this activity should be the creation of an impressionistic or rhythm poem. Students who need an extra task could focus on rhyme or adding additional parts of speech in the poem such as adverbs or prepositional phrases. Furthermore, vocabulary from page 94 of the SB (see appendix 121) can be used to consolidate the vocabulary along with the correct articles that they require e.g.:

The nature is important to us, so how about we discuss:
Do not be selfish, pick up the rubbish.
Pick up a can if you can.
Throw it in the trash in-a-flash!

This activity can also be done in the way that the Estonian classical *Ajaleht* game goes. Students are given a specific theme related to the topic of the unit (this activity can easily be adjusted according to other topics of units as well; the focus on articles remains nonetheless). For instance, students are given regular white sheets of paper and the teacher offers them the topic of *Our environment*. Students write a similar association as with the poem above and fold the sheet in such a way that whatever they wrote is hidden and pass the paper on to the next student in the circle. Once everyone has gotten a chance to write on each paper, the results will be read out, and the teacher could refer to the mistakes that have been made with articles or allow students to do article error analysis. This variation of the activity assures anonymity for students who, perhaps, are not as confident in sharing their fantasy and creativity.

This activity could also be conducted in a way that creates personalization, meaning that the use of their interaction within the group work, or individually, can be based on their personal experiences, opinions, ideas, and feelings (Ur 1988: 22). For example, to enhance the factor of personalization, students could begin by writing about their summer holidays, about their families, or someone else's (Ur 1988: 22) (see appendices 13 and 13.1). These written tasks should assess students' use of articles, among creativity and orthography. Visual focus is offered by the SB itself, as an example of a poem is offered on page 94 (see appendix 12). Furthermore, vocabulary related to the topic is offered in the rest of the unit as well, which serves as an aid for those students, who perhaps struggle to find suitable words for their contribution to the poem. Pleasurable tension could be created if the teacher decides to give a time limit for the poem, which could be done when the unit has been finished and serves as a revision task. For additional entertainment within the task, students could be allowed to go outside in groups, especially in schools that are in rural areas. This gives them a variety of environment that could increase their intrinsic motivation.

The limitation of this activity is that the pre-task, the task itself, and attuning students to the task to arouse interest in them, require time. The topic of this task can be changed, according to teacher's and students' preferences, however, in the case of this current unit, students should find the topic of *the environment* and its many variations quite relatable and interesting.

2.7.3 Teaching articles through listening

The main aim of listening tasks in the *ILE 4* is hearing the intonation and pronunciation in authentic texts (Tera 2012: 23). Authentic texts in this case refer to texts that are rich and varied in style, mode, medium, and purpose and illustrate to the students how the target language is typically used (Tomlinson 2012: 161). Listening exercises are often integrated with the writing skill which instruct to write or draw according to what is

said in the listening excerpt. Although the National Curriculum (2014) recommends that the listening skill be developed for the outcome of improving pronunciation and intonation, this section will provide an exercise that integrates articles with listening, which could help students notice and apprehend the role and position of articles in spoken communication better. Ur (1988: 6) recommends that listening be taught by students perceiving and recognizing the spoken form of a language structure, as well as comprehending what the language structure means in the context.

The main objectives of this activity are as follows: linguistically – the objective is to gain an understanding of the use of the article within sentences, including when to use the Ø. As this activity can be suited for any reading text in the *ILE 4*, an example of the activity will be used from unit 4 of the SB (see appendix 14). The activity is inspired by Kolln's (2003: 166-167) and Chamot's et al. (1999) suggestions who have proposed cloze passages as a means of learning articles through listening (see page 28).

The activity *The Movement game* can be done in pairs or groups of three to four. It cannot be done individually or as a whole class. The example will show the procedure of the game with four people. As a pre-task, the teacher should go over the basic rules of articles such as countability, uncountability, specificity, and generic rule (see Whitman's model on page 21). This pre-task can be done by the teacher holding items in their hand, for which the students choose the correct article, followed by the teacher using the items in a sentence and students must elicit the correct missing article – definite or indefinite.

After the pre-task, students are expected to form into preferred groups assigned by the teacher. Each student is assigned a type of article – *a*, *an*, and *the*. They are free to write it on a post-it note and stick it on their forehead for other group members to see. Once the types of articles are assigned, each student will think of a signature sound or movement which refers to their type of article e.g., the sound of a cat represents *a*, the waving of hands

represents *the*, etc. The group must be sitting in a circle. As mentioned, the cloze passage for this activity can be any reading text in the *ILE SB*. The cloze passage opted for, however, should have all articles omitted by the teacher beforehand for this activity. The teacher, or another student, will begin reading the cloze passage without any articles. The person whose assigned articles should be included in the sentence that the teacher reads stands up e.g.:

My grandmother, my father's mother, was born in 1946. So, she can't remember anything about Second World War. But she can remember what town looked like in ruins. It took long time to build it up again, Granny promised to take me to history museum. Granny went to school when she was seven. She told me about becoming member of communist youth organization. We hated wearing red scarves, but we loved activities that came with it. (Kurm, Soolepp 2015: 25)

This example cloze passage can be modified in other ways as well, however, given that the students should learn vocabulary within the topic of the unit, it is a fair chance for students to also learn vocabulary whilst listening. After all, the correct use of articles depends largely on the noun phrases. This activity takes into consideration the following factors: firstly, the activity emphasizes pleasurable tension, because as the activity proceeds, the aim is to become more fluent and faster with the addition of articles. However, there are no winners in this game, which should relieve the stress of competition. Secondly, visual focus is emphasized by all students seeing the article types that their group members have been assigned, including theirs. Thirdly, the content of the activity is on the topic of grandparents which can be relatable to many students.

The limitations of this exercise are that the task could become chaotic when adding a time limit. However, for more proficient learners, the aspect of time limit could be appropriate and suitable. Also, the pre-task should be thoroughly explained, because, without the knowledge of where to add the appropriate knowledge, the students may find themselves in utter confusion during the task.

2.7.4 Teaching articles through reading

Reading tasks are recommended to do in consecutive lessons, as opposed to focusing only on one text for the whole period (Tera 2015: 24). *ILE 4* includes pre-, while- and post-reading tasks. Generally, reading is planned along with listening, however, given that the thesis already includes recommendations for a listening task, this section will focus only on reading. The reading tasks generally aim for students to notice new language structures, vocabulary, phrases, expressions synonyms, antonyms, etc. (Tera 2015: 24). The reading skill focuses on perceiving and recognizing written form, as well as comprehending what the written structure means in context (Ur 1988: 6). The following activity requires the teacher to prepare sets of rules as flashcards or on the blackboard for each type of article – *a/an*, and *the*. This activity can be done in groups, individually, in pairs, or as a whole class. The author suggests that the rules are limited to four. The rules can be an example of what appendix 3 illustrates, although these rules are from *ILE 3*. However, given that the students worked with this set in their previous school year, these rules should activate prior knowledge. The rules could also be attained from exercise 6 on page 111 of the WB (see appendix 6.1). The rules could be formulated as the following:

1. When talking about something specific such as ‘The President of Estonia’.
2. When talking about something singular that starts with a consonant.
3. When talking about something plural that starts with a vowel.

These rules are then placed around the classroom. Students are then formed into groups of three to four and they will all receive a text from *ILE 4* as a photocopy since students will have to cut segments out of the text. Each group has a different text to work with. The groups begin by reading the text; teachers should urge students to first read it out loud as a group or individually. For example, a group of students receives the text on page 107 of the SB (see appendix 15). Their task is to find as many sentences containing articles and adding them to the corresponding rules by cutting out the segments and sticking them under the rule where the teacher placed them. The reason for placing the

rules separately is to provoke thought in the groups on which article is used in the sentence and what the function of the article is. To avoid the situation where a student states “because it seemed most logical”, teachers will inquire groups why they put a certain sentence under this rule and evoke them to think about how and why a certain rule applies to their added sentence. To take the activity further, rules can be modified according to the teacher’s and students’ needs and proficiency level. This activity can also be done by adding the zero article, however, since the *ILE 4* has not specifically talked about the uses of the zero article, the rule has been left out from the activity.

In conclusion, four different activities were presented in the given section of the thesis. All activities were based on a certain language skill, with the aim of improving the use of articles. However, all activities can be combined and integrated with other language skills and can be adjusted to higher proficiency levels. The activities all highlight keywords such as learner-centeredness, active participation and learning. The aim of these activities is to help students improve their article use via the four language skills, which ultimately develops students’ communication competence, as suggested by the National Curriculum (2014). Most of these recommended activities were compiled with the aim of creating authentic situations. Furthermore, the activities were mainly compiled in a way that highlight the teacher’s passive role to enhance the aspect of learner-centeredness.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of the thesis was to recommend ways of teaching articles in a way that students become more aware and conscious of article use. The recommendations aimed to provide students different contexts through which articles can be learned and acquired, such as learning, speaking, writing, and listening. To compile these recommendations, an analysis of the existing *ILE 4* exercises was conducted. The analysis was largely based on describing what exercises are present in the coursebook and how the present exercises can be modified to be more focused on teaching articles. The author found that all article exercises follow a similar pattern – the explicit article exercises are fill-the-gap type and require the knowledge of topic-related vocabulary. Some article exercises included an explicit approach, where students were presented with a rule box and were expected to do the article exercise based on this rule. An article-teaching model was also implemented on exercises that were explicitly about articles, this model served as an example of how to plan and organize article teaching to their students. Finally, recommendations were provided, based on the analysis of exercises. Overall, the objective of these recommendations is for teachers to approach teaching articles in the confidence that their students will have a solid knowledge of the English article system, giving a substantial preparation for students' future English courses, which gradually will become more demanding and complex

Teaching languages to young learners can lead to two processes – language acquisition and language learning. For the acquisition of articles, a natural EFL environment should be provided within a classroom, yet students are more likely to be exposed to this type of language environment anyway – via videogames, watching multimedia in English, visiting foreign countries. These kinds of environments where language is acquired, however, might not be enough for students to consciously and in full awareness understand why their English communication is structured the way it is, why they use the language

structures they do, etc. Although language learning is what generally happens in an EFL lesson, students should nonetheless be encouraged by teachers to explore platforms where language learning can happen naturally.

Grammar teaching methods must be suitable for the students' age – what works with adults, might not work with younger students. Given that the main objective in learning foreign languages is developing the communication competence, it is logical for teachers to base their grammar teaching on that. Instead of teaching grammar for the sake of it, grammar should be taught along with other language skills, with the aim of producing grammatically correct sentences in spoken and written English. To develop the communication competence, the CLT approach was highlighted, yet makes no explicit mention of grammar rules. To avoid the situation of bypassing grammar, the main method to be implemented allows students to notice grammatical patterns, structure the pattern within their internal grammar, and finally proceduralization, giving students to implement the newly learned grammatical patterns.

Given the intricacies and many exceptions of rules in the English article system; several problems in teaching and learning articles could arise. For one, the L1 of Grade 6 students has no article system as in English. There are ways, however, to compare Estonian demonstrative pronouns with English articles. The lack of an English article system in L1 can cause more subconscious omissions of the article in spoken and written communication. Secondly, the differentiation between definiteness, indefiniteness, as well as countability and uncountability can also be confusing to students. Many theorists agreed that article teaching should be kept at a basic level, yet, students should nonetheless be aware of the use of articles in spoken and written, including the use of the zero article. The thesis highlights that although articles have been mentioned explicitly in the previous *ILE* sets, the topic nonetheless requires constant practice and revision.

The main ideas for planning recommendations for teaching articles were based on the concept of learner-centeredness, authenticity, as well as context-based teaching, including integrations with listening, reading, writing, and speaking. In planning these recommended activities and exercises, a clear objective was to be set, along with factors such as choice of topic, visual focus, open-endedness, personalization, pleasurable tension, etc. The recommendations provided were based on developing students' language skills, which constitute the communication competence.

Most of the recommendations were meant for either pairs, groups, or as a whole class; although these recommendations, too, can be modified to teachers' preferences and students' needs. The recommended exercises highlighted that articles can be taught in ways that students discover the use of articles themselves with the teacher having a passive role. The activities were mainly fun and entertaining, and they could create more of a natural language learning environment than, for example, learning and memorizing article rules by heart. Through all the language skills, students should become more aware of what the position and function of articles are in the English language. Overall, these recommendations were provided based on the National Curriculum and should be suitable for teachers who find that more attention is to be drawn on learning the correct use of articles.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Translation exercise in Unit 9

The translatable sentences were the following. The possible answer key is provided under the sentences:

1. Nad istusid kamina ees ja kuulasid muusikat.

They sat in front of the fireplace and listened to music.

2. See järv on turismimagnet.

This lake is a tourist attraction.

3. Ta eemaldas musta pleki vaibalt.

He/she removed the black stain from the carpet.

4. Kas kummitus kadus ära?

Did the ghost disappear?

5. Nad said eile vähe magada.

They got little sleep yesterday.

6. Mis kell eile pimedaks läks?

What time did it go dark last night?

Appendix 1.2. Tests of Grade 6 students demonstrating article errors

Image 1

4. 1= They sat at front of fireplace and they listened music. 2= This lake is tourist attraction. 3= He removed black stain from carpet. 4= Is ghost gone away? 5= They got little bit sleep. 6= What time yesterday got dark.

Image 2

3. He removes black stain from the carpet.

Image 3

2. This lake is tourist attraction.

Image 4

He removed, black stain in carpet.

Image 5

This lake is tourist attraction.

Image 6

3. They removed the black stain from the carpet.

Image 7

2. This lake is a tourist attraction.
3. He removed a black stain from a carpet.
4. Did the ghost disappear?

Appendix 2. Questions of the survey on article teaching in Estonian schools

1. Mis õppematerjale Te inglise keele õpetamisel kasutate nt I Love English, Upstream jne. (TV, õpik, muu)?
2. Kas artiklikasutuse reeglitele peaks pöörama rohkem tähelepanu või arvate, et artiklite õppimisele ei peaks nii suurt tähelepanu pöörama, sest õpilane saab need selgeks iseenesest läbi aastate?
3. Millist tüüpi harjutused on soodustanud Teie õpilastel artiklite õppimise lihtsustamist (nt fill-the-gap ülesanded, lugemisharjutused, valikvastustega küsimused, interaktiivsed harjutused (nt mängud, laulud, vestlused jne)?

Appendix 3. Explicit representation of rules in the previous coursebook *I Love English 3*

Photos are taken from *I Love English 3* WB pp. 116 and 117.

Image 1

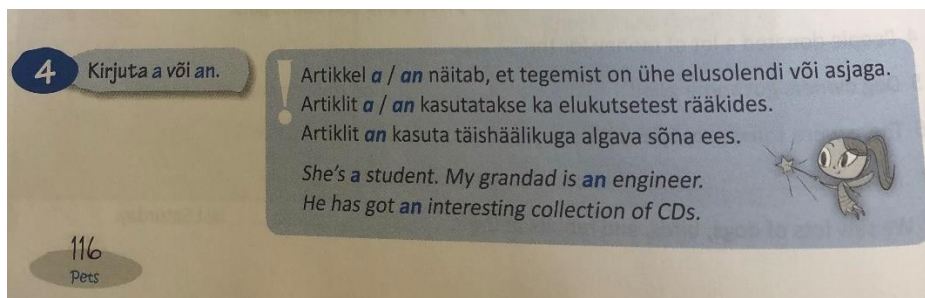


Image 2

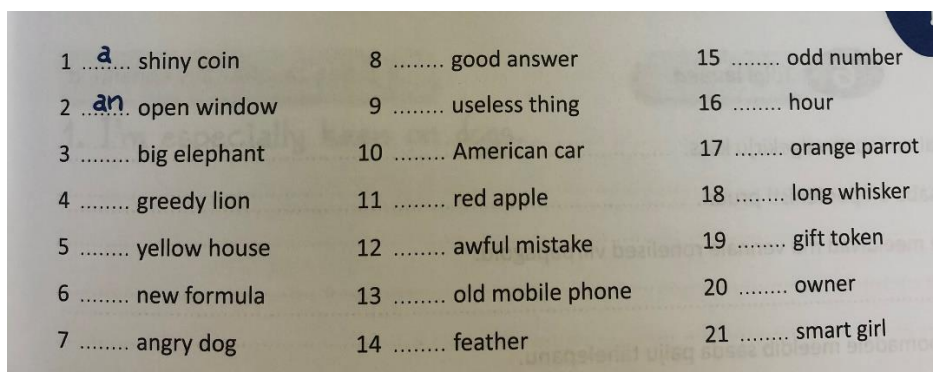
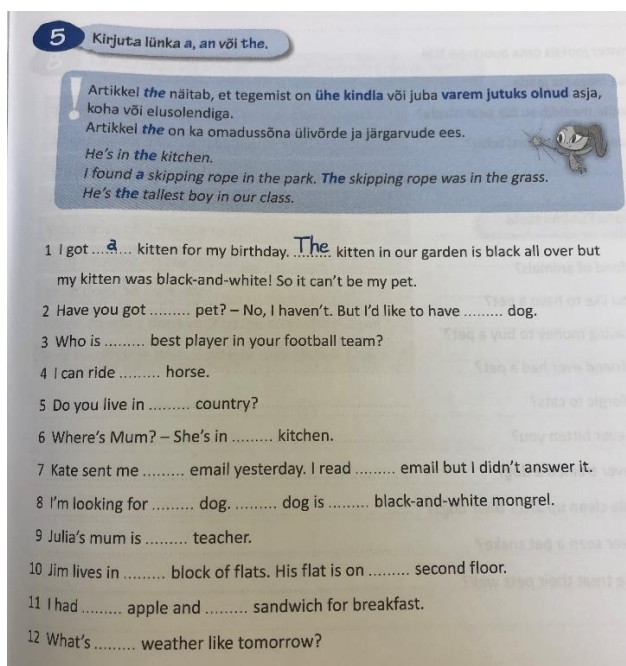


Image 3



Appendix 4. Exercise 5 of unit 9 WB

**5** Complete the sentences. Write a, an, or some.

- 1 Can I have water, please?
- 2 The shoemaker got leather for new pair of shoes.
- 3 century lasts one hundred years.
- 4 The farmer sold grain to buy tractor.
- 5 There's university in Tartu.
- 6 Is there elephant in the Tallinn zoo?
- 7 I'm going to wear trendy costume to the Christmas party.
- 8 Find open door and go into the building.
- 9 They moved house month ago.
- 10 I need time to get ready for exciting trip.
- 11 This writer has written very good book.
- 12 Would you like pocket money?
- 13 Norway is kingdom but Italy is republic.

Appendix 5. Exercise 3 of Unit 10 WB

3 Complete the sentences. Use *a*, *an*, or *the* where necessary.

- 1 It's beautiful day! sun is shining. Let's go to beach.
- 2 Tim is salesperson in department store in Oxford Street.
- 3 On last day of December they always take walk in town centre.
- 4 They sailed across Atlantic Ocean in small boat.
- 5 She told the children story about honest shoemaker and his wife.
- 6 There was price tag on floor of the fitting room. I picked it up.
- 7 I want to send you email with some pictures. Can you tell me address?
- 8 I've got great idea. Why don't we send Anne and Bert romantic card on their big day?
- 9 Can you pass me scissors, please? They are in top drawer.
- 10 Switch off water, please. It's boiling.
- 11 She's never been to Africa. But she often goes to Australia.
- 12 That's book I need!
- 13 TV in my parents' bedroom doesn't work. They want to buy new one.
- 14 She bought new pair of shoes.
- 15 Stars and Stripes is flag.
- 16 Norwegian is language.

Appendix 6. Exercise 5 of Unit 18

18
Unit

5 Complete the sentences with a, an, or the where necessary.

- 1 We haven't got dishwasher or microwave oven, but we've got new washing machine. Dad bought it only few weeks ago.
- 2 Our neighbours don't spend their time on mowing lawn because they've got robot lawn mower. It moves around in garden when family is at work.
- 3 Sheila would like to have robot cat box. She likes pets and she's got yellow striped cat but she's bored with cleaning cat's litter box every day.
- 4 We can't afford to go on long holiday very often. Last year we went on family trip to Finland. We visited water park. This summer we're going to go on camping holiday in Estonia. We're going to spend week on island.

Appendix 6.1 Exercise 6 of Unit 18 WB

6 Complete the sentences with a, an, or the where necessary.

! go to **the** school = go as a visitor

! go to school = go as a student

Samal põhimõttel kasutatakse artiklit **the** ka sõnade **church** ja **hospital** puhul.

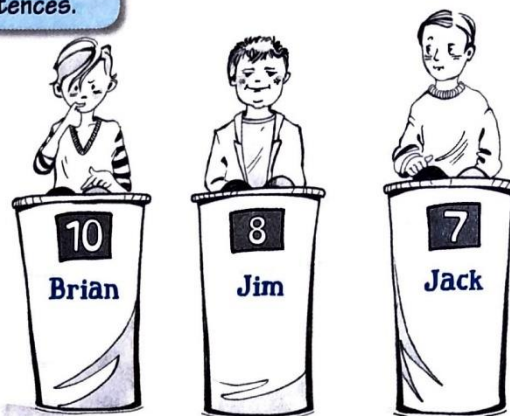
- 1 Jane usually goes to school at 7.45 in morning. This morning she left just after breakfast. She is good student. She is never late.
- 2 I met my best friend at hospital. My mum and I were visiting my sister. I didn't know that Janet's granny was in hospital, too.
- 3 Lisa's mum went to school to talk about her maths test on Monday. Lisa wasn't at school on that day. She was still in hospital.
- 4 Mary is cleverest child in her class. She is also good at tennis.
- 5 What did you have for lunch? - piece of cheese and apple.
- 6 Come on, children, it's time for bed. Don't start new game any more.
- 7 My great-aunt goes to church every Sunday. She often takes flowers from her garden to decorate church.
- 8 There is modern church not far from where we live. There are often concerts in church.
- 9 Uncle Colin doesn't know Browns. They have never met.
- 10 My mum is tram driver and my dad works as vet.

Appendix 7. Exercise 1 of Unit 2 WB

1 Look at the pictures and complete the sentences.

good	better	best
bad	worse	worst

- Brian got the score.
- Jack got the score.
- Brian was than Jim and Jack.



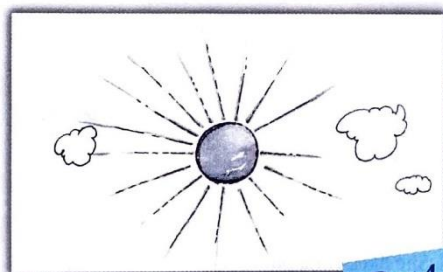
Day 1



Day 2



Day 3



Day 4



Day 5

- On the fourth day of our trip the weather was the
- On the third day the weather was the
- On the second day the weather was than on the third day.
- On the first day the weather was as as on the last day.
- On the last day the weather was than on the fourth day.

Appendix 7.1. Exercise 5 of Unit 2 SB

2

Unit

Wise servant

Once a chief in a small village told a servant to go to the market. "Bring me the best piece of meat from the market," he said.

The servant ran to the market right away. The chief was surprised when the servant came back with the tongue of a large cow. When the dinner was ready, the chief was impressed. The meat was truly delicious.

The chief called the servant to him again. "The tongue was wonderful. Now go to the market again and bring me the worst piece of meat from the market."

The servant ran right to the market. Soon he came back carrying a piece of meat that looked like the first. The chief was surprised that the servant once again brought him a tongue from another cow.

The chief became really cross and he told the servant off. "What is this?" he asked. "When I told you to bring me the best piece of meat, you brought me the tongue. When I asked for the worst piece of meat, you brought me another tongue. Are you playing games with me?"


The servant answered, "Sometimes a man is very unhappy because of his tongue; and sometimes his tongue makes him really happy. It can be sweet or bitter. It depends on the words and sounds that people say. If a person's words are kind and sweet, they bring happiness. If the words are rude and sharp, they can bring sadness and pain."

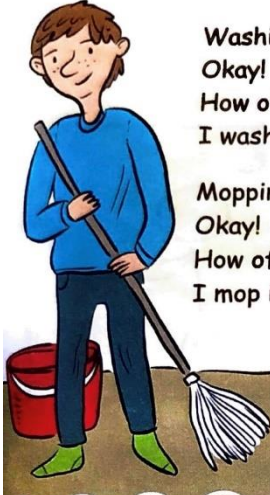
"Thank you," said the chief. "Your words are wise." In a speech to his people he said, "May the words of all of us be kind and sweet for everybody who hears them."



Appendix 9. Transcript of exercise 1 of Unit 18 SB


CHORES Unit 18

1 Listen and chant. 



Washing the dishes.
 Okay!
 How often do you do it?
 I wash up every day.

Mopping the floor.
 Okay!
 How often do you mop it?
 I mop it every day.



Cooking a meal.
 Okay!
 How often do you cook it?
 I cook it every day.

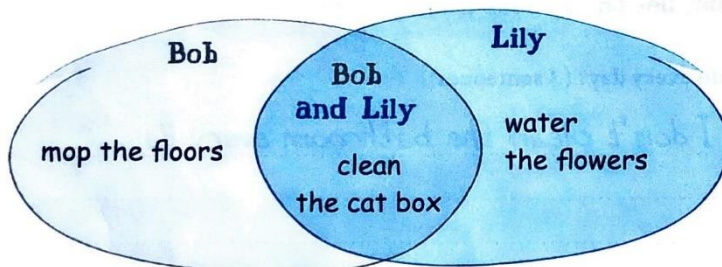
Tidying your desk.
 Okay!
 How often do you tidy it?
 I do it every day.

Appendix 10. Exercise 4 of Unit 18 WB

4

a Study the diagram and read the sentences about Bob and Lily.

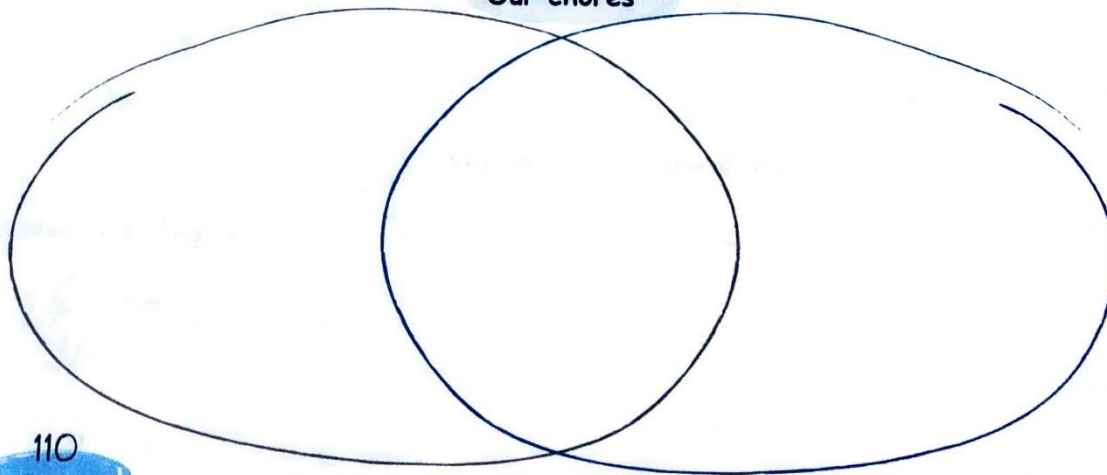
Lily's and Bob's chores



- 1 *Bob has mopped the floors, but Lily hasn't.*
- 2 *Lily has watered the flowers, but Bob hasn't.*
- 3 *They both have cleaned the cat box.*

b Work in pairs. Ask and answer question 4 in exercise 3. Write notes in the diagram. Speak about your diagram.

Our chores



Appendix 11. Exercise 3 of Unit 17 SB

3 Make up your own dialogues.



£5.80



£1.75



£2.10



£2.30



£2.30



£1.30



£8.90



£1.10

Yes, please?

Anything else?

Would you like ... ?

Here you are.

You're welcome.

..., please.

I'd like ...

How much is it?

Thank you.



£2.90

Appendix 12. Exercise 1 of Unit 16 SB

Unit 16 WE CARE

1 Listen and chant. 

Chocolate wrappers,
Plastic bottles,
Ice-cream sticks,
And cola cans.


Pizza boxes,
Biscuit packets,
Yogurt pots,
And chewing gum.

There you are -
Why did you drop it?
Pick it up and
Put it in a bin.

Why don't you care?
Don't you really care?



Appendix 12.1. Exercise 2 of Unit 16 SB

2 a Listen and repeat. 

1 O	2 oO	3 Oo	4 Ooo
[peɪdʒ] page	[pə'fɔ:m] perform	['rʌbɪʃ] rubbish	['pɒvəti] poverty
[wiəd] weird	[prə'dju:s] produce	['kʌpl] couple	['ɔ:gənaɪz] organize
[bædʒ] badge	[sə'pɔ:t] support	['nɒlɪdʒ] knowledge	['fɜ:nɪtʃə] furniture
[frɪdʒ] fridge	[kən'fju:zd] confused	['saɪəns] science	['eɪdʒənsi] agency

Appendix 13. Exercise 7 of Unit 1 WB

7 Write about your summer holidays. (8 sentences)

In June / July / August ...

At the beginning of ... / At the end of ...

I was / stayed / went / visited ...

I made a trip to ...

My favourite outdoor / indoor game was ...

On rainy days / On sunny days ...

I enjoyed / helped / earned / played ...

.....

.....

.....

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.....

.....

Appendix 13.1 Exercise 10 of Unit 7 WB

10 Write about Estonia. (8 sentences)

Europe

across the Baltic Sea

Finland

the capital

famous for

four seasons

rain, snow

rivers, lakes, islands

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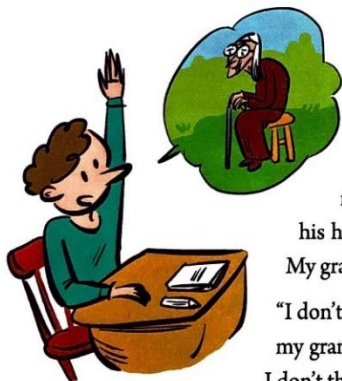
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Appendix 14. Exercise 3 of Unit 4 SB

History assignment



"Your home assignment is to interview your grandmothers," said Mr Stock, our history teacher at the end of the lesson. "Then write about their lives."

I just couldn't see the connection between the history course and my granny. But before I could make up my question, Brian put up his hand. "Can't I interview my great-grandmother? She lives with us. My grannies are both dead," he asked.

"I don't have a grandmother. My grannies both died before I was born. But my grandad lives not far from us." Nelly looked worried. "He's really old - I don't think he remembers anything about history."

"Talk to your grandparents, great-grandparents, or other family members who are the oldest. Ask them to talk about their lives. Give it a go. You've got a fortnight for writing down their stories," explained Mr Stock.

So, I called my granny and asked her to get ready for an interview. She was quite happy about it. "Listen, Eric. Come over as soon as you can. I'll make us a cup of tea and I've got some chocolate biscuits left from my birthday," she said.

24

History

4

Unit

My grandmother, my father's mother, was born in 1946. So she can't remember anything about the Second World War. But she can remember what the town looked like in ruins. It took a long time to build it up again. Granny promised to take me to the history museum, where we could see some photos of it. I can't wait!

My granny's parents were both doctors - I didn't know that. So, looking at my granny and dad - this is a kind of family tradition, to study medicine. Maybe I should follow suit?

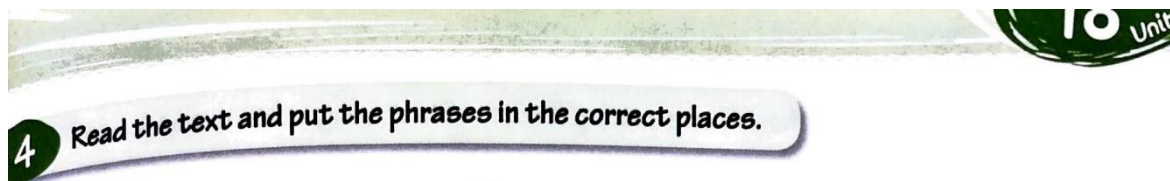
Granny went to school when she was seven. She told me about becoming a member of a communist youth organization and all the different things that happened during her school years. "We hated wearing red scarves but we loved the activities that came with it," she said.

They did a lot of outdoor stuff. Granny and I both cracked up when she told me how they hunted for imaginary enemies in a summer camp. "During a shift of about twenty days there was always a night-time alarm in the camp. Once I lost one of my white tennis shoes in a night hunt. My mates and I searched for it in the morning but we never found it. I was very worried because it wasn't possible to buy white tennis shoes in a shop every day. You needed to queue for them on certain days," she told me. To be honest, it sounds a bit strange for me. But maybe this is the history that Mr Spock talked about.



Anyway, today after dinner I'm off to Granny's again to catch up on where we stopped last night. I don't know what I can work out from what she is telling me - but it's really exciting to know more about her life.

Appendix 15. Exercise 4 of Unit 18 SB



4 Read the text and put the phrases in the correct places.

- A certain days B lawn mowing C leaving for work D private garden E free time

Home robots

Do you sometimes feel that household chores are too boring? Cheer up! Home robots seem like something from a science fiction film, but actually they may not be the distant future to us at all. Scientists and engineers have invented all sorts of gadgets to make our life easier. They believe that modern technology can leave people more (1). There are washing machines, microwave ovens, and dishwashers already in quite a few homes. There are also lots of families who have chosen home robots to help out with chores like vacuuming or (2).

Which of the three robot helpers would be the most useful in your home?



This is a vacuum robot. This smart gadget first sizes up your room, and then moves over the floors in a zigzag pattern. You can set it to work during (3) and times. The latest models of this robot can even vacuum and wash the floors at the same time.

This robot is for outdoor work – it's a lawn mower robot for a (4). It runs on batteries instead of using petrol. The owner can turn it on in the morning before (5) and when the family arrives home in the evening, the grass is cut. Some of the robots even send a special signal to the owner when somebody tries to steal them.



This is a self-flushing and self-washing cat box, which makes every cat owner very happy. They don't have to clean the litter box any more. The modern cat box flushes the waste away by itself and, like a cat, washes itself clean. It also saves the pet owner's money as it uses washable litter that you never need to change.

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Helen Kahur

Teaching the English article system based on the analysis of *I Love English 4*.

Inglise keele artiklisüsteemi õpetamine *I Love English 4* analüüsi põhjal.

Magistritöö

2021

Lehekülgede arv: 82

Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on luua inglise keelt võõrkeelena õpetavatele õpetajatele soovitusi kuidas artikleid õpetada olemasoleva õppematerjali põhjal nii, et õpilastel tekib teadlikum arusaam inglise keele artiklite rollist ja funktsioonist lausetes.

Magistritöö raames analüüsiti 6. klassile mõeldud Ülle Kurmi ja Ene Soolepa *I Love English 4* (2014) õpikut ja töövihikut, sealjuures analüüsiti eksplitsiitseid artikliharjutusi ning neid, mis ei ole otseselt artiklite teemaga seotud, kuid mida saab õppematerjalina kasutada artiklite õpetamiseks. Kuna eksplitsiitseid artikliharjutusi oli õppematerjalis vähe, siis pakuti välja erinevaid soovitusi kuidas õppematerjalis olemasolevaid harjutusi muuta selliseks, et fookus oleks suunatud artiklite tõhusamale omandamisele.

Seejuures on oluline märkida, et kõik soovitusel püstitati vastavalt Põhikooli riikliku õppekava lisale 2, mis käsitleb A-võõrkeele õpetamise eesmärke ning õppetegevuse kavandamist ja korraldamist. Vastavalt kõne all olevale põhikooli riikliku õppekava lisale, on põhiline eesmärk arendada õpilaste suhtluspädevust õpitavas võõrkeeles, mille raames tuleb omakorda arendada nelja õpioskust – kuulamist, lugemist, rääkimist ning kirjutamist. Töö autor lähtus artikliharjutuste soovitusel tegemisest sellest, et õpilased saaksid artiklite

kasutust õppida ja omandada läbi suhtluspädevuse arendamise.

Magistritöö teooriaosa pakub teoreetilist ülevaadet sobilikest keeleõpikäsitustest kuuenda klassi vanuserühmale, võõrkeele grammatika õpetamise meetoditest, kuidas grammatikat õpetada kontekstist lähtudes, inglise keele artiklite süsteemist, artiklite õpetamise tehnikast ja strateegiatest sh ka probleemidest, mis võivad esile tulla artiklite õpetamisel inglise keelt võõrkeelena õppivatel inimestel. Teooriaosa lõpeb erinevate harjutuste ja muude õpitegevuste loomise ja ülesehitamise viisidega.

Magistritöö empiiriline osa lähtus põhiliselt olemasolevate artikliharjutuste analüüsimisest, sealjuures toetuti teooriaosas välja toodud artikli õpetamise mudelile. Analüüsiiti ka muid harjutusi, mida võiks artiklite õpetamisel modifitseerida selliselt, et need on orienteeritud rohkem artiklitele, kuid arendades seeläbi ka inglise keele osaoskusi. Artikliharjutuste soovitude fundamentaalne põhimõte seisnes selles, et artikleid õpetataks integreerituna teiste osaoskustega, mitte isoleeritult. Inglise keele artiklisüsteem on olemuselt keerukas, sest kätkeb endas erandeid ning nüansse, millest arusaamine võib osutada väljakutsuvaks eriti eestlastele, kelle emakeeles ei ole samaväärset artiklisüsteemi. Seetõttu kasutati harjutuste analüüsiks Whitman'i artiklite õpetamise mudelit, mille eesmärk on luua süstemaatiline ja loogiline alus artiklitest arusaamiseks. Whitman'i mudeli näitest tuli välja, et lisaks umbmäärase ja määrava artiklite selgekssaamisele, on tähtis artiklite kõrval mõista ka hulgamäärsõnade funktsioone.

Artikliharjutuste soovitudes lähtus autor põhiliselt nüüdisaegsest õpikäsitusest, õppijakesksusest, aktiivsest õppimisest ja osavõtmisest. Soovitused oli püstitatud selliselt, et õpetajal on pigem passiivne roll ning vajadusel juhendab lapsi. Samuti oli üheks artikliharjutuste soovitude eesmärgiks loomuliku keele keskkond, mis aitaks õpilastel mitte ainult õppida vaid ka loomulikul teel omandada inglise keelt. Kõik artikliharjutuste soovitused on tehtud I Love English 4 olemasolevate harjutuste ja tekstide põhjal ning

harjutuste raskusastet ja harjutuste käiku on võimalik vastavalt soovidele ja vajadusele muuta.

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Helen Kahur

18.05.2021