

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
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**THE APPLICATION OF A BOOK CLUB  
AS A TEACHING METHOD IN THE EFL CONTEXT  
IN AN ESTONIAN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL  
MA thesis**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this master's thesis is to examine the process of designing and conducting a book club and applying it as a teaching method in an English as a Foreign Language classroom. The study explores whether the method can help upper secondary students with developing their language skills and thus expands on two research questions: 1) what the strengths of the book club as a teaching method are for improving the students' English language skills in an Estonian vocational school's EFL classroom, and 2) what the weaknesses of the book club as teaching method are.

The first chapter of this study expands on the use of literature in foreign language teaching and why it is used for learning a language overall, and it is concerned with how to select texts for teaching EFL learners about reading. Secondly, it looks at the history of the book club, using a book club as a teaching method, the previously found pros and cons as well as the design process of the book club. The second, empirical chapter of the thesis gives an overview of the design process of the book club, considering the Estonian National Curriculum and the test school's curriculum. It also provides an analysis of conducting the book club by using the teacher's notes and a student questionnaire. Finally, the results of the book club and a students' self-assessment are analysed.

The conclusion summarises the main findings of the thesis.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CBI – Content-based Instruction

CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLIL – Content-and-Language Integrated Learning

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

L1 – First language

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the primary skills that students use and develop throughout their entire schooling at various stages. The other primary language skills as well as transferable skills can be expanded by reading. Using literature is instrumental in achieving the skill and as there are opposing views in studies as to what literature is, the definition needs to be addressed. Meyer (1997: 1) sees literature as “written texts”, as they may be “marked by careful use of a variety of linguistic features.” Moreover, Meyer (1997: 4) states that literary works “are in a literary genre (poetry, prose fiction, or drama)” and they may be “read aesthetically” as “intended by the author to be read” in this particular way, or by the reader.

In a simpler manner, Damrosch (2009: 6) has argued that literature is most often deemed as “written with letters”, implying that the term has become vague and broad as many try to decipher it. He sees literature particularly as “poems, plays, and prose fiction” that are intended to be imaginative and often written elaboratively, as well as having “varying degrees of breadth” (ibid.: 9). The blurriness of the definition of the term ‘literature’ is what Meyer (1997) tried to avoid by providing prototypes that are open for discussion within any work of “literature”. In this thesis, literature is defined as a combination of Meyer and Damrosch’s interpretations and deals particularly with works of fiction.

The subskills that can be taught through reading are language and analytical skills that can be applied to any type of text. Language and analytical skill development are a large part of the aims that the gymnasium stage of schooling in Estonia expect on both the school and national level in foreign language learning. The existing knowledge can be expanded through “development of written and oral self-expression skills, creation of text and ability to comprehend them” (Appendix 2 of Regulation No. 2 of the Government of the Republic of Estonia of 6 January 2011, National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools), which are some of the main concerns teachers may have about students’ foreign language skill

development. A method to achieve the oral and higher-order thinking skills-related aims of the curricula is to use the book club method, where reading takes place for all students at the same time and it is often centred around the same book or theme. It is followed by students' interpretation of the text (Brownlie 2019, Petroelje Stolle 2011, Osborne 2008: 1). The book club gives students a possibility to also enhance their communication, digital means and time management skills and discipline (McCaughey 2017: 23, Eriksson Barajas 2016, Daley 2019: 148, Thomas and Goering 2018, Cooper 2018: 366). While the book club method is not a new phenomenon, implementing it in a foreign language learning setting is not used often, especially to teach a foreign language through longer works of literature (Daniels 2002).

The reason for using this method is due to my belief in using literature to learn a foreign language as this proved to be an effective method to improve my own analytical skills, vocabulary as well as grammar in upper secondary education. Higher order thinking skills are considered to be crucial in students' everyday lives in the future and they are also encouraged to be applied in classrooms in the Estonian National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (2011). In most Estonian schools, the chosen second language (or *foreign language A*) to be learned is English, and it is expected that students have reading comprehension and analysis skills not only in their mother tongue, but also in a foreign language (ibid.: 1). This is relevant in Estonia also as there are more materials in English than in Estonian to use in different academic fields. The language skills that students could learn through a book club in a foreign language class can be transferred to most other general subject courses, where analysis and overall discussion take place. Hence, the students can benefit from this experience in their later education and life.

Book clubs are also increasing in popularity in educational settings in different subjects worldwide although it is a newer phenomenon in Estonia according to a practicing teacher in the country (Daniels 2002, Cooper 2019, Lesley 2018, personal communication

20.12.2022). As there are benefits to the method for study that were previously mentioned, there are also likely to be faults to using the method, whether it is in the method itself, the preparation or the execution of it, especially in foreign language lessons. The present study will address the possibilities and limitations of the method for language learning in upper secondary foreign language education.

The aim of the current thesis is to analyse the process of conducting a book club in the English language learning context for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in an Estonian vocational school. The thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the strengths of the book club as a teaching method to improve the students' English language skills in an Estonian vocational school's EFL classroom?
2. What are the weaknesses of the book club as a teaching method?

In order to answer the questions, action research was conducted in a vocational school in Estonia. There are two chapters to the study. The first chapter is a literature review of previous studies on the use and functions of literature in EFL classrooms, the book club method, the design process of a book club and the pros and cons of using it as a teaching method. The author of the study led an in-class book club for 34 Year 1 and 2 students studying at the gymnasium level within a two-month period, the design process and analysis of which is provided in detail in the empirical part of the study. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was used as a base text for the book club to spark a variety of discussion topics, and design activities and materials that accompanied the book club unit within regular EFL lessons. The lesson activities and the strengths and weaknesses of the unit are analysed by using student questionnaires and teacher notes. The development of the language and analysis skills gained through reading literature in an EFL classroom is expanded in the empirical study as well.

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The first chapter of the present thesis consists of two subchapters based on previous research to provide a theoretical background for the empirical study. It focuses on various ways of using literature in a foreign language-learning classroom and examines the book club method.

### **1.1. Literature and Language-learning Settings**

The following subchapter will give an overview of the theoretical background information on the topic of how literature is being used in language teaching. The first subchapter is dedicated to the reasonings various scholars have given as to why literature should be taught in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons. The second subchapter intends to give an overview of using different methods to teach literature in the EFL classroom. The final section describes the various details to consider when choosing texts for an EFL class.

#### **1.1.1. Reasons for Using Literature in EFL Classrooms**

Reading, as described by Ur (2012: 133), is mostly associated with “reading and understanding” in any language learning setting. Reading can mean to “to look for meanings” and to “understand the overall sense of the text”, but it can also require having previous knowledge of the words used in the present text to understand and analyse it fully (ibid.: 134-135). Although reading has always been an integral part of foreign language teaching, it has received less attention in the past compared to other language learning skills as curriculum requirements change and literature is discussed in smaller blocks in the classrooms. It is, however, a highly efficient way to introduce students to new cultures and linguistics that could broaden their worldviews, hence why it is now being introduced increasingly in the language-learning classrooms internationally (Ur 2012: 136, McCaughey

2017: 23). Students are able to use their existing knowledge to relate to characters or storylines, therefore making the texts more memorable for them (Hollingworth & Drake 2011: 75, Bessman Taylor 2012: 154). It is also worth mentioning that students need to learn how to read for academic purposes as well as for pleasure, and there are various methods of teaching both in the EFL classroom (Hollingworth and Drake: 75, 83).

Reading in academic settings can be valuable for students in many ways and Armstrong (2015: 7-8) and McCaughey (2017: 22) have stated in their studies of students with varying levels of the English language that using works of literature in an EFL-learning setting specifically has different benefits such as enhancing students' linguistic, cultural and metacognitive knowledge and awareness.

Scholars have found that all receptive and productive skills can be activated when using reading as a method of teaching (Roessing 2009, Harmer 2015: 315, Collie and Slater 1987: 6, Ur 2015: 143). Reading can be applied inside and outside of the classroom setting as the students can read various texts intensively and extensively. Thus, the teacher can implement skimming, scanning and reading for inference or gist in various activities to enhance students' skills not only in reading, but also in terms of analysis (Harmer 2015: 314, Collie and Slater 1987: 6, Ur 2012: 143). Roessing (2009: 16) additionally implies that there are several "reading experiences" that can be applied in the classroom: "shared reading, small-group or book club reading, and individual reading", all of which may use any of the reading techniques mentioned earlier. The productive skills – writing and oral production – are also likely to be greatly expanded on when students practice reading literature. While reading in a foreign language, the reader is able to memorize and contextualize different "lexical or syntactical items" and thus, this develops their writing skill in turn (Collie and Slater 1987: 5, Luukka 2019: 207). It may also improve the readers' oral language production skills as they conclude how to form new linguistic structures with the help of the

context of the text (Collie and Slater 1987: 5).

Perhaps listening is the language skill that may be improved the least of the receptive and productive skills, although with the use of audiobooks and having texts read out loud, it may be improved upon. Reading with the help of audiobooks has proven to be especially helpful for students with “severe reading problems”, and students can all be motivated to read (Eriksson Barajas 2016: 31). With the more recent implementation of book clubs in regular traditional EFL classrooms, students are able to enhance their listening and communicative skills as they participate in the discussions (Daley 2019, Thomas and Goering 2018, Cooper 2018: 366). Besides language skills, communicative and digital competence can be activated with the use of different reading techniques and formats (Daley 2019: 148).

Literature is a great resource of authentic material as both fiction and non-fiction may introduce students to different time periods, settings and formats of writing. In most cases, the language used is meant for native speakers and, therefore, learners are familiarized with forms of language and language use that they may not encounter otherwise (Collie and Slater 1987: 3-4). Linguistically, using literary texts can develop the students’ knowledge on “dialects and spoken English”. It introduces and helps students with practising grammar topics and different topical vocabulary items, as well as assessing the text’s quality (ibid.: 3-4, Luukka 2019: 205). Another approach is studying the text’s content based on certain criteria or one literary work’s place in a specific genre or theme (ibid.: 205, Hollingworth and Drake 2011: 74, 81, Armstrong 2015).

In traditional EFL lessons, language is mostly taught by using textbooks that provide students with introductions to different topics. Most textbooks targeted for EFL-learners and used by EFL teachers are sectioned into skill-based chapters that mostly focus on a fragment of a topic and new grammar rules, which leave little room for deeper immersion if teachers

use solely the books for instruction (Luukka 2019: 209-210, Sylvan 2018: 225). For this reason, there are teachers who turn to Content-and-Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) or Content-based Instruction (CBI) methods for teaching content and language at the same time without specifically concentrating on language-learning but focusing on the content at hand (Dalton-Puffer et al. 2014: 215-216, Llinares 2015 in Morton and Llinares 2017: 2).

In research about the relation of CLIL or CBI methods to teaching literature, various studies have found that there are different attitudes towards as to whether or not literature should be taught in the EFL setting and which aspects to focus on. Luukka's study (2019: 208) revealed that teachers studied thought of teaching various elements of language and literacy learning as more important than teaching the content and culture of the literature that can affect students' analytical skills. In contrast, Armstrong (2015: 20) saw more value in the students learning about the content of the fictional texts they are reading in order to connect the story to everyday life situations. The positive impact of including reading in content-area instruction is also reflected upon in Harmon and Wood (2001: 56). In Luukka's (2019), Sylvan's (2018: 225) and Schreuder and Savitz's (2020: 269) studies, it has, however, also been stated that although using literature to teach language is useful for learners due to the opportunities for communication and analysis, it is mostly the students' disinterest in reading, the teacher's choice of texts and the lack of inclusion of reading in the syllabi that may hinder using reading fiction as regular language practice.

Armstrong (2015: 9-10), Schreuder and Savitz (2020: 269), Eriksson Barajas (2016: 28) and Luukka (2019: 199) among other researchers have generally concluded that including a variety of texts in the EFL classrooms is beneficial to students as wider readability of genres and text types can broaden the students' worldview when the literature is discussed among their peers and the teacher. Analysing texts with the help of guiding questions and using the topics from the books to relate the texts to students' everyday lives

is encouraged by the teacher and, in turn, students gain awareness of other cultures and develop their linguistic knowledge (Armstrong 2015, Álvarez-Álvarez 2016: 230). According to Thomas and Goering (2018: 104) and Eriksson Barajas (2016: 28) traditional teaching practices may hinder students' learning and feeling of comfort in the classroom. Thus reading can help students of different backgrounds understand each other and they may feel as if they are seeing themselves in the characters and storylines of the chosen reading material.

As mentioned previously, literature can be used to develop students' analytical, evaluation and creative skills, all of which are part of the higher order thinking skills of the revised Bloom's taxonomy (Switzer and Barclay 2012: 529). The original Bloom's taxonomy is a framework of educational outcomes in affective, cognitive and sensory domains, all of which are classified into six categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Bloom's taxonomy, specifically the cognitive domain of it, is one of the most widely used frameworks that educators use to improve the learning outcomes of various curriculums, assessments and activities. The cognitive domain was developed in the revision of the Bloom's taxonomy and the levels were altered from the original taxonomy. It was arranged into the order of knowledge-based categories: "remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create" (Anderson and Krathwohl et al. 2001, Switzer and Barclay 2012: 335-336). Although the framework was designed to help educators with the process of learning, teaching and assessment, it is the students who are benefitting most from expanding on the various skills in the process of learning a language. This can be applied to other areas of study as well (Anderson and Krathwohl et al. 2001: 17). Students who actively participate in the lessons using higher order thinking skills are thought to retain information better, have different opinions and views on various topics and are able to discuss a variety of topics in the classroom, which

are important when we are learning about literature (Switzer and Barclay 2012: 330, 336). Having described the benefits of learning a language through literature and using the method of employing fiction in lessons as a way to convey messages, culture, language et cetera, it is evident that there are many ways in which literature helps rather than hinders students' knowledge of a foreign language.

### **1.1.2. Selection of Literary Texts for an EFL Classroom**

Some of the first questions that the teacher needs to ask themselves when teaching literature is what type of literature to teach to a specific learner group, why should we teach literature in the EFL-learning setting and how to do it. These questions, in turn, become the teacher's aims and the students' learning outcomes. There are many criteria that they need to consider when selecting texts for students to read. The primary criteria include the students' individual "needs, interests, cultural background and language level" (Collie and Slater 1987: 8, Ur 2012: 143, Polleck 2010: 104). The texts that the teacher chooses for the students to read need to be at the suitable language level. Additionally, they should take the reading material's content appropriateness into consideration; hence, for example, reading books targeted towards young adult readers serves as a way to connect the young learner to the characters that are similar in age (Robertson 2017). Teachers need to think about the students' individual abilities for reading and make reading available and inclusive for every student in the classroom (Polleck 2010: 104, Harmon and Wood 2001: 52). On this topic, Luukka (2019: 208-209) notes the importance of modern and age group-specific literature that students could relate to rather than teaching mostly twentieth-century texts that are thought to be "remnants of the text-focused approach to reading" used in education since its popularization in the 1970s. Teachers may also need to think about the format that they use for reading as there are likely to be students who prefer a certain method or format, be it e-books, physical books or audiobooks for reading for various reasons (Daley 2019: 153-154, 156, Luukka

2019: 209).

When selecting any type of text for students to read, Ur (2012: 143) and Brownlie (2019: 22) conclude that the teacher needs to be aware of the students' current language level so that the texts are easily understood and any unknown vocabulary can be deduced from the context of the text. At the same time, the teacher needs to be aware of what the text includes and provide extra information about the topic or text itself beforehand. Roessing's (2009: 16), Luukka's (2019: 207) and Hollingworth and Drake's (2011: 75) studies mention that in order for the student to become an analytical reader, the teacher should use the shared reading strategy, where students are encouraged to read different types of texts such as poetry, news articles, graphic novels and short stories, for them to become immersed in the experience of reading before moving to novels. The fictional reading material especially has to provide students with topics that motivate them to discuss as well as "hypothesize and predict" the text further. As mentioned previously, different texts need to be approached in different ways regarding strategies and teachers may use the literacy skills of "background knowledge, summarizing, clarifying, inferring, and evaluating" to improve upon in students' language and literature analysis skills (Ur 2012: 143, Polleck 2010: 119, Hollingworth and Drake 2011: 74).

## **1.2. The Book Club Method**

In this chapter, the method of using a book club as a means to teach literature in an EFL context will be discussed.

### **1.2.1. History of Book Clubs**

A 'book club', synonymous with 'a reading group', 'a literature club' and 'a book circle' among others, as defined by Susan Osborne (2008: 1), can "range from a few friends who meet regularly to talk about particular books that they all have read [...] to more formal

meetings, perhaps led by an academic, which explore literature in a more structured manner, rather like a seminar”. Meanwhile, Daniels (2002: 2) has described a literature circle as a “small, peer-led discussion group whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book”. Most definitions of the term are similar as they refer to the notion of “meeting” and “talking about books” in one way or another (Osborne 2008: 1, Daniels 2002: 2, Furman 2015: 35, Polleck 2010: 105, Roessing 2009: 79). As the method of literature meetings is popular nowadays, it has an expansive tradition behind it.

Book clubs as means of meeting friends and talking about literature have a long history that dates back to the pre-Historic times, when scholars such as Socrates, Plato and Aristophanes, as well as other students of Socrates, met to discuss various questions of life and experiences in a free-form manner that later in education became known as the Socratic Circle approach (Kolber 2022, Mission 2018, Thomas and Goering 2018: 104). According to Mission (2018), the Socratic Circle essentially meant that the members of the circle learned through asking questions with the help of a given text. It was followed by the ideas of trying to “understand the universe” within groups of Pythagorean philosophers.

Although the English-speaking countries have a vast history of hosting book clubs, the bigger widespread of book clubs happened in the United States with Harry Sherman’s invention of the Book of the Month Club, first known as the Little Leather Library (Mission 2018, Rubin 1985: 782). Little Leather Library became the starting point of many later book clubs as they started to ship recently released books to readers within the club and nowadays, the club has over a million subscribers (Rubin 1985: 782, Mission 2018). As European examples, Manley (1999: 79) mentions the United Kingdom’s history of book clubs dating back to the early 18th century that operated similarly to today’s libraries, and in Spain, similar clubs appeared in the 1980s library settings (Álvarez-Álvarez 2016: 230). A notable book club that has engaged millions is *Oprah’s Book Club* by television host Oprah Winfrey,

started in 1996, which to this day includes a variety of titles that are read online and in person, inspiring others to create their own clubs (Mission 2018, Farr 2005 as referenced in Cooper 2019 and Switzer and Barclay 2012: 239).

The online reading community book clubs are the norm today, and moderator Diane's *Around the World in 80 Books* and YouTube book content creator BooksandLala's thriller-mystery club *Literally Dead Book Club* on the book-related social media platform Goodreads are only a few of the many successful and large community book clubs in operation (Diane 2022, Lala BooksandLala 2022). Thousands of readers globally can be connected to each other via virtual means, such as joining book clubs, writing fan fiction and (making video) blog content, and this allows for those who do not speak a foreign language on a daily basis to immerse themselves in the experience, including students (Robertson 2017, Furman 2015: 35, Álvarez-Álvarez 2016: 229, Petroelje Stolle 2011: 21). The digital opportunities have allowed more readers to access books and book-related content easily (Daley 2019: 147).

The book clubs that are widely popular today are mostly based on meeting likeminded people who enjoy reading and discussions together. As it appears that the possibilities for hosting and joining a book club are made easier than they have ever been, the following chapter will expand on the idea of employing a book club for learning a language or content.

### **1.2.2. Book Clubs in Learning Contexts**

Book clubs, or 'literature circles', as a teaching method are a relatively new phenomenon in foreign-language teaching and there are a variety of techniques that teachers use for implementing the method. In terms of learning contexts specifically, the book club or literature circles were starting to be included in lessons in the 1980s (Daniels 2002) and have constantly evolved to this day. They are known as practices for all kinds of learners to

gather and talk about reading, books and the topics within (Petroelje Stolle 2011: 20).

One of the first known methods of using literature in a classroom is the aforementioned Socratic circle, where the learners are encouraged to close read a text of any kind and talk about it amongst each other whilst giving and receiving instant feedback on their progress (Kolber 2022, Thomas and Goering 2018: 104). This method gives the students the opportunity to lead discussions and feel more comfortable with talking either about the specific subject that they are studying in the target language. It differs from the traditional method of book clubs since two groups are formed - an inner circle, who are in active discussion and brainstorming, and the outer circle, who observe the discussion process and content (Kolber 2022, Thomas and Goering 2018: 107). The teacher is often in the role of an observer and a guide, who provides the text and topics to start discussions from (Kolber 2022, Thomas and Goering 2018: 104). Thomas and Goering (2018: 104, 109) used the Socratic method to teach world history and they concluded that it is beneficial for both students and teachers as it gives them the excitement for reading and analysing while meeting the curriculum aims (ibid.: 109).

Another way of teaching and discussing literature in the classroom is with the use of reading response journals. The studies conducted by Brownlie (2019) and Roessing (2009: 16) advocate two methods of teaching literature combined – using a reading response journal and using a discussion group with the purpose of teaching literature and analysis in the English-learning classroom. Brownlie (2019: 33) argues that journalling helps the students with intuition as they start looking into details of what they are reading with the help of guiding questions and assignments related to the work. Roessing (2009: 16), however, mentions the reading strategies that the students learn through extensive reading, such as reflection and individual comprehension of the texts. Reading journalling can be done in various ways – in a traditional handwritten format and the digital format, where students

may be making multimodal content such as blog or forum posts or video blogs, to implement their reading, analytical, writing and communicative skills (Daley 2019, Brownlie 2019, Furman 2015: 64, Robertson 2017, Switzer and Barclay 2012: 332-334, Harmon and Wood 2001: 52, Petroelje Stolle 2011: 21). Daley (2019: 150) suggests that when using digital means to conduct a book club, students “become skilled experts in the use of these particular devices” that they use for reading, such as e-readers, which enhances their digital competence as well.

The more traditional way of conducting a book club in the learning setting is in discussion groups, where students are able to speak freely about any theme or topic in the book within a specific timeframe in the lesson (Brownlie 2019: 21, Petroelje Stolle 2011: 20). The reading groups meet on a regular basis and they are usually supervised by the teacher. Although Brownlie (2019) and Roessing (2009) encourage the reading of several books by different groups of students, some may argue that the proper way of conducting a book club is to read the same book with the whole group. The books may also be centred around a similar theme (Daley 2019: 164, Hollingworth and Drake 2011: 81). Cooper’s (2019) study at a university, for example, was conducted with political science students, who read academic books written for the popular audiences and reflected on their experiences. To achieve the aims of improving the students’ “social capital” and help them retain the essential information on the topic, the lecturer included a recommended reading list of texts that fit into their syllabus (ibid.: 377-378). A similar study on reading academic books for popular audiences was conducted by Lesley (2018), where they studied the readability of non-fiction books among students instead of academically challenging texts and the effect it has on the students’ “motivation and enjoyment” of the reading experience. These examples show that book clubs can be used in various learning contexts and language levels for students to collaborate and “recall, learn from, and appreciate reading” (Cooper 2019: 365-

366, Thomas and Goering 2018, Bessman Taylor 2012: 142, Switzer and Barclay 2012, Petroelje Stolle 2011: 22). Switzer and Barclay (2012: 336-337), however, specifically use the Bloom's Taxonomy higher-order thinking skill levels for evaluation in their business classes' book club to see student engagement with the text. Daniels (2002) and Harmon and Wood (2001: 55) imply that using book clubs in a learning environment can improve the feeling of accomplishment and students' results in the courses. It also encourages them to take part in social activities and read more for enjoyment. Polleck (2010: 105, 121) found in her study that as students of various backgrounds are involved in the process of a book club, they grow "socio-emotionally" and their literacy skills are likely to be improved. To test this hypothesis, she conducted formal and informal book club meetings for adolescent urban women in different age groups, observed the participants and conducted interviews and surveys (Polleck 2010: 106). A similar conclusion was drawn by Álvarez-Álvarez (2016: 234) as she hosted a book club in a non-academic setting and found that the members of the club had developed a higher awareness and level of their social, literary and literacy skills. She also inferred that the participants had grown as people through reading (ibid.: 236-237).

A book club as a teaching method creates a lot of dialogue among researchers and there are many ways to include it in many subjects' syllabi. Ranging from reading journals to traditional literature circle meetings, it gives teachers and instructors an opportunity to adapt the method to their needs and the school's curriculum.

### **1.2.3. Strengths and Weaknesses of The Book Club Method**

Using a book club in the language learning setting is an effective way to immerse students in the language and create a safe space for them to voice opinions and make personal connections to what they have read. The students learn to observe and to have active discussions that develop their language and social skills at the same time. Fisher and Machirori (2021: 1) and Acim (2018: 1) as referenced in Kolber (2022), establish that, as it

is also the case with the use of literature in the EFL classrooms, the Socratic method of instruction may help broaden the students' worldview and help them be more socially active. When they are collaborating with others, the Socratic method could be of assistance in students trying to overcome their fears of public speaking. It is also insisted on in other research, such as Harmon and Wood (2001: 51) and Petroelje Stolle (2011: 20), that "collaborative book talk" is a more engaging way for students to participate in the class than the traditional teacher-dominated lessons. The advantage of boosting students' confidence by giving them an opportunity of "reading for pleasure and study" as well as providing recommendations is also agreed upon in Luukka (2019: 208), Daley (2019: 162, 164) and Cooper (2019: 372), all of whom used a different method for teaching or researching teaching literature in their studies.

Although most scholars believe the book club method to have many strengths, there are also several weaknesses that need to be addressed. Robertson (2017) and Cooper (2019: 372) state that one of the main disadvantages of hosting a book club is that the students are not able to find time to meet before or after lessons. Robertson (2017) also adds that students often have other activities to partake in during that time, which makes it difficult to schedule a book club meeting into their day. When reading one book within a certain time period together, agreeing on a book choice may be a challenge for students due to the many genres, difficult language and book lengths. Another issue addressed in Eriksson Barajas' (2011: 31) and Lesley's (2018: 225) studies is that some students read faster than others and students may only be reading as part of an assignment, not for the enjoyment of the reading experience. The same problem arises when discussing books in groups, as "employing multiple or appropriate" reading and discussion strategies may not be apparent to the teacher (Roessing 2009: 80).

Robertson's (2017) study expressed the difficulty in acquiring books for the club

meetings although using a library sponsorship and a digital platform for the meetings proved to be a success. In his study, Cooper (2019: 372) was concerned about the extra work hosting a book club creates for the instructor as most book clubs happen before or after work hours. He also touched on the adaptability of it to the online learning setting. This is tied to making arrangements for funding of the book club as the teacher or instructor of it needs to organise and schedule the meetings that would best fit everyone's interest and benefit (Polleck 2010: 109). Although there are disadvantages to the book club method for teaching, the method appears to have a greater positive impact on studies of language and literature among other subjects.

#### **1.2.4. Designing and Conducting a Book Club**

Brownlie (2019: 22) and Daley (2019: 163-166) agree in their works on discussion groups that there are various stages of hosting a book club and a plethora of details to be contemplated beforehand. As previously mentioned, various scholars suggest compiling a list of books at various levels of difficulty and length that students can choose from and could spark students' interest (Brownlie 2019: 22, Daley 2019: 164, Cooper 2019: 367, Polleck 2010: 107, Hollingworth and Drake 2011: 81, Luukka 2019: 206, Switzer and Barclay 2012: 340, Armstrong 2015: 18-19, McCaughey 2017: 24). The books have to be relevant enough for them to engage in the reading process, and one of the options is using a book that has an upcoming film or television adaptation (McCaughey 2017: 23). Although it may appear as a challenge for the instructor, they should set the amount of reading the students are going to do in a given time span to avoid discussions on solely reading amounts, and they may give the students the opportunity to vote or even nominate the reading choices (Osborne 2008: 4 Eriksson Barajas 2011: 30, 32, Roessing 2009: 79, Luukka 2019: 206, Switzer and Barclay 2012: 339, Lesley 2018: 226-227, 232).

The aims and outcomes of the meetings as well as expectations, including behaviour,

from the group should be identified within the rules and the structure of the book club (Roessing 2009: 79, 81, Brownlie 2019: 22-23, Thomas and Groening 2018: 105, Osborne 2008: 3, Polleck 2010: 107, Eriksson Barajas 2016: 32, Harmon and Wood 2001: 53). Switzer and Barclay (2012: 338) insist that all requirements of the book club are to be mandatory to achieve maximum student engagement. The time and place for meetings, and the members of similar age are also points to consider when starting a book club (Daley 2019: 163, Osborne 2008: 2, Polleck 2010: 107, Eriksson Barajas 2016: 20, Álvarez-Álvarez 2016: 230).

Brownlie (2019: 25), Cooper (2019: 369) and Daley (2019: 165) among others emphasize the importance of the teacher's involvement as a listener rather than a leader in the discussions. It is important for the discussions to eventually become student-led (Petroelje Stolle 2011). The teacher should provide open-ended guiding questions when necessary for when the students get quiet in the classroom as well as extra materials for them to start a conversation from (Daley 2019: 164, Hollingworth and Drake 2011: 83, Switzer and Barclay 2012: 340, Harmon and Wood 2001: 53). They should also prepare points such as the main themes and "significant passages" that could spark a worthwhile natural discussion among the students (Osborne 2008: 5-6, Roessing 2009: 79, Switzer and Barclay 2012: 334, Armstrong 2015: 19). Within fictional stories, according to Eriksson Barajas (2016: 23-28) and Álvarez-Álvarez (2016: 230), some of the most important details to discuss are characterization, "typical" plots in the genre, the setting, the point of view, vocabulary and the "nature and style" of the work. Armstrong (2015: 10, 13) also suggests using increasingly challenging questions and small groups with roles for each meeting to develop students' critical thinking.

To 'make a learning opportunity' out of the chosen reading materials meanwhile sustaining a relaxed and encouraging atmosphere is also noted as one of the important

aspects of the book club setting (Eriksson Barajas 2016: 30, Luukka 2019: 206, McCaughey 2017: 25). Daley (2019: 165-166) expands on her experience of hosting book club meetings with the importance of creating a friendly atmosphere for the students, for example, with letting them bring drinks and snacks to the meetings. In other cases, the teacher or lecturer could be the one to provide them (Cooper 2019: 368). Daley (2019: 165-166) also recommends including activities related to the book's content and discussing the guiding questions in smaller groups before talking as a class as. This generates different ideas from people, and helps them remember information. Cooper's (2019: 369) method of conducting the political science book club included letting the students discuss the book they have read with other members of small groups, but he stresses how there needs to be a wrap-up for the conversations for the students to take away the most important points of the topic discussions. The students present books in order to inform others about the content and elaborate on their takeaway of it, which is an effective way to evaluate their learning of the content It is also possible to evaluate the aims of the club meetings through these types of tasks (ibid.: 369). Hence, it is important for there to be a specific end goal within the book club and students likely expect to be evaluated in one way or another for their reading.

Planning and hosting a book club or any kind of a reading activity in an EFL-learning setting is an extensive process for the teacher. There are a variety of aspects to consider prior to the club taking place, from the book choice to timing and teacher involvement, which is why the previous research on the topic has been thoroughly explored.

## **2. EMPIRICAL STUDY**

The second chapter of the present study elaborates on the process of designing and conducting the book club with vocational secondary school students in an EFL classroom, as well as the analysis of the two. The chapter is divided into three subchapters. The first subchapter provides the methodology of the study, including the participants and data collection, and the second subchapter addresses and analyses the study's design, reasons for choosing the book club book, learning aims and outcomes, chosen approaches for the book club meetings and content evaluation. The final subchapter focuses on the results of the study, including analysis of the meeting activities as well as the students' and the teacher's evaluation of the method, where the strengths and weaknesses are analysed. In the present analysis, teacher's lesson plans, notes and student reflections are used.

### **2.1. Methodology**

The current study was conducted in order to test and analyse the process of designing and conducting a book club in the English language learning context. The following two research questions were formulated: what are the strengths of the book club as a teaching method to improve the students' English language skills in an Estonian vocational school's EFL classroom, and what the weaknesses of the book club as a teaching method are. The study was carried out as a qualitative action research by using an authentic literary text in a book club-type setting in a regular EFL lesson unit. The text was assigned to be read in four parts over the course of five lessons per group in the time period of January to March 2023.

#### **2.1.1. Participants and Data Collection**

The unit using the book club method was conducted in a vocational school in Estonia. The unit was tested within the period of the first two months of the semester, from January to March of 2023, as students in the school start their English lessons at different times within

January to March. The students mostly had one 90-minute lesson a week, which included a variety of activities and discussions in the classroom. The study was completed with the help of 1 group of students in Year 1 and 2 groups of students Year 2, all of whom were studying their vocation as well as completing their gymnasium education. A group of 4 students from both Years 1 and 2 had separate lessons at a lower language level, all of whom participated in the book club lessons. The students were between the ages of 16 and 23 with a varying language level of A2 to C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) proficiency levels. The students who were underaged were given parental consent forms (see Appendix 1) to fill and bring back to the teacher, which concluded in 34 participants across all four groups. 13 students of the groups chose not to participate in the study or were not present during the lessons. The code system used for the sample groups was decided on depending on when the group started with their lessons and the year of study, for example, Group 1A referring to the first starting sample group in Year 1 of their studies and Group D referring to the group of students in different years learning English at a lower language level. The study was included in their regular English lesson time. The author used convenience sampling for participants and the school due to regularly teaching the students in the test.

The data was collected by using student self-reflection forms, the teacher's notes from before, during and after the meetings. An interview was held with a practicing teacher who implements the book club method as an extracurricular activity in another Estonian school. The data was also gathered by digital means, such as a Google Docs file with links for sharing materials used in the lessons and each of the respective course's English lessons' Google Classroom page. The reading materials themselves were gathered with the help of Project Gutenberg and a readily available SoundCloud radio reading of the chosen book as students would be able to easily access the materials on their digital devices at all times.

Students also had the chance to choose a different medium for reading that they could find themselves. The gatherings themselves used a variety of tools such as focus groups, related texts, images, videos and games and other formats alike. All data was analysed using Microsoft Word, Google Forms and Google Sheets.

### **2.1.2. Before Designing the Meeting Plans**

Prior to designing the meeting plans, I started gathering information by firstly consulting the national and school curriculums, and the aims set for teaching English. The Estonian National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (Appendix 2 of Regulation No. 2 of the Government of the Republic of Estonia of 6 January 2011, National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools) approved by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2011 encourages the use of different materials, such as fiction and other types of media, for language learning purposes and enhancing the skill of reading comprehension. All of the general aims of language learning can be achieved via reading as it is possible to elicit the different skills “to develop students’ foreign language competence” at the appropriate language level. Reading and communication in the book club format allows for the teacher to integrate the skills of reading, listening, writing and/or speaking, and subskills, such as communication and digital competence, with different topics as well as subjects (Daley 2019: 148). In the National Curriculum, instead of focusing on the specific level of language, it is also emphasised that it is “essential to support students’ motivation, develop their skills, build their confidence and practice the language outside the school” (Ministry of Education and Research 2011: 1).

The main skills that are mentioned to be developed are “written and oral self-expression skills, creation of text and ability to comprehend them”, which can be achieved with the book club method. Cross-curricular topics that are tied to literature studies in a foreign language are cultural identity, values and morality due to their high discussion value

particularly within works of fiction (Ministry of Education and Research 2011: 6). In learning a foreign language, it is expected for the students to “achieve a better command of the language” they are learning in context (ibid.: 12).

Although the Estonian National Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research 2011) sets specific aims and approaches to meeting them, the school’s teachers are most often the ones to decide how to approach teaching the regular English classes as well as specialised courses. A similar claim is made in Armstrong’s (2015) study. The school, where the study is conducted, states their main aim for the language courses to be for the students to apply everyday communicative foreign language in speech and writing as independent language users. They are expected to express and defend their statements, use suitable sources and apply strategies fit for foreign language learning. A criterion for assessment states reading 20th century American and British literature (including authors such as Roald Dahl, Aldous Huxley and Kurt Vonnegut) as well as partaking in class discussions and guided dialogues. The aforementioned aims are all related to and support the National Curriculum’s learning purposes set for Upper-Secondary Schools (Ministry of Education and Research 2011). Taking into consideration the aims set by both, the method of a book club was chosen with the purposes of motivating and supporting students’ communicative skills, widening their knowledge of culture and history related to the novel, and to self-reflect on the experience.

The regular EFL course is divided into 5 courses over the period of three years with 10 90-minute lessons taking place within one semester. The final semester of EFL lessons consists of five 90-minute lessons. The course is distributed in the timetable at different times, meaning that the teacher may have one group’s two lessons within one week or they do not meet at all within a month. All student groups start with their studies at different times, for example, the sample group Group 1A started their English lessons in the third week of

January, whereas Group 2C started in the first week of February. Respectively, the sample groups conclude their lessons earlier. The lesson time and independent work is divided by the teacher. After discussions with the previous language teachers, – as there is one active English language teacher in the school at a time –, it was suggested that the students be given as little independent work as possible because of the students' workload in their vocation studies and the great difference in their ability to comprehend a foreign language. The experienced language and literature teachers at the school and one professional outside of the school were consulted for advice on reading choices, teaching methods and students' abilities as well as the purpose of the book club method. It was suggested that the chosen texts are easier for students to comprehend, giving examples of young adult literature and children's classics, taking the students' differing language levels into consideration.

Within the previous semester, I had given all Year 1 and 2 students an opportunity to choose one work of literature in English to read on their own. All the students were expected to read one fiction or non-fiction work during the semester to familiarise themselves with reading in a foreign language, and to motivate them to read. This served as preparation for the book club method as many of the students had admitted to not being avid readers. Many of the students concluded that this was a fun experience for most of them due to the ability to choose what they wanted to read, for example, comics or non-fiction, and the content of the book was often enjoyable for them. This gave me an opportunity as a teacher to evaluate students' reading habits and tastes, and to come to a conclusion in choosing a book to be read for the book club meetings.

### **2.1.3. Reasons for Choosing George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as the Book Club Reading Selection**

George Orwell's book *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), which famously deals with the aftermath of living in a totalitarian society, is often a book that is included in the English

literature curriculums. The primary reason for choosing George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for the book club is due to it becoming a public domain book in 2021. The European copyright law states that the "intellectual property" loses its copyright protection "70 years after your death" (European Union 2022, Taylor 2021). As the availability of the book for public use was one of my main concerns as a researcher and teacher, Orwell's famous works appeared as the most recent ones that could be included in the study. The books were accessible through Project Gutenberg, a project website including many classic public domain literary works in full with no added charge, as well as SoundCloud's PacificaRadioArchives archived radio reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* from 1975. Reading public domain books and audiobooks were also suggested reading methods by the interviewed teacher (personal communication 20.12.2022) (see Appendix 2).

I had to also consider students' reading tastes and the varying language levels following the advice of previous research (Brownlie 2019: 22, Daley 2019: 164, Cooper 2019: 367, Polleck 2010: 107, Hollingworth and Drake 2011: 81, Luukka 2019: 206, Switzer and Barclay 2012: 340, Armstrong 2015: 18-19, McCaughey 2017: 24). As my students' language level and CEFR language proficiency can range from A2 to likely C1/C2, the choice of books was made based on what the students had read in the previous semester. I had concluded based on six groups' reading evaluations that the vast majority of students enjoy dystopian and fantasy literature with some preferring classic literature with social studies' elements. Combining the two, I decided on *Nineteen Eighty-Four* due to its topicality, the genres and the many features that can be discussed within the novel. When talking about the book choice with Marika, a practicing teacher of book clubs in the EFL language setting in another school in Estonia, it was mentioned by her that the book is "very topical and, actually, they [the curriculums] expect that everybody has read it when you want to be a respected citizen" as oftentimes, Orwell's novels are in required or recommended

reading lists in Estonia. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also presented in a variety of formats, such as graded readers, audiobooks, film adaptations, graphic novels and more. Thus, it has a variety of premade activities and materials available online for public use. This means that the book can be read by students at most language levels with the encouragement of using mediums of their preference and considering their own language levels.

#### **2.1.4. Meeting Aims and Learning Outcomes**

The main aim of the unit of the book club was to motivate the students to read and develop their foreign language skills, especially oral and listening skills. The unit was also used to develop the students' literary analysis skills through *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as the book gave the students the opportunities to analyse various themes, topics, characters, events, environments etc. As the students had been briefly familiarised with text analysis methods in the previous course of English in fall, they were expected to apply this knowledge within the book club with guided questions and specified topics each week.

Each lesson itself had 3-6 main objectives depending on the topic of the lesson. The students were, first and foremost, asked to express their opinions on the book's content based on the topics. Other often established aims were to communicate in groups or pairs as well as finding information related to the book as required. Other objectives included analysing certain details of the book.

In order to motivate students to read, there were various activities included, such as games, trivia and quote quizzes, and character storyboard tasks, where students were able to earn points that resulted in a prize at the end of the unit. An example of it was an opportunity to be evaluated for their work within the lessons rather than on the second test of the semester. The final evaluation of the students' understanding of the book was to complete a self-assessment survey and a creative project. The survey was based on their participation and enjoyment levels of the book club itself and gave me an overview of the students' perception

of the strengths and weaknesses of the book club method. The creative project showcased their interpretation of the book, and they had a choice between a design of a poster, a cover redesign, a comic, or writing a poem, short story, an essay or a review of the book. The criterion of the final task was that it had to be related to the book and the student's reading experience, resulting in a differentiated grade that considered all factors of the book club including obligatory elements (see Appendix 2) and the completion of the self-assessment form. The self-assessment form gave the students an additional 'pass' grade and extra added points for their graded work. Making attendance mandatory was also suggested by Switzer and Barclay (2012: 352) due to the students being evaluated based on their knowledge on the novel. This ensured that students, who had not completed their home reading, could also retain the content of the lesson. Students who failed to attend more than two of the mandatory lessons without a valid excuse were asked to write an extra analytical essay on a topic discussed in the lessons in order to evaluate their completion of reading and analysis of the book.

### **2.1.5. Reasons for the Chosen Approaches for the Book Club Meetings**

The main approach chosen for the book club meetings was the book club method as students are able to use their knowledge from the book club lessons in various activities in the target language. The tasks that the students are completing throughout the lessons require content knowledge, such as the definitions of the literary devices when combining English and literature, and social studies and history, when talking about politics. The contexts of the tasks are primarily provided by the teacher. The students have to read the required sections of the book first on their own. Then they would demonstrate their ideas and knowledge in the classroom with a focus on the content of the book rather than grammar and vocabulary, which is usually expected in the English language classroom (Dalton-Puffer,

Nikula and Smit 2010: 1-3). Using intensive reading prior to the lessons is implemented for the purpose of activating the students' analytical skills and to provide examples from the text (Harmer 2015: 314, Collie and Slater 1987: 6, Ur 2012: 143).

A further reason for choosing the book club approach and including active tasks in the lessons is due to the suggestions from Marika, who has the experience of hosting a book club for EFL-learners in another school in Estonia. The author of the thesis conducted an interview with the practicing teacher in order to get suggestions and learn about the methods of teaching that she has used. Her book club operated as a "social club" that would motivate students to read and communicate with one another, which is why I also decided to design my book club like that rather than a traditional book club. It was mentioned that active tasks accompany the text that is discussed due to students possibly losing interest or becoming demotivated to read when there are only guided discussions taking place in the classroom (personal communication 20.12.2022, Switzer and Barclay 2012: 328). Therefore, various activities such as games, quizzes, as well as prizes to motivate students will be applied in the lessons. Switzer and Barclay's (2012: 335), Daley's (2019: 148-149, 153, 156, 159) and Armstrong's (2015) recommendations of 'smaller discussion group' work and multimodal reading tools are also included in the book club design for the aims of students developing their language and analysis skills, and digital competence through it.

## **2.2. Results and Discussion**

### **2.2.1. Analysis of the Book Club Meetings**

This chapter briefly introduces the book club activities, their analyses and student feedback of the five 90-minute lessons taught to four groups of students within a two-month period from January to March 2023, totalling to 20 book club lessons. The extended lesson plans including lesson aims, overview of the process and homework assignments are found in Appendices 3-7.

### **2.2.1.1. Lesson Activities and Teacher's Reflection**

Most of the lessons first dealt with defining literary terminology that was going to be used in the lessons. In the first lesson, the students had to define three different terms – a book club, dystopia and utopia. The third lesson's main definition to decode was a 'theme', and finally in the fourth lesson, 'a motif' and aspects of figurative language were discussed. The first lesson was focused on the introduction of the semester and the book club unit, including brief information about dystopia and utopia as literary genres as well as George Orwell's life and works. Therefore, the definition of 'book clubs' was relevant to the lesson. Students throughout all four groups defined a 'book club' in teams of two to three, and they thought of it as "reading" and "coming together to read". This was followed by further explanation by the teacher, referring to definitions by Susan Osborne (2008: 1) and Daniels (2002: 2). However, there were several students throughout different groups who expressed not knowing what a book club could be prior to this discussion. The ideas were expanded on with guided questions about students' own experiences and ideas in the same smaller teams, which resulted in only one student of 34 having participated in a book club previously. In different lessons, this was primarily chosen as a pre-learning activity because the students had been made aware of what literature and the different points of analysis within literature and other mediums are in the previous course of English.

Defining dystopia and utopia was different as students worked together in groups with guiding questions of what keywords the terms include and what the timeline of a story in the given genre might be before explaining them to the class. The dystopian genre was explained in greater detail as the students were more familiar with it due to it being more present in literature, television and other media. It was explained as having "social issues", and technology and people being "bad" was also brought to attention. Arguably the more difficult term to explain and give examples for was utopia; however, across all groups it was

mentioned that it is the opposite of dystopia – “a perfect world” or a “paradise”, where “everyone gets along”. One student from Group 2B presented the idea of characters, who “try to find a way out of utopia because everything is perfect”.

The topics of ‘theme’, ‘motif’ and ‘figurative language’ and the various aspects of it were discussed as full-class interactions rather than in groups for time saving purposes. The most difficult of the three to define were the differences between ‘theme’ and ‘motif’. With the help of examples from the book, the students could define themes and motifs with hints provided by the teacher as well. The term ‘Orwellian’ was explained through an informative video by TED Ed., which helped students visualise concepts from the book. One of the main strengths of defining activities is to remind the students of terminology they may have heard before or to learn something new. This explains the need for introducing the topic terminology or unknown vocabulary at hand as students can apply this knowledge to what they are going to analyse effectively, especially when a book club is held in an EFL-learner environment (McCaughey 2017: 26).

Another frequently used method was group work with various quiz types. The first lesson ended with a multiple-choice trivia quiz in pairs or groups of three and served as a confirmation of learning of the materials of that lesson. All of the students were asked to listen to the information intently with the help of a Google Slides slideshow and several guiding questions to the audience prior to the quiz. The students were informed of a following trivia quiz activity in order to retain the information presented by the teacher. Students in all groups were motivated to complete the work in groups and discussed the different possibilities for answers, writing them on paper. With some groups, the results were checked by the teacher later in order to give students appropriate points for their work, while with others, they were checked immediately in class by switching the answers with another group. Most of the students were speaking along in the lesson, more so students who are

active in lessons by nature, and they did not appear to feel pressured about the coming lessons.

Another quiz type I used was a guessing game in Lesson 4, where students were presented with nine different quotes on Google Slides and they were asked to guess whether the given quote from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was an example of a metaphor, personification, foreshadowing or a flashback. In multiple cases, there were several options possible. In the last lesson, I used a *Kahoot!* game of 42 fact-based questions that reflected on the main characters, ideas, events etc. about the story. The quizzes were added into the lessons to break up the lengthy discussions as the students tend to become less motivated to work and listen along in the 90-minute lessons. Games and quizzes as such made the students more active in class due to the competitive nature of them. This became especially apparent within Group 2C as they expressed being competitive during the quiz itself and there were varying results, which made the competition interesting until the end. As I also used a point system to keep the students motivated throughout the unit and to give them an end goal for relieving them of a test at the end of the course, it was inspiring them to win and participate.

Using quizzes and active pair or group work in the lessons was mentioned by teacher Marika, as she suggested that students may have the tendency to quickly lose motivation to listen and talk along in the lessons (personal communication, 20.12.2022). Using video examples for *doublespeak* and a Macintosh Computers advertisement relating to the book also helped students visualize some of the concepts from the book, especially when comparing the work to real world, which was reflected upon by one student in the self-assessment survey. Other types of activities that were implemented in the lessons were drawing character storyboards, where students drew the story's characters in groups, described their personalities and looks as well as found quotes from the book to match them. Another activity that only one of the four groups had the chance to use was a crossword

puzzle, which was not successful as the students had likely forgotten about many of the items and hints that were asked of the puzzle, which had all been from the chapters that they had read up until that week.

Students worked well in smaller groups as they became active researchers. They used knowledge from their reading and digital searching skills of the e-book provided to them for the storyboard activity. The size of the groups was determined by the amount of students present in the given lesson, usually ranging from three to five students per group. The students claimed also enjoying these tasks in person after the lessons, where the game and activities were involved due to them being able to work with the text itself, draw, and communicate and use their ideas. These types of collaborative activities give the students opportunities to learn from their peers and develop their own comprehension in content and language. At the same time, it gives them the chance to communicate with friends in the classroom, which is one of the principles of the book club method (Peachey n.d, Cooper 2019: 365-366, Thomas and Goering 2018, Bessman Taylor 2012: 142, Switzer and Barclay 2012, Petroelje Stolle 2011: 22).

The majority of the lessons included some parts of teacher talk when there was new terminology to explain and eliciting answers from the students with guiding questions. The latter was used as the students had a hard time starting conversations about the books themselves although they had known the topics to come beforehand. I prepared a list of questions about the reading of the current week, consulting various materials online, and compiled a set of open-ended questions that “invited discussions, debate and deep thinking” (Daley 2019: 164). It became apparent that some of my students did not have much prior experience in “student-centred discussions”, and as Harmon and Wood (2001: 55) also mention it, it hindered their contribution to the discussions. Discussing became easier in the last two lessons for some students in several classes, who had spoken less in the first ones

due to needing support from the teacher to get started. As scholars (Switzer and Barclay 2012: 330, 336) also emphasized the use of higher order thinking skills for retaining information, the students who were actively participating or simply listening in the classroom were the ones expressing remembering the most. They were also the most interested in the traditional book club lessons, where the discussions were guided by the topic questions. They enjoyed listening to their peers' opinions and learning about their views on the given topics and discussing them, which is an important part of literature analysis (ibid.: 330, 336).

Guidance was used less when there were options for the students to compare the book's ideas to real world history and their everyday life. Expanding on the concepts of the book by relating it to students' lives is an effective way to keep them engaged in the lessons and to get them to analyse the book deeper (Armstrong 2015, Álvarez-Álvarez 2016: 230, Roessing 2009: 16). Students in my lessons became more active when relating the book's political issues to recent world politics, for example, comparing world leaders from different times in history such as Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler's rule of their countries. They also compared Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin's administrations with *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* the Party and Big Brother's administration of Oceania. When talking about surveillance as a theme of the book, reality television was also a motivating topic for the students to discuss as the question of whether or not reality television is a source of entertainment and for whom it may be entertaining for was elaborated on. As guiding questions were used and topics from students' everyday lives or global issues were addressed, it helped the students to relate to the text.

### **2.2.1.2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Hosting the Book Club at the Vocational School**

As the main aims of the book club were to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the club, the students had the chance to express their own ideas of improvement in skills, motivation and the execution of the book club in a written format. The teacher's individual notes were used for expanding on them. The book club concluded with a self-assessment survey in two formats: on a digital Google Forms platform as well as a printed version of the form. These formats were used due to students already being familiar with the Google Forms platform previously and they had easier access to it through their school e-mail accounts that are linked to Google's mail services. The paper version was chosen due to some students preferring writing on paper because they could concentrate on the questions better when writing them out. The questionnaire included 17 main questions with 4 sub-questions for four of them (see Appendix 8 and 9). Two questions were optional. Most of the questions could be answered in several sentences but students had the choice to answer as they wished to. The questionnaire was anonymous and the answers were submitted during the last lesson of the unit for each of the groups, on February 10, 17 and 20, and March 10, 2023.

24 out of 34 total participants (or 70%) present in the final lesson completed the questionnaire as one of the assignments to be graded and to provide feedback on the book club. The results of the survey were mixed. Some students who expressed enjoyment of lessons that are different from the regular English lessons, meanwhile several students were either bored or unable to contribute to the conversations due to their dislike for public speaking. 37,5% of the respondents said that they enjoyed talking and discussing the book with others, which was one of the main goals of the book club. 21% of the students also said that they liked the different feeling in the classroom, meaning that the atmosphere was more

comfortable than a regular English lesson. Three students expressed liking the lessons themselves although they did not enjoy the chosen book. Two student answers were concluded for each of the following ideas as well: “I liked the organisation.”, “It was a new experience.”, “I liked doing other activities rather than just talking.” and “I enjoyed exploring the contents of the book.”. Additionally, students evaluated the strengths of the book club to be practicing their oral language skills, learning new things, asking questions and making time for reading that feels like a leisure activity rather than schoolwork.

When the students were asked about their skill development and what they learned during the book club in the survey, 3 students expressed the book club having broadened their worldview and 2 students said that having the pressure of coming to the class completely prepared made the book club experience enjoyable to them. According to them, there had been many learning opportunities even for those who had not read the book chapters of the week. The most common response for areas of development with 12 and 10 answers each, was that students learned what to look for in books when reading for literary analysis and to compare information with the real-world situations. 8 students learned about politics, 6 students learned new vocabulary and 5 students now claim to know how to differentiate literary terminology through the reading and club experience. There were between one to three answers reporting on the following – learning how to express and discipline themselves in English, taking notes, learning of not enjoying dystopian literature, as well as vocabulary usage. When asked about the students’ analysis skills, 18 students expanded on how it is now easier for them to analyse a text and to ‘make sense of the story’, meanwhile 4 students were not sure about their analysis skill development. Two students said to have not developed their skills. The reading format did not seem to have a great impact on students’ enjoyment of the book club although the students who listened to the audio version said to have made more time for reading because of its portability and their

ability to focus on the text.

There were 4 total answers from 3 students (12,5%) who did not enjoy the book club with the varied reasonings being the disconnection between the student and teacher, having deadlines, personally wanting to prioritise media in Estonian and feeling uncomfortable with speaking in the classroom overall. This is likely because of some of the students' preferences for reading not aligning with the chosen book club book, and their previous experience of discussing and taking part in literature-related discussions. Another reason may be that discussing books in English is unfamiliar to them because most of the literature that is being read in secondary schools in the country is in Estonian.

The most popular lessons with the students were the lessons with active tasks, where they could complete tasks based on the book, such as quizzes and creating storyboards together. 10 students expressed the introductory lesson to be the most enjoyable, 11 students liked the character and symbol analysis lesson and 13 students enjoyed the final lesson of comparisons to world history and conclusion of the club the most. The aforementioned reasonings for enjoyment of activity-based lessons align with most answers; the lessons, where students could play games and use the information actively that they have been reading about were the most popular. However, 6 students preferred the traditional book club format for the themes of the book over the other lesson types due to "switching arguments and comments" and working together to find answers to guided questions. Alongside talking about motifs and language, the latter was also arguably the lesson students enjoyed the least due to the lack of active work with the text and an end product or a result with points. Another stated reason was the students' general disinterest in the topics although 20 students expressed enjoying them. Therefore, for EFL-learning students, using the traditional format of the book club appeared to have been a weakness rather than a strength. The discussions, teacher's notes on the board during the lessons and listening to the audiobook were helpful

for students to keep track of what they were learning, which can also be considered strengths of the book club.

As it was apparent from the student self-assessment and feedback survey, there were limitations and concerns about the conducted book club. Several problems arose from my notes and reflections from the lessons as well. After the conclusion of the first lesson already, I realized that the active tasks help the students stay focused and engage in the lesson more. The language skill of listening and speaking were applied the most in the lessons as the students were encouraged to complete active tasks related to discussions mostly at the end of the lessons. They become more talkative, including the usually quieter students, and they were motivated to work with different groups of people in their class. I also noticed that the layout of the classroom that the lessons were held in was not the ideal relaxed environment to host a book club in. The rooms were difficult to change due to the capacity of the school building itself. As the room that all of the lessons were conducted in is limited in space and other lessons were either after or before the lessons immediately, it was difficult for me to move the furniture and layout of the room around. In most cases, people expect book clubs to be in circles, where all participants are seated and accompanied by snacks and drinks. Due to time and space constraints, the present study could not take this into consideration. This especially applied to the traditional book club lessons with discussions prioritised above activities. This problem was also addressed by two students in the feedback survey as they explained it as feeling as if it was a regular lesson. Additionally, it was hard as a teacher to move around and pay attention to the group discussions due to this layout problem.

As some of the lessons were early in the morning or late in the afternoon, the active group or pair tasks were necessary for the students to be focused and motivated, as well as the prize system in the form of sweets and/or points. As a teacher, I also needed to consider the timetable of the lessons as most students had one lesson a week of English, and during

other times, they had two lessons with only a day between them. Therefore, it was difficult to schedule the reading sections for home reading as some students needed more time to read the text. This was resolved with the option of students reading the graded reader version of the book or the audiobook especially during those times. The students were not pressured to read the entire section by that time and to at least get an idea of what happens in the book due to the time limitation. Time for reading was also addressed as one of the main problems in the questionnaire as to why students fell behind on the reading or why they had not read for the book by certain times. 33% students admitted to always being prepared to come to the lesson, meanwhile 67% of the students had not read the assigned sections by specific times.

Additional problems that students addressed in the survey were some students apparently not reading the book and not talking along, the choice of reading, a need for specific student questioning by the teacher, acquiring the book, using a reading test to check their learning and the book club being longer than it was. The main strengths, however, are students' analytical skills improvement over the time of the lessons as noted by the teacher as well as the students themselves, the relaxing environment and increased motivation to read. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that there were mixed results for the success of the book club due to several weaknesses addressed as follows: the students' interest in reading and the book itself, the difficulty of the book's language use, fear of public speaking and the time management. Overall, both the strengths and the weaknesses are similar to the ones pointed out by scholars in the previous research.

### **2.2.2. Language Skills' Improvement**

The second aspect besides the general strengths and weaknesses, the possibility of improving students' language as well as analysis skills with the help of dystopian literature was studied. Implementing different skills for reading comprehension, such as reading using

a physical book for reading and listening skills for audiobooks were used the most within the book club. Reading is the main activated receptive skill in a book club, where students read the chosen book intensively as home reading and then come to the lesson for discussions (Roessing 2009: 16, Harmer 2015: 314, Collie and Slater 1987: 6, Ur 2012: 143). Reading via audiobook also helped students with learning pronunciation, sentence and word formation as the book was read to them by a professional (ibid.: 136). This, in turn, developed their oral language production skills. Students who struggled to read the physical or digital format due to various reasons, such as the density of the text or them having special educational needs, expressed this method of reading to be most useful for them as all the students could enjoy the reading experience equally (Eriksson Barajas 2016: 31). When listening to students speak during the book club meetings, there were several of them whose sentence structure skills were improved upon likely due to listening to others speak and the book in audio format. As a result, they could produce more complex sentences and expand on their ideas because of the more intensive use of English in class than usual. As previous research concluded, literary language is often more elaborate and profound, therefore students are able to identify and use extended vocabulary and figurative language as they read extensively (Collie and Slater 1987: 5). This was proved by the book club in the EFL context as well as figurative language elements present in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four* that were discussed in detail.

Besides the basic oral production skills, conversation skills are often also improved upon as students are able to discuss the topics of the books with others in the classroom (McCaughey 2017: 23, Eriksson Barajas 2016, Daley 2019). Communicative skills as well as digital skills can be activated with the use of multimodal reading, in which students use various forms of media and “modes of reading”, such as sounds and images, for easier comprehension of the material (Daley 2019: 148). This was also used in my lessons when

some of the lessons were accompanied by slideshows with text, photo and video material that could help students comprehend and retain the information more easily. With the more recent implementation of book clubs in regular traditional EFL classrooms, students are able to enhance their listening and communicative skills as they participate in the discussions (Daley 2019, Thomas and Goering 2018, Cooper 2018: 366). Thomas and Goering (2018: 104) also claim that with the use of literary texts, students are taught to listen to others and discuss various topics rather than debating on them, which is an important skill that they may be unable to learn otherwise. The students in my lessons worked together in pairs or groups often and there were no problems of debate in the general discussions. They listened to each other when working with the text, and several students initiated meaningful discussions in the group that was later expanded on in a general discussion. The only opportunity for debates for students were during the character storyboard creation as they could not come to a decision on the character design. Some students ignored the book's descriptions and came up with their own ideas that, in turn, created debates within their group because of the clash with the book's descriptions. However, others used Orwell's text for specific character representations, which sparked no debates within the groups themselves. Therefore, also the skill of listening and communication was developed with the help of group members and active discussions. The language skill that was not evaluated was the skill of writing due to the final assignment being creative work and most students chose to create art for it rather than write. A few students across all groups chose to write poetry based on the book, but as writing poetry depends on specific criteria for writing, it was not enough to evaluate the writing skill improvement from it.

In terms of higher order thinking skills, the students were able to employ all of the skills that are mentioned in Bloom's taxonomy in its order (Switzer and Barclay 2012: 529, Anderson and Krathwohl et al. 2001). Knowledge was gained through reading the book as

preparation for the lessons and learning about the background of the genre and author. The information was comprehended and then applied in the various types of quizzes after expanding on the ideas students had. Analysis of the book's content was the main feature used in the discussions, moving from basic knowledge to a deeper analysis within various topics, which most students could do by contributing to the conversations. The information was evaluated by them in the self-assessment questionnaire, and finally, they created artwork or a written work based on the book club book. Hence, all of the levels of Bloom's taxonomy were achieved with different tasks throughout the book club unit. Students who used the higher order thinking skills within the lessons actively by being involved in the discussions appeared to have retained the information from previous discussions better (Switzer and Barclay 2012: 330, 336). The previous lessons' ideas were constantly expanded upon in the following lessons. I asked the questions of who the new characters were, which symbols they could find in the current week's reading and whether there were new themes, motifs and language elements they found at the start of each consequent lesson. The students who had read the book as scheduled and actively participated in the discussions were the ones who could nearly always contribute to the discussions from lesson to lesson, and thus, it can be said that they used their higher order thinking skills effectively. The students who were less active in the lessons could only be evaluated through the self-assessment form, which cannot confirm their claims of improving any skills other than listening.

## CONCLUSION

In order to find out the usefulness of a book club as a method of teaching in an upper secondary school setting of English as a Foreign Language lessons in an Estonian vocational school, this thesis examined the various reasons for using literature in said language lessons for teaching language skills. The current study assessed the process of designing a book club, taking into consideration the aims set by the National Curriculums for foreign language studies and the school that the teaching experiment took place in, which is important in the planning stage of such activities, especially if used at regular lesson time. It is hence important to know which types of texts, learning environments, and materials are acceptable to use in the English lessons so that they fit the set curriculum aims. A key to success in conducting a book club is to know not only the students' reading tastes and habits, but also their reading speed, range of vocabulary, knowledge of culture and history, level of analytical skills and ability to communicate with others.

The aim of this study was to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of using a book club as a teaching method by designing and conducting it in an EFL-learning setting. The author hosted a book club unit of five 90-minute lessons for four separate groups of students, resulting in 20 total lessons conducted. The book club was based on George Orwell's 1949 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as it provided secondary-level students with many discussion points. Each lesson was topic-based and most lessons included various activities and traditional book club discussions. The teacher notes on the book club, its hosting process and a student self-assessment questionnaire were used to analyse and draw conclusions about the positive and negative sides of the book club in the learning context of the vocational school. Based on the study, it can be argued that using a book club in an EFL-setting is a successful method of teaching although it has several limitations stemming from the students' existing skillset and the environment that the method is used in.

In terms of students' and teacher's perceptions of the book club, it was a success as students claimed that they now know what to look for when reading a book in an academic setting. Hence, using topic-based lessons and guiding questions is appropriate for teaching analytical skills to the upper secondary school students. The book club can be adapted and adjusted according to the current topic or lesson at hand due to its versatility. It provides opportunities for students to express their opinions, encourages discussions with peers, enables using games as well as can be accommodated to different learning environments. Although the book club method was generally well-received by the students who participated in the study, the opinions on the choice of the novel can diverge in the book club. Therefore, student choice of one or multiple books, or a reading list could be considered for using the book club method in regular lessons. Students regarded the topic of politics and comparing the ideas from the novel to certain historical contexts, if relevant, the most rewarding aspects of the lessons. Students also claimed to have learned new vocabulary and concepts that they had not known previously, which proves that the book club offers many opportunities for learning, not only language, but also content and culture.

Using a book club is also effective in enhancing students' analytical skills, especially their higher order thinking skills, if they are focusing on the topic at hand and being active in the lessons. While there is a possibility of silent students remembering the lesson content and using their higher order thinking skills rather expertly, the active students in the lessons are more likely to not only recall the learned material, but also analyse it. Many students need guidance for effectively analysing a text, which takes practice and active communication with their peers. There are both advantages and disadvantages to using active tasks in discussion lessons as well as the traditional method of only discussing the book in a book circle. Thus, teachers need to find a balance of the two, especially when dealing with a variety of students in the club.

A weakness to the method was that oftentimes, there were students who had not completed the reading by the allocated time, which created frustration in students who had done the home task as this would have created more interesting points of discussion in the lessons. The time schedule for the reading was mentioned as the biggest problem of the study, although most students seemed to have enjoyed the book club as it was. As a result, it is apparent that there are also many disadvantages that a book club can have. A book club needs efficient organisation before it begins, which is a lengthy process especially for teachers, and thus there are many factors that the teacher or host of the club needs to consider.

In general, using a book club as a teaching method can be considered a helpful way to enhance language and analytical skills; however, as of now, it does not replace the current widely used methods of implementing textbooks as a main source of language learning in an EFL setting. As there are students who prefer doing other things to reading, there is a possibility of a conflict in the reading choice, environment, time etc. The students' language level, interest, the space and methods for discussion are only a few of the factors that matter in the book club method. A book club as such needs to be approached in a suitable manner and the students need to be ready for the experience; hence, there is a lot of preparation work to be done by the teacher to make the lessons as engaging and as appropriate as possible for the students. The limitations of the book club method in the present study can be addressed in future studies on the topic and leave room for various improvements.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. Parental Consent Form

08.01.2023

Lugupeetud lapsevanem või eestkostja

Palun nõusolekut kaasata Teie laps enda inglise keele magistriõpingute lõputöö uurimusse, mille valimisse kuulub ka Teie lapse kursus.

Uurimuse eesmärgiks on analüüsida raamatuklubi kavandamise ja läbiviimise protsessi inglise keele õppekontekstis ning selle tugevusi ja nõrkusi õppemeetodina. Uurimuse käigus täidetakv küsitlus ning õpilastega vestlused tundide vältel on anonüümsed ning uurimisobjektideks on õpilaste keeleoskus ja kirjandusanalüüsi võime ning areng.

Uurimusega selgitatakse välja, kas raamatuklubi on võimalik kasutada õppevahendina keeleoskuse arendamiseks kasutades klassikalist düstoopiakirjandust. Uurimus toetub raamatuklubimeetodile, mille põhieesmärk on õpilastes tekitada lugemishuvi läbi teemakohaste vestluste ja õpiülesannete tunnikontekstis nii, et kõik õpilased loevad igal nädalal võrdse osa raamatust endale sobivas õpetaja väljapakutud formaadis. Antud uurimuse alusel oleks võimalik suurema huvi korral välja töötada koostöös teiste kooli õpetajatega õpilastele suunatud raamatuklubi valikaine või huviring ning laiendada ka kooliraamatukogu ilukirjanduse valikut.

Uurimust viib läbi [kooli] inglise keele õpetaja ja Tartu Ülikooli anglistika osakonna magistrant Eke Pernik.

Uurimus toimub viie 90-minutilise tunni jooksul ajavahemikus 17.01-10.03.2023 olenevalt õpilaste inglise keele tundide ajakavast.

Täna Teid koostöö eest!

Lugupidamisega

Eke Pernik

[meiliaadress]

#### **Annan nõusoleku uurimuses osalemiseks.**

Lapse nimi:

Lapsevanema allkiri:

Kuupäev:

## APPENDIX 2. Book Club Unit Syllabus

### Book Club Unit Syllabus

**Unit length:** 5 lessons; 1 x 90 min lesson a week (January to March 2023)

**The description of the target group and their needs:** Three groups of ca 9-16 students. vocational school students, who are studying based on the Estonian National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Students and the school's curriculum. The students' English language level ranges greatly from A2 to C2 while we are studying at B2 to B2+ level in general. One small group of students (4) at B1+ level. The unit is integrated into the English as a Foreign Language course for Year 1 and 2 students and it is obligatory for completing the full 10-lesson course.

The students are able to actively practice English and to develop their text analysis skills. They will be encouraged to become motivated readers and critical thinkers through different reading mediums and activities in the classroom. The students are able to develop their oral communicative skills and listening skills through discussions and tasks about the chosen book, reading skills through creative work and extensive reading. The unit integrates the English as a Foreign Language lessons with literature, history, social studies, digital and computer studies and public speaking.

#### Study unit objectives:

- The student will develop their foreign language skills through extensive reading.
- The student will familiarise themselves with text analysis methods and learns to apply them rudimentarily.
- The student will practice free speaking in a foreign language through class and group discussions.
- The student will apply the knowledge of the unit in lesson work, such as games and activities related to the reading each week.
- The student will analyse the concepts of the book club book, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.
- The student will value analysis as an important element of literary tradition.
- The student will apply the knowledge of the unit in a creative final assessment work.

**Concepts:** Dystopia, totalitarianism, liberty, censorship, propaganda, language, technology, freedom, repression, isolation, historical symbolism.

#### Obligatory literature:

- George Orwell *Nineteen Eighty-Four*(1949)  
Various formats:
  - E-book, HTML: <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks01/0100021h.html>
  - Audiobook, PacificaRadioArchives original radio reading-on-air (Charles Morgan, 1975) <https://soundcloud.com/pacificaradioarchives/ftv-0539-george-orwells-nineteen-eighty-four-part-1-of-10>
  - Graded reader, graphic novel, film adaptations

**Grading (Differentiated MI (X), 1, 2, 3, 4, 5):**

- Active participation in the lessons (85%). Participation in the lessons is **mandatory**.
- Self-assessment about your reading experience and development.
- Creative final project – the student demonstrates their knowledge of the novel with designing a poster, writing a poem, a review, an essay, a short story or a comic relating to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Deadline: by the time your group’s Lesson 6 has concluded.

**The requirement for a passing grade for the course is participation in at least 4 of the 5 lessons actively and a positive grade for the final assessment task.** Contact the teacher for any questions and should you need to miss the lessons with a valid reason.

**General plan:**

| <b>Time</b> | <b>Topic and theme of the lesson</b>  | <b>Notes for the teacher</b>   |
|-------------|---|--|
| Week 1      | What happens if...?: Introduction to dystopian literature and George Orwell.  | Reading 40-60 pages a week (or between two lessons) at home.                     |
| Week 2      | “Big Brother is watching you.”: Symbols and characters of <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> .   |  |
| Week 3      | “Sooner or later they were bound to get you.”: Themes of <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> . Focus on power and control (freedom, repression, isolation, surveillance). |  |
| Week 4      | “It’s a beautiful thing, the destruction of words.”: Motifs of <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> . Significant vocabulary and Orwell’s fear-mongering writing style.    |  |
| Week 5      | “Who controls the past, controls the future.”: Relevance to today’s world and parallels to history.   | Self-assessment and creative projects due the end of the day of Week 6’s lesson. |

## APPENDIX 3. Lesson Plan 1

### Lesson Plan 1: What happens if...?

**Students:** +/- 13 (1A), 6 (2B), 11 (2C), 4 (D)

**Subject:** English 2/4 or English as a Second Language

**Time (Date, time):** 17.01.2023, 25.01.2023, 27.01.2023, 03.02.2023 - 90 minutes each

**Topic:** What happens if...?: Introduction to dystopian literature and George Orwell.

**Lesson outcomes (Skill-based):** By the end of the lesson, the students will...

...familiarise themselves with the aims of the semester and grading requirements.

...describe what a book club is and what it consists of.

...be able to differentiate dystopia from utopian literature and compare the two.

...describe the characteristics of dystopia and utopia, and give examples.

...familiarise themselves with George Orwell's life and works.

...review what they learned and heard in the lesson with a quiz in pairs.

**Materials needed:** Computer, projector, Internet, Google Slide slides, school's information system.

#### Procedure:

| Time              | Activities and instructions for students  | Materials and comments  |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 5 min             | Introduction to the lesson aims and procedure.<br>Marking attendance.   | Slide 1   |
| 10 min            | Introduction to the course of English this semester with a stronger focus on the book club unit of the lessons.   | Slide 2-5<br>The first half of the semester is dedicated to the book club, the second half on regular English lessons. Students earn points for participation in the book club lessons that conclude in extra grades. |
| 10 min<br>(2 min) | Introduction to the book club method. Students are asked the open-ended question: What is a book club? How do we define a book club? Student answers followed by further teacher explanation.               | Slide 6-8   |
| (5 min)           | Pair discussion. Guiding questions: Have you (or someone you know) ever participated in a book club? What types of book clubs have you seen or know of from before? What do you think a book club involves? | Pair work or groups of three.   |
| (3 min)           | Discussion as a full-class interaction.   | The same open-ended questions.  |
| 10 min            | Introduction to fantasy and dystopian literature. The teacher explains the history behind fantasy literature with few guiding questions (e.g. What do you think is the oldest subgenre of                   | Slide 9-12<br>Students are either completing this task by the whiteboard, writing the   |

|        |  |   |
|--------|--|---|
|        | fantasy? Who is one of the most known fantasy writers and considered a classic?).  | answers down, or at their seats writing on paper. |
| 10 min | Utopia vs dystopia. The class is split into two groups. Group A and B discusses questions of what dystopia vs utopia is, how a story/characters/the possible ending are constructed. Dividing the whiteboard into two for groups to write their answers (5 min). Explanations by the students (5 min). Further examples by the students and teacher. |   |
| 25 min | Introduction to the book club book and author – George Orwell (Teacher talk). Guiding questions. Who has read George Orwell before? What do you know about the author and the book?  | Slide 13-16                                       |
| 23 min | A short quiz (15 questions) about dystopian literature and George Orwell’s life as a reminder of what we learned in the lesson. Checking the answers in the next lesson.   | Slide 16-50                                       |
| 2 min  | Conclusion of the lesson. Thanking students for attending the class and reminding them of the homework as well as the parental consent form.   |   |

**Homework:** Reading Part 1 Chapter 1 to Chapter 6 in the original format of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Take notes on what we could talk about already in the next lesson, focusing on characters and symbols of the book so far.

## APPENDIX 4. Lesson Plan 2

### Lesson Plan 2: “Big Brother is watching you.”

**Students:** +/- 13 (1A), 6 (2B), 11 (2C), 4 (D)

**Subject:** English 2/4 or English as a Second Language

**Time (Date, time):** 27.01.2023, 30.01.2023, 10.02.2023 - 90 minutes each

**Topic:** “Big Brother is watching you.”: Symbols and characters of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

**Lesson outcomes (Skill-based):** By the end of the lesson, the students will...

...identify the main characters in the story so far.

...analyse the characters that have appeared in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

...develop communication skills by working together in groups.

...have designed a storyboard based on the descriptions of the characters and drawn the character.

...have expressed and shared their opinions.

...analyse the symbols of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* so far.

**Materials needed:** Computer, projector, Internet, Google Doc scoreboard, school’s information system, markers and pens, A3 and A4 copy paper, sweets as prizes, copy of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

#### Procedure:

| Time   | Activities and instructions for students  | Materials and comments   |
|--------|---|--|
| 3 min  | Introduction to the lesson aims and procedure.<br>Marking attendance.   |  |
| 7 min  | Looking through the answers of Orwell/dystopia quiz and showing the students the scoreboard. Prizes distributed for the quiz participation.   |  |
| 10 min | What are your initial thoughts?<br>Talking about the first page of the story and the emotions and colours the students associate the book so far with. Talking through the characters in the book so far and the students impressions of them.  |  |
| 30 min | Activity: Character storyboard. Students divide into groups of 3-5. All the groups get a character that has been mentioned or described so far in the book. Dividing an A3 worksheet into four sections: character traits, physical traits, which quote you associate with them and why and the character design- | A3 and A4 paper, 1 per group. Coloured markers on the teacher’s table for students to use. A physical copy of the book available to use. |
| 8 min  | Presenting the work with 4 minutes for each group. Explaining the choices of wording, the quote choice and why they chose to draw their character as such. The other group has a chance to add more information should they want to.  | Characters chosen: Winston, Mrs. Parsons (or the Parsons family), Goldstein, Big Brother.  |

|        |  |  |
|--------|--|--|
| 5 min  | Class discussion question with characters written on the whiteboard from earlier: Who do you think will have a bigger role in the story later?   |  |
| 20 min | Activity: Symbolism in the book. Discussing some of the symbols of the book. Students thinking about what could be presented as a symbol and the teacher giving them hints once they get stuck. Students try to explain the meaning or influence of symbols in the book. Full class interaction. | Symbols:<br>Big Brother<br>Telescreens<br>“The place where there is no darkness”<br>Goldstein<br>The Memory Hole |
| 4 min  | What else caught your attention that you want to talk about? Talking about the meaning and the opposite effect of the names of the ministries, their operation in the book.  | Ministries<br>Newspeak, dictionaries   |
| 3 min  | Concluding the lesson by reminding the students of homework and thanking everyone for their participation.   |  |

**Homework:** Reading Part 1 Chapter 7 to Part 1 Chapter 8. Take notes on what we could talk about already in the next lesson, focusing on themes of the book so far. Think about what has been said about freedom, repression, isolation and surveillance.

## APPENDIX 5. Lesson Plan 3

### Lesson Plan 3: “Sooner or later they were bound to get you.”

**Students:** +/- 13 (1A), 6 (2B), 11 (2C), 4 (D)

**Subject:** English 2/4 or English as a Second Language

**Time (Date, time):** 01.02.2023, 03.02.2023, 06.02.2023, 17.02.2023 - 90 minutes each

**Topic:** “Sooner or later they were bound to get you.”: Themes of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Focus on power and control (freedom, repression, isolation, surveillance).

**Lesson outcomes (Skill-based):** By the end of the lesson, the students will...

...revise what a theme in a literary work is and how to identify it.

...identify the main themes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

(...analyse the theme of power and control throughout the story using a mind map.)

...analyse the themes of the book with examples and relation to today’s world.

...develop their communicative and elaborative skills.

...have expressed and shared their opinions.

**Materials needed:** Computer, projector, speakers, Internet, Google Doc scoreboard, school’s information system, marker, A3 copy paper and A5 copy paper, copy of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

#### Procedure:

| Time            | Activities and instructions for students  | Materials and comments   |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 3 min           | Introduction to the lesson aims and procedure.<br>Marking attendance.   |  |
| (2 min)         | Explaining the changes in reading schedule For Groups 1A and 2B.  | Reading around 80 pages for the remaining two lessons.   |
| 7 min           | New ideas about symbols and characters. Who are the new characters and do we have any new symbols? ‘The glass paperweight’, ‘2 + 2 = 5’ and Mr. Charrington from Chapters 7-8.  |  |
| 5 min           | Guessing and explanation by students within 3 minutes of what a theme is and how can we find it in a literary work. 2 minutes for extra explanation by the teacher.   | The student answers are noted on the whiteboard for later reference.   |
| 10 min          | Students guess the themes of <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> illustrated with examples.   |  |
| 71 min (65 min) | Talking about the themes of the book in a traditional book club format.<br><br>Teacher-initiated questions on the topics of how power, warfare, violence, propaganda (machines), loyalty, repression, manipulation, love, liberty, technology, the individual vs. collective identity, class struggle and memory is represented. Students take over the | All students are encouraged to come forward with ideas.<br><br>Alternative task for Group D: 20 min – Drawing a word cloud on ‘power and control’. Helping questions: Who is controlling? What is being controlled? Who is |

|                    |  |   |
|--------------------|--|---|
|                    | discussion at any point as all topics are written on the board.  | controlled? Who has power and how?                                    |
| 2 min              | Concluding the lesson by thanking the students for attending and reminding them of the homework task.  |   |
| Extra task (6 min) | Watching the 1984 Macintosh Computers commercial (YouTube link). Discussion question: How did it make you feel? What do you think the purpose of it was? How does it relate to the book? Full-class interaction. | Depending on if the students finish with their discussion task early. |

**Homework:** Reading Part 2 Chapter 1 - Part 2 Chapter 9. Take notes on what we could talk about already in the next lesson, focusing on motifs of the book so far. Think about motifs (recurring ideas) in the book as well as the language (Newspeak, Oldspeak) and Orwell's writing itself. What are the motifs of the story? Is it difficult to understand and what style does he have? Is he using difficult vocabulary, how does he form sentences structurally? What does the style make you feel?

## APPENDIX 6. Lesson Plan 4

### Lesson Plan 4: “It’s a beautiful thing, the destruction of words.”

**Students:** +/- 13 (1A), 6 (2B), 11 (2C), 4 (D)

**Subject:** English 2/4 or English as a Second Language

**Time (Date, time):** 08.02.2023, 10.03.2023, 13.02.2023, 21.02.2023 - 90 minutes each

**Topic:** “It’s a beautiful thing, the destruction of words.”: Motifs of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Significant vocabulary and Orwell’s fear-mongering writing style.

**Lesson outcomes (Skill-based):** By the end of the lesson, the students will...

...identify the main motifs of the characters of the story.

...identify Orwell’s writing style using examples from the book.

...define different literary devices (flashback, connotation, foreshadowing and personification) using examples from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

...have expressed and shared their opinions.

(...have tested their knowledge on the current reading with a crossword puzzle.)

**Materials needed:** Computer, projector, Internet, Google Doc scoreboard, school’s information system, pens, Google Slides slideshow with quotes, crossword puzzle printed copies, sweets as prizes, copy of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

#### Procedure:

| Time   | Activities and instructions for students  | Materials and comments  |
|--------|---|---|
| 3 min  | Introduction to the lesson aims and procedure.<br>Marking attendance.   |   |
| 5 min  | Ideas added from today’s reading to the previous lessons’ topics.   |   |
| 35 min | Talking about the motifs of the story. What are they trying to say? What are the main ideas that come through again and again? What are they trying to say?   | Motifs:<br>The Party, the Ministry of Truth, and the Thought Police |
| 20 min | Discussion question: What is Orwell’s writing style like? What is his goal with this type of writing style in <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> ; why do you think he has written it like so?   |   |
| 10 min | Students’ ideas on what counts as figurative language. Does Orwell use it? How? Followed by a teacher explanation of what types of figurative language Orwell may use.<br>Explaining what a metaphor, foreshadowing, flashback and personification is. (6 min)<br>Discussing Orwellian terminology that is used in today’s world. (4 min) |   |
| 10 min | Guessing game with quotes from the book up until Part 2 Chapter 9. Guessing which quote is a metaphor, flashback, personification and students explain why or how they think so.<br>Students with the most correct points win extra   | 9 quotes from throughout the novel on a Google Slides slideshow.    |

|                       |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
|                       | 3 points on the scoreboard, second place earns 2 and the rest of the students 1 point.  |   |
| Extra task:<br>25 min | Crossword puzzle on notable events and language so far. Students try to use as little help of the book as possible, no use of the Internet. Once they finish the puzzle, checking the answers at the teacher's desk. The first three winners in speed and accuracy (first winner in Group D) get(s) 3 points extra. | Crossword puzzle used and slightly modified from Prestwick House. |

**Homework:** Reading Part 2 Chapter 10 to the end. Think about *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* relevance in today's world and parallels to history. Think about everything that happened throughout the book and if you have any ideas, you're welcome to write them down to discuss in the last lesson. Please try to think of two questions about the book at home to discuss next time.

## APPENDIX 7. Lesson Plan 5

### Lesson Plan 5: “Who controls the past, controls the future.”

**Students:** +/- 13 (1A), 6 (2B), 11 (2C), 4 (D)

**Subject:** English 2/4 or English as a Second Language

**Time (Date, time):** 10.02.2023, 17.02.2023, 20.02.2023, 10.03.2023 - 90 minutes each

**Topic:** “Who controls the past, controls the future.”: Relevance to today’s world and parallels to history. Wrapping up the book club.

**Lesson outcomes (Skill-based):** By the end of the lesson, the students will...

...identify the main historical parallels of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and real life.

...identify the main parallels of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and today’s world.

...analyse the main purpose of the novel.

...complete the self-assessment survey with explanations.

...critically evaluate the book club content and their language skills’ development.

...reflect on what they have learned during the unit.

...have expressed and shared their opinions with arguments.

**Materials needed:** Computer, projector, Internet, Google Doc scoreboard, school’s information system, markers and pens, A3 and A4 copy paper, sweets as prizes, copy of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, students’ phones or school’s computers (Macbooks).

#### Procedure:

| Time   | Activities and instructions for students   | Materials and comments  |
|--------|--|---|
| 3 min  | Introduction to the lesson aims and procedure.<br>Marking attendance.  |   |
| 5 min  | Showing the example of political doublespeak from CNN (1 min). Discussion: What is this clip an example of if you think of <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> ? Where else have you seen examples of this in real life? From history? (4 min)   | Answer: Doublespeak.<br><br>Many of the examples have been discussed in previous lessons as well (President Donald Trump’s administration, Stalin/Hitler regime, reality television, surveillance via cameras, phones and online activity). |
| 30 min | Discussing student questions and ideas after finishing the book.<br>Discussion questions: Were your predictions of characters having bigger roles correct? Was Winston a hero? Why/Why not? What did Orwell try to warn the reader of? Do you think Julia had a negative or a positive impact on Winston? Were Orwell’s ideas accurate in its predictions? What is the most opposite of reality from the book? Thinking back to Winston from the beginning to the end, what would you do to ruin The Party’s rule? | Some questions altered from Penguin Random House Reading Guide.   |

|        |  |   |
|--------|--|---|
|        | Knowing what you know now, how would you free yourself from what is coming?<br>What did the title of the book mean? What purpose did the book/title serve?   |   |
| 10 min | What does Orwellian really mean? Video (5 min). Discussion: In your opinion, is it necessary for Orwellian language to be used in politics? Why? Can a democratic society become Orwellian?  | Video may be shown in the language lesson (Lesson 4) if there is time left over in the lesson.  |
| 7 min  | Referring back to Lesson 1, what makes this a dystopia? What did you notice in the book that makes it a dystopia? How is it different from other dystopian novels?   |   |
| 30 min | Completing the self-assessment survey on Google Forms.   | Students who were part of the study and brought back the parental consent forms. Students who were not part of the study (and participants who wish to) receive the questionnaire on paper. |
| 6 min  | Book club unit conclusion and an opportunity for students to express their opinions. Finishing the lesson with the reminder of the final task by the end of the next lesson. Students who have finished the questionnaire and do not wish to add anything in oral form are allowed to leave the class early. |   |

Extra task ideas should the discussion and students' ideas be shorter.

|                              |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Extra task:</i><br>30 min | Crossword puzzle on notable events and language so far. Students try to use as little help of the book as possible, no use of the Internet. Once they finish the puzzle, checking the answers at the teacher's desk. The first three winners in speed and accuracy (first winner in Group D) get(s) 3 points extra. | Crossword puzzle used and slightly modified from Prestwick House. Students who were not part of the study. Those who were part of the study and want to complete it can do it at home. |
| <i>Extra task:</i><br>25 min | Kahoot quiz on the full novel. Chance for the winner to earn extra points.  | Quiz link<br>Announcement of the "winners" of the book club in the next lesson.  |
| <i>Extra task:</i><br>30 min | Start working on the final assignment. Start sketching your idea or writing out a word cloud of what you want to do.  |  |

**Homework:** Complete the final task of creating a poster/cover redesign/comic or writing a poem/short story/essay by the end of our Lesson 6 day.

## APPENDIX 8. Student Feedback and Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

### George Orwell 1984 Book Club: Feedback and Self-evaluation

Dear book club participant,

This questionnaire is part of your teacher Eke Pernik's Master's degree study at the University of Tartu. I am studying in the University of Tartu's Foreign Language Teaching programme with a specialty in English language. I am writing my thesis on the topic of the strengths and weaknesses of book clubs as a teaching method in an English as a Foreign Language context in our school.

The aim of my paper is to analyse the process of designing and conducting a book club in the English language learning context as well as the strengths and weaknesses of it as a teaching method.

This questionnaire will help to give an idea of what you enjoyed and didn't enjoy about the book club unit in the English lessons, as well as what I as a teacher could improve on for possible future book clubs. The answers to the questionnaire will be completely anonymous and your self-assessment and feedback is very valuable to me.

Answer the following questions with thorough responses. **This questionnaire is anonymous, so please do not add your name to it.**

The questionnaire should take up to 30 minutes to complete. Thank you!

#### Your age

- [14-15]
- [16-17]
- [18-20]
- [21-23]
- [24-26]
- [27-30]

#### 1. Did you enjoy taking part of the book club in the lessons? \*

- [Yes]
- [No]

##### 1.1. Why did you enjoy it? If you didn't, why not? \*

[Long-answer text]

#### 2. What did you learn during the course when reading and analysing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? (Name at least 2 things). \*

[Long-answer text]

#### 3. Which lesson did you like the most?

- Introduction to dystopia and George Orwell
- Characters and symbols
- Themes
- Motifs and language
- Comparisons to today and history, concluding the club

##### 3.1. Why was it your favourite?

[Long-answer text]

**4. Which lesson did you like the least?**

- Introduction to dystopia and George Orwell
- Characters and symbols
- Themes
- Motifs and language
- Comparisons to today and history, concluding the club

**4.1. Why didn't you enjoy it?**

[Long-answer text]

**5. How easy/difficult was the reading and book club participation for you? Explain.**

\*

[Long-answer text]

**6. What did you think about the discussion topics? \***

[Long-answer text]

**7. Do you feel that you have learned enough during the book club? \***

- Yes
- No

**8. Did you always come to the class prepared? If not, what prevented you? \***

[Long-answer text]

**9. What helped you to learn?**

[Long-answer text]

**10. What type of reading format was the most used or helpful for you? Why? \***

*Options: Online reading format, e-book (epub), graded reader, audiobook, graphic novel etc.*

[Long-answer text]

**11. Do you think it now is easier for you to analyse and look more into a story and its ideas after analysing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? Why/why not? \***

[Long-answer text]

**12. What did the teacher do well in your opinion? \***

[Long-answer text]

**13. What could have been better in the book club? \***

[Long-answer text]

**14. Was it clear for you what you had to do in class? At home? \***

- Yes
- No

**15. Was this book club unit what you expected it to be?**

- Yes
- No

**15.1. Why/why not? \***

[Long-answer text]

**16. Can you use your knowledge from the book club somewhere else? Explain. \***

[Long-answer text]

**17. How did the course affect your knowledge, skills, and/or studies? \***

[Long-answer text]

**Would you participate in a book club elective course (valikaine) similar to this one in the future?**

- Yes
- No

**If you have any other comments or questions about the questionnaire or the book club, please add them here.**

[Long-answer text]

## APPENDIX 9. Results of the Student Feedback and Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

### Your age

| Age   | Students | Percentage |
|-------|----------|------------|
| 16-17 | 15       | 62.5%      |
| 18-20 | 8        | 33.3%      |
| 21-23 | 1        | 4.2%       |

### 1. Did you enjoy taking part of the book club in the lessons?

| Answer option | Students | Percentage |
|---------------|----------|------------|
| Yes           | 21       | 87.5%      |
| No            | 3        | 12.5%      |

#### 1.1 Why did you enjoy it? If you didn't why not?

Students who enjoyed the book club:

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| I enjoyed talking and discussing the book with others in the lesson.                                 | <b>9</b> |
| There was a different feeling in the class, a break from a routine.                                  | <b>5</b> |
| I did not enjoy the book but I did like the lessons.   | <b>3</b> |
| I liked the organisation.  | <b>2</b> |
| It was a new experience.   | <b>2</b> |
| I liked doing other activities rather than just talking.   | <b>2</b> |
| I enjoyed exploring the contents of the book.  | <b>2</b> |
| I got to read a classic.   | <b>1</b> |
| It is convenient to read a book for school as it is hard to find time for reading for entertainment. | <b>1</b> |
| I liked learning new things.   | <b>1</b> |
| I liked that we could ask questions freely.  | <b>1</b> |
| I liked practicing speaking in English.  | <b>1</b> |

Students who did not enjoy the book club:

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| I did not enjoy the disconnection between students-teacher because of the room layout. | <b>1</b> |
| I do not enjoy deadlines.  | <b>1</b> |
| I need to prioritise speaking and consuming media in Estonian rather than English.     | <b>1</b> |
| I did not feel comfortable because it didn't work in the classroom for me.             | <b>1</b> |

### 2. What did you learn during the course when reading and analysing *Nineteen Eighty-four* (Name at least 2 things).

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| I learned how to analyse a book.   | <b>12</b> |
| I learned how to compare the book and certain historical/today's contexts. | <b>10</b> |
| I learned about politics.  | <b>8</b>  |
| I learned new vocabulary.  | <b>6</b>  |
| I learned the definitions and differences between dystopia and utopia.     | <b>5</b>  |
| I learned how to define and find literary devices.                         | <b>5</b>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| I learned about the definition and usage of doublespeak.    | 3 |
| I learned that I do not like dystopian books of this style. | 2 |
| I learned how to express myself in spoken English.          | 2 |
| I liked the book. I didn't get bored of reading it.         | 2 |
| I learned about George Orwell's life and works.             | 1 |
| It was motivating for self-development.                     | 1 |
| I learned about discipline.                                 | 1 |
| I learned to enjoy books in a non-traditional format.       | 1 |
| I learned how to take notes.                                | 1 |

### 3. Which lesson did you like the most?

#### 3.1 Why?

| Reason   | No. of students who responded with this reason |
|--|--|
| <b>1: Introduction to dystopia and George Orwell (10 students)</b>           |  |
| It was interesting.  | 2  |
| I learnt a lot in this lesson.   | 2  |
| I learned about the contrast between utopia and dystopia.                    | 2  |
| George Orwell's life story was interesting.                                  | 1  |
| The introduction was great.  | 1  |
| <b>2: Characters and symbols (11 students)</b>                               |  |
| I liked drawing and making the poster.                                       | 4  |
| Character exploration was interesting.                                       | 3  |
| It was the most fun.   | 2  |
| The topics were relatable.   | 1  |
| No reason provided.  | 1  |
| <b>3: Themes (2 students)</b>  |  |
| I liked working as a team.   | 1  |
| I liked switching arguments and comments.                                    | 1  |
| <b>4: Motifs and language (6 students)</b>                                   |  |
| I found it interesting how Orwell's language is still used today.            | 2  |
| I liked exploring the language side of the story.                            | 2  |
| I liked watching the video.  | 1  |
| No reason provided.  | 1  |
| <b>5: Comparison to today and history, concluding the club (13 students)</b> |  |
| I liked playing the <i>Kahoot!</i> game.                                     | 4  |
| I thought it was fun and interesting.  | 4  |
| I liked the connections between the story and today's world/history.         | 2  |
| I got fulfilment from discussing the book as a whole.                        | 2  |
| I liked having creative freedom.   | 1  |
| I liked making up different theories.  | 1  |

#### 4. Which lesson did you like the least?

##### 4.1 Why?

| Reason  | No. of students who replied with this reason |
|---|--|
| <b>1: Introduction to dystopia and George Orwell (5 students)</b>           |  |
| It was dull, not interesting.   | 2  |
| It was hard to understand what dystopia was.                                | 1  |
| I could not attend the lesson.  | 1  |
| I did not like the book from the start.                                     | 1  |
| <b>2: Characters and symbols (3 students)</b>                               |  |
| The comparison to historical people was boring.                             | 1  |
| I did not like the protagonist.   | 1  |
| I am bad at remembering names.  | 1  |
| There was no evidence of what the characters looked like.                   | 1  |
| <b>3: Themes (7 students)</b>   |  |
| It was not interesting.   | 2  |
| I do not remember it.   | 2  |
| It felt repetitive.   | 2  |
| It was tiring.  | 1  |
| No reason provided.   | 1  |
| <b>4: Motifs and language (8 students)</b>                                  |  |
| I was behind on the book so it was hard to understand it.                   | 4  |
| I did not know how to express myself.                                       | 1  |
| I do not care about language.   | 1  |
| I was not there, so I do not know what happened in the lesson.              | 1  |
| No reason provided.   | 1  |
| <b>5: Comparison to today and history, concluding the club (5 students)</b> |  |
| It made me feel sad.  | 1  |
| I failed the <i>Kahoot!</i> quiz.   | 1  |
| I had personal disagreements with the comparisons.                          | 1  |
| It was hard to talk about history since I do not know it well.              | 1  |
| No reason provided.   | 1  |

#### 5. How easy/difficult was the reading and book club participation for you? Explain.

|                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Easy (11)</b>         | It was easy, I just didn't like the book much.  | 4 |
|                          | Listening to the audiobook made it easy.  | 3 |
|                          | I found it very easy and enjoyable due to having sections of reading                                | 2 |
|                          | The class discussion made it easy.  | 2 |
| <b>In the middle (6)</b> | It was hard to find time for reading.   | 3 |
|                          | It was a little difficult as it was hard to concentrate on the reading because the book was boring. | 2 |
|                          | It was hard to speak along in the lesson while the reading was easy.                                | 1 |
| <b>Difficult (7)*</b>    | The language was difficult to understand.   | 4 |
|                          | I had too many missed assignments so I did not have time to read.                                   | 3 |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | It is difficult for me to speak in class.           | 3 |
|  | It was hard to keep up with the pace and deadlines. | 3 |
|  | I struggle with reading in general.                 | 1 |

*\*7 students who explicitly responded with it being hard or difficult to read. 16 students including those who had multiple ideas that corresponded to reading being difficult.*

## 6. What did you think about the discussion topics?

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>I enjoyed the discussion topics.</b>              | <b>17</b> |
| They were interesting and entertaining.              | 11        |
| I liked learning about politics and human behaviour. | 1         |
| I liked learning about the symbols and quotes.       | 1         |
| No reason provided.                                  | 4         |
| <b>I thought the discussion topics were average.</b> | <b>3</b>  |
| No reason provided.                                  | 3         |
| <b>I did not enjoy the discussion topics.</b>        | <b>4</b>  |
| I liked listening to others more.                    | 1         |
| I do not enjoy historical literature.                | 1         |
| I do not enjoy politics.                             | 1         |
| The topics were kind of complicated.                 | 1         |

## 7. Do you feel that you have learned enough during the book club? \*

| Answer option | Students | Percentage |
|---------------|----------|------------|
| Yes           | 19       | 70%        |
| No            | 9        | 30%        |

*\*Some students' answers were vague and in the middle of the two answers. Therefore, there are two answers added to the results in both yes/no categories for one student.*

## 8. Did you always come to the class prepared? If not, what prevented you?

| Answer option | Students | Percentage |
|---------------|----------|------------|
| Yes           | 8        | 33.3%      |
| No            | 16       | 66.7%      |

Students' reasons for not coming to the lessons prepared:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| I didn't always have time to read.   | 6 |
| I was busy with other schoolwork.  | 3 |
| I forgot to read sometimes.  | 3 |
| I fell behind on the reading.  | 3 |
| I was busy with something else, personal reasons.                          | 3 |
| I had no motivation to read (personal reasons or disinterest in the book). | 2 |

## 9. What helped you to learn?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Discussing and other peoples' opinions.                   | 9 |
| The teacher's notes on the whiteboard/slideshows.         | 3 |
| Listening to the audiobook.                               | 3 |
| I was motivated to read.                                  | 2 |
| Taking notes.   | 2 |
| Using a dictionary/translation websites and applications. | 2 |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| The teacher's guidance.    | 2 |
| I am not sure.             | 2 |
| Reading the book out loud. | 1 |
| Quizzes used in class.     | 1 |
| Reading summaries.         | 1 |

**10. What type of reading format was the most used and helpful for you?**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Digital format (e-book, HTML, PDF, .epub etc.)</b>             | <b>10</b> |
| Online website format (Project Gutenberg)                         | 5         |
| e-book  | 4         |
| PDF   | 1         |
| <b>Audiobook, PacificaRadioArchives radio reading</b>             | <b>7</b>  |
| It is possible to multitask while listening.                      | 3         |
| It was portable.  | 2         |
| It was something new and interesting.                             | 2         |
| I had time to listen to it while commuting to school.             | 1         |
| I learned pronunciation.  | 1         |
| It was easier to focus on.  | 1         |
| It was easier to read a book I do not enjoy.                      | 1         |
| <b>A combination of reading formats</b>                           | <b>6</b>  |
| Audiobook and e-book.   | 5         |
| Audiobook and physical book.                                      | 1         |
| <b>Physical release</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| The whole point of reading nowadays is to get away from a screen. | 1         |
| <b>Graded reader</b>  | <b>2</b>  |
| Important information in a short form.                            | 1         |
| Allowed me to catch up on reading in a shorter time.              | 1         |
| <b>Graphic novel</b>  | <b>1</b>  |

**11. Do you think it is now easier for you to analyse and look more into a story and its ideas after analysing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? Why/Why not?**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Yes</b>  | <b>18</b> |
| Deep analysis helps me make sense of the story.                   | 9         |
| I learned new vocabulary and concepts.                            | 8         |
| It was good analysis practice.                                    | 5         |
| I learned new tips for reading.                                   | 1         |
| <b>Maybe. / I am not sure. / It is the same.</b>                  | <b>4</b>  |
| Maybe upon rereading the book it would be easier.                 | 1         |
| I have been part of a book club as such before.                   | 1         |
| <b>No</b>   | <b>2</b>  |
| I have analysed books like this previously.                       | 1         |
| I like to just enjoy the story as it is without overanalysing it. | 1         |

**12. What did the teacher do well in your opinion?**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Preparation and organisation was done well. | 9 |
| There were varied activities.               | 7 |
| There were varied topics.                   | 4 |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| The questions were varied and interesting.    | 4 |
| Explaining vocabulary/concepts.               | 3 |
| The teacher was enthusiastic and friendly.    | 3 |
| The teacher was talking during the lesson.    | 2 |
| The presentation of the book was well done.   | 2 |
| The reward system.                            | 2 |
| The teacher took off the pressure of reading. | 2 |
| Everything was well done.                     | 1 |
| I do not know.                                | 1 |

### 13. What could have been better in the book club?

|   |   |
|---|---|
| I liked it as it was.   | 8 |
| More time for reading   | 4 |
| It would have been better if more students had read the book.                     | 2 |
| The reading choice could have been better.  | 2 |
| The seating arrangement of the book club could have been better.                  | 2 |
| The teacher could have asked specific questions from certain non-active students. | 2 |
| Getting the book beforehand.  | 1 |
| A reading test on paper to prevent spoilers from the speakers.                    | 1 |
| Less political discussions.   | 1 |
| The book club could have been longer.   | 1 |
| I could have read more.   | 1 |

### 14. Was it clear for you what you had to do in class? At home? \*

| Answer option | Students | Percentage |
|---------------|----------|------------|
| Yes           | 23       | 100%       |
| No            | 0        | 0%         |

### 15. Was this book club unit what you expected it to be? \*

#### 15.1 Why? Why not?

|            |   |           |
|------------|---|-----------|
| <b>Yes</b> |   | <b>20</b> |
|            | It was as I had expected.   | 14        |
|            | Discussing was fun.   | 1         |
|            | I had simple expectations.  | 1         |
|            | It was relaxed and there was no pressure.                         | 1         |
|            | Because we were told what it was going to be like.                | 1         |
|            | I have been in book clubs before so it was the same.              | 1         |
| <b>No</b>  |   | <b>3</b>  |
|            | It exceeded my expectations.                                      | 2         |
|            | I expected us to chat in a circle while drinking tea.             | 1         |
|            | I did not expect the different activities and topics each lesson. | 1         |

### 16. Can you use your knowledge from the book club somewhere else? Explain.

|            |   |           |
|------------|---|-----------|
| <b>Yes</b> |   | <b>21</b> |
|            | I will know what to analyse future reading. | 9         |
|            | I can use it in future discussions.         | 8         |

|           |  |   |
|-----------|--|---|
|           | I can use new vocabulary and knowledge about politics. | 5 |
|           | I can use it in other book clubs and reviewing.        | 2 |
|           | I can use it when planning a story of my own.          | 1 |
|           | I can use it for organisation.                         | 2 |
|           | I do not know how to explain it.                       | 1 |
| <b>No</b> |  | 2 |
|           | I do not know how to explain it.                       | 1 |
|           | No reason provided.                                    | 1 |

### 17. How did the course affect your knowledge, skills, and/or studies?

|  |   |
|--|---|
| It did not affect any of my skills or studies.                 | 4 |
| It affected me emotionally.                                    | 3 |
| I do not know how it affected me.                              | 3 |
| It broadened my worldview.                                     | 3 |
| I developed my vocabulary.                                     | 3 |
| It helped with my oral communication and improvisation skills. | 3 |
| I developed my analysis skills.                                | 3 |
| It motivated me to learn and read more.                        | 2 |
| It helped me memorize information more effectively.            | 1 |
| It helped me with information organization.                    | 1 |

### Would you participate in a book club elective course (valikaine) similar to this one in the future?

| Answer option | Students | Percentage |
|---------------|----------|------------|
| Yes           | 10       | 43.7%      |
| No            | 13       | 56.5%      |

### Would you like to add anything?

- The book club elective is a good idea, I'm just not very keen on reading.
- Great job! It would be nice if we had more book club lessons in the future during the English lessons because it was [a] fun way to study English :)
- Better timing next time, but everything else was pretty great! :)
- I would participate in one next time maybe if it was [at a] slower pace.
- I would participate depending on the book in the future.

One student forgot to fill in questions 14-17, therefore these questions have 23 responses rather than 24.

## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL  
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Eke Pernik**

**The Application of a Book Club as a Teaching Method in the EFL Context in an Estonian Vocational School**

**Raamatuklubi rakendamine õpetamismeetodina inglise keele võõrkeelena õpetamise kontekstis Eesti kutsekoolis**

Magistritöö

2023

Lehekülgede arv: 75

Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärgiks on uurida raamatuklubi kavandamise ja läbiviimise protsessi inglise keele õppekontekstis. Uurimuses analüüsitakse kas mainitud meetod võiks aidata kutsekooli õpilastel enda keelelisi osaoskusi arendada. Selleks on püstitatud kaks uurimusküsimust: 1) mis on raamatuklubi õppemeetodi tugevused ühe Eesti kutsekooli õpilaste keeleoskuse arendamisel inglise keele võõrkeelena tundides, ja 2) mis on raamatuklubi õppemeetodi nõrkused õppemeetodina.

Uurimus on jaotatud kaheks osaks, mille esimene peatükk räägib kirjanduse kasutamisest võõrkeeleõppes ja miks seda üldiselt keeleõppes kasutatakse, lisaks kuidas võõrkeele õppijatele lugemise õpetamiseks tekste valida. Teiseks on esimeses peatükis juttu raamatuklubide ajaloost, raamatuklubi õppemeetodist, varasematest uurimustest raamatuklubi õppemeetodi tugevuste ja nõrkuste ning klubi kavandamise protsessi kohta. Teine peatükk on empiiriline osa, mille raames valminud viis 90-minutilist tundi neljale erinevale rühmale viidi läbi ühe Eesti kutsekooli 34 õpilasega esimeselt ja teiselt kursuselt. Peatükk käsitleb õpetamiseksperimendi ettevalmistamist ja läbiviimist ning analüüsib selle tulemusi.

Kokkuvõttes on raamatuklubi meetod õppemeetodina kahetine – meetodil on palju tugevusi ja nõrkuseid, mis võivad olla meetodi kasutamisel äärmiselt olulised. Uurimuse tulemustest selgub, et meetodi põhilised tugevused on pingevaba ja turvaline õhkkond keeleõppetunnis, kuna õpilased saavad arutleda sihtkeeles laiadelt teemadel ja tegeleda tekstiga erinevatel viisidel, mis arendab nende keele- ja analüüsioskust samaaegselt. Näiteks kasutati uurimuses õppetöös lisaks arutlustele mängu ja rühmatöid. Samas on meetodil ka palju miinuseid, mis võivad õppimist ja arengut segada, näiteks ruumilahendus, õpilaste ükskõiksus lugemise vastu ning ajalimiit. Tulemused näitavad, et antud õpetamismeetod on pigem edukas meetod õppeks võõrkeeletundides antud õpilastele, kes uurimusest osa võtsid ning kasulik hobina lugemisest huvitatud õpilastele.

Märksõnad: võõrkeele õpetamine, inglise keele õpetamine, kutsekool, raamatuklubi, George Orwell, õpetamismeetodid

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