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Promoting L2 English speech fluency in Finnish general upper secondary education: An analysis of textbooks and teachers' perceptions

Highlights

- Many research-based principles of promoting fluency were identified in textbooks of L2 English for Finnish upper secondary school.

- Teachers were somewhat satisfied with the number of fluency-focused activities in textbooks.

- The importance of speech fluency is recognised in textbooks and by teachers, but teachers are expected to supplement textbooks.

Abstract

This article addresses how speech fluency is promoted in general upper secondary education in Finland. Promoting speech fluency was examined from two perspectives: an analysis of activities in textbooks and teachers' views of the usefulness of textbooks in teaching fluency. The textbook analysis included 32 English textbooks from four textbook series. Teachers' perceptions were studied with a questionnaire that was answered by 26 English teachers. The results demonstrate that there were 64 fluency-focused activities in the 32 textbooks. Over 80% of the participants wished to have more fluency-enhancing activities in textbooks, yet, over 60% were satisfied with the number of fluency activities. The results suggest that the importance of speech fluency is recognised in textbooks and by teachers, but teachers are expected to supplement textbooks with other fluency-focused activities. A large variety of fluency activities in textbooks would be beneficial to facilitate learners' fluency development in an ideal way.

Keywords: speech fluency, L2 teaching, upper secondary education, textbooks

1   Introduction

Globalisation has increased the need for communicative competence in different languages, which includes the ability to speak the language fluently (Tavakoli & Wright 2020). As such, fluency is fundamentally linked to the theme of this publication, *Language as a key to a changing world*. The changing world requires improved communication skills in a second language (L2) in educational and working contexts, among others, and therefore language learners need to have the opportunity to develop fluent oral language skills. Fluency is one of the main objectives in many L2 teaching programmes (Tavakoli & Wright 2020), as well as a central aspect of speaking proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, where it is defined as "ability to maintain a lengthy production or conversation" and "ease and spontaneity of expression" (Council of Europe 2018: 144, 171–172). Being a fluent speaker in another language is also a personal goal for many learners, as it is fundamental to the ability to communicate (Tavakoli & Wright 2020). Communicative foreign language teaching has been popular for the last thirty years (Pakula 2019; Tavakoli & Wright 2020). Due to the focus on spoken skills in communicative language teaching, speech fluency has also received more attention from language teachers recently (Tavakoli & Wright 2020). The importance of fluency underscores the relevance of studying how L2 fluency can be enhanced, both theoretically and in the classroom.

In this study, promoting fluency in L2 teaching does not refer to general oral proficiency, but rather to the more specific aspects of fluency, corresponding to the narrow sense in Lennon's (1990) distinction between broad and narrow senses of fluency. The broad sense of fluency corresponds to general oral proficiency, which is how the term is usually used in everyday language. The narrow sense consists of for example speed, pauses and hesitations, and it is usually adopted in L2 research

(Tavakoli & Hunter 2018). Lennon's (1990) narrow sense of fluency is viewed as one component of general proficiency, separate from complexity and accuracy, in the Complexity-Accuracy-Fluency framework (CAF) (Housen et al. 2012).

Fluency in this narrow sense is a somewhat neglected component in language pedagogy, because of the limited amount of attention it has received in teaching materials and practices (Rossiter et al. 2010; Tavakoli & Hunter 2018). Many teachers may emphasise accuracy and grammar, and even if the approach is communicative language teaching, free oral production activities are not sufficient for the development of speech fluency (Gatbonton & Segalowitz 2005). It has been suggested that free-production activities should be complemented by a specific focus on fluency (Rossiter et al. 2010; see also Section 2.1). Even though teaching fluent speaking has been researched to some extent, Tavakoli and Wright (2020) argue that research on the pedagogy of fluency has not attracted enough attention, and they suggest that fluency research could inform for example curriculum design or teacher education.

This study focuses on the pedagogy of fluency from the point of view of promoting fluency in textbooks and how teachers view the usefulness of textbooks in fluency instruction. Fluency-focused activities in textbooks have been examined in textbooks of L2 English in the Canadian second language learning context, where the learners live in an English-speaking environment (Diepenbroek & Derwing 2013; Rossiter et al. 2010), but no such studies have been published concerning foreign language settings, such as English is in Finland. The present study fills this gap by examining textbooks of English in Finnish general upper secondary education (referred to as upper secondary school) to identify and classify the fluency-focused activities in the books based on various research-based methods of promoting fluency. While there are previous textbook studies conducted in the Finnish context on other topics, such as pronunciation (Tergujeff 2013), cultural and linguistic diversity (Roiha et al. 2024) and oral exercises in general (Mäkelä 2005), fluency activities have not been examined. Previously, the topics of promoting fluency in textbooks (Diepenbroek & Derwing 2013; Rossiter et al. 2010) and promoting fluency in teachers' practices (Tavakoli & Hunter 2018) have been studied separately, but this study seeks to complement textbook research by also surveying teachers' views of the materials. This is done to provide a more comprehensive picture of fluency pedagogy, as teachers ultimately decide how materials are used in the classroom. Thus, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How common are fluency activities in textbooks of L2 English in Finnish upper secondary school and which fluency activity categories do the fluency activities represent?
2. How do Finnish upper secondary school teachers of English view the teaching of speech fluency and the usefulness of textbooks in promoting speech fluency based on a questionnaire?

In this study, we focus on textbooks of the A syllabus of English in Finnish upper secondary school, which aims at CEFR proficiency level B2.1 and consists of six compulsory modules (previously called courses) and two optional modules (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019). Similar to the trend of growing interest in fluency teaching and research, L2 speaking skills in general have become increasingly prominent in Finnish upper secondary schools since a separate, optional course on oral skills was included in the curriculum in 2008 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2017). Oral skills are important for communicative competence, and they are included throughout the studies of English in the National core curriculum (NCC) for general upper secondary education (Finnish National Agency for Education 2019). However, it has been suggested that, in practice, teachers and teaching materials may still prioritise written language (Pakula 2019), which is possibly emphasised even more in upper secondary school because the final exams, the matriculation examination, do not currently test oral proficiency in language subjects. This suggests that fluency is potentially neglected in the Finnish context as well, similarly to the findings from other countries mentioned above (Rossiter et al. 2010; Tavakoli & Hunter 2018), and the present study aims to investigate whether this is reflected in textbooks. It must be kept in mind, however, that the presence or absence of certain activities in the textbooks does not equal what is actually done in classrooms (see also Tavakoli & Hunter 2018), but the textbooks do have a guiding function (Luukka et al. 2008). Complementing the textbook survey with teachers' views seeks to shed more light on the issue.

2   Speech fluency in L2 teaching

In this section, previous literature on L2 speech fluency will be discussed, with emphasis on pedagogical approaches to fluency. Section 2.1 will discuss different ways to promote fluency in L2 teaching. Previous research concerning fluency in textbooks and in teachers' perceptions will be presented in Section 2.2.

2.1   Promoting fluency in L2 teaching

Given the importance of being able to speak a foreign language fluently, the central question in this study is how the development of fluency can be supported, particularly through teaching. This section will present more specific ways to promote fluency in the narrow sense in the classroom, which Rossiter et al. (2010) divide into linguistic features and pedagogical procedures to enhance fluency. According to their categorization, linguistic features include formulaic sequences and discourse markers, while consciousness-raising, the provision of pre-task planning time, the imposition of time constraints on production and task repetition are examples of pedagogical procedures.

Consciousness-raising means that fluency can be improved indirectly through "an explicit focus on the learners' use of fluency-enhancing strategies" (Götz 2013: 126). These fluency-enhancing strategies have also been referred to as fluency resources, which can be divided into two types of problem-solving mechanisms: stalling mechanisms and communication strategies (Peltonen 2017). Indeed, problems are likely to arise in an L2 because its production is less automatized than in the L1, and also learners' knowledge of L2 is often incomplete (Dörnyei & Kormos 1998). Learners should be made aware of the role of these fluency resources, so that they are better prepared to deal with problems in real-life communication (Peltonen 2017). The ideal combination for achieving this in practice would be to introduce strategy instruction and awareness-raising activities to help learners notice how it is possible to maintain fluency, together with speaking practice (Peltonen 2020; Peltonen & Lintunen 2024; Rossiter et al. 2010). For instance, it has been suggested that with teachers' support, learners could be instructed to reflect on differences in speakers' fluency from different perspectives, such as speech rate, pausing or stalling mechanisms (Peltonen 2020). Part of strategy training is raising awareness about the usefulness of communication strategies and demonstrating models of how native speakers and other learners use them (Dörnyei 1995). It is also possible to directly teach expressions that are needed for example for circumlocution or fillers (Dörnyei 1995).

Fluency resources are ways to solve problems caused by a lack of automaticity, but there are some methods that have been found to promote fluency through automatization, and these include **task repetition** and **pre-task planning**. Task repetition means completing the same task several times, and its advantage is that the speaker can reuse the same content, vocabulary and grammatical structures, as most of the planning has happened already during the first delivery, which reduces the need for pauses and hesitations in later deliveries (de Jong & Perfetti 2011). Another way to reduce the need for planning while speaking is the use of pre-task planning, which promotes fluency, as learners can plan for the content and language of their speech already before starting the task (Mehnert 1998).

Formulaic sequences are listed by Rossiter et al. (2010) as a linguistic feature that promotes fluency. Formulaic sequences are stored and retrieved as a single unit, in the same way as a single word (Wood 2006). The benefit of processing formulaic sequences is that if they are retrieved automatically, the speaker can already focus on planning ahead, which increases fluency (Wood 2010). Formulaic sequences are thus also linked to automaticity, and these two concepts are central in the development of speech fluency (Wood 2010). Boers et al. (2006) examined the effect of teaching formulaic sequences on fluency, and they observed a link between the use of formulaic sequences and fluency assessments, as well as the effectiveness of their teaching technique in terms of fluency. In their study, the learners were told about the importance of formulaic sequences and guided to identify useful chunks from texts or recordings. Thus, this method can also be considered an example of

consciousness-raising. Repetition is also important in aiming at the automatization of formulaic sequences (Wood 2010).

Discourse markers refer to the kinds of lexical phrases that Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) divide into macro-organizers and micro-organizers. Macro-organizers are used to signal the structure of speech or text, for example to show a shift of topic, to summarize or to give an example (e.g., *by the way*, *in a nutshell*, *in other words*). Micro-organizers (e.g., *well*, *I see*, *yeah*) function as fillers to gain more planning time, which promotes fluency. There is some overlap between discourse markers and other fluency-enhancing features discussed above. Discourse markers can simultaneously be formulaic sequences if they are multi-word constructions that are processed as a whole. Similarly, discourse markers used as fillers could be regarded as stalling mechanisms, part of fluency resources. Discourse markers make speech more coherent when they are used to connect utterances, and filling pauses with discourse markers gives the speaker "a feeling of fluency" and shows that they wish to continue speaking (Nattinger & DeCarrico 1992: 119). An example of how to practise the use of macro-organizers is to prepare presentations, focusing specifically on the use of these discourse markers to connect ideas, whereas micro-organizers can be practised for example by adding fillers to simple dialogues (Rossiter et al. 2010).

2.2   Fluency in L2 textbooks and classroom practices

As stated in Section 1, research on fluency activities in textbooks has been relatively rare. Fluency-focused activities in textbooks have been examined mainly in the Canadian second language learning context, in studies by Rossiter et al. (2010) and Diepenbroek and Derwing (2013). The survey of Rossiter et al. (2010) included 28 student textbooks and 14 teacher resource books in Canada. In these books, they investigated the presence of the following types of activities: a) consciousness-raising tasks, b) rehearsal or repetition tasks, c) the use of formulaic sequences, d) the use of discourse markers, and e) communicative free-production activities. They found that free-production activities were clearly the most common type of activity in the books, and formulaic sequences and rehearsal or repetition featured in more than half of the books as well. The study of Diepenbroek and Derwing (2013) included 48 textbooks of English as a second language in Canada. Their categorization of activities was slightly different from Rossiter et al. (2010), consisting of formulaic language, role-play, repetition and preplanning, and their finding was that formulaic language and role-play were the most common activities, but repetition and especially preplanning were less frequent (Diepenbroek & Derwing 2013). Both studies came to the conclusion that the textbooks that were examined did not focus sufficiently on promoting oral fluency. Therefore, as Diepenbroek and Derwing (2013) conclude, it is expected that teachers promote fluency using methods other than those provided by the textbooks.

Along with research on fluency activities in textbooks, examining teachers' views on fluency and methods for teaching it has also been relatively rare. Yet, one study exploring both was Tavakoli and Hunter's (2018) examination of how language teachers understand fluency and how they promote fluency in the classroom. The participants (N=84) were teachers of English, Spanish, Italian, German or French at different school levels from primary school to university, and they represented various nationalities and different lengths of teaching experience. The main results of Tavakoli and Hunter's (2018) survey were that over 80% of the teachers answered that they knew at least to some extent what speech fluency means, but only about half of the participants said that they knew how to teach fluency. The teachers were also asked to provide examples of how they promote fluency in the classroom. Over half of the suggested activities belonged to the category of free-production activities, whereas only about 10% of the answers mentioned activities corresponding to explicit fluency-focused activities.

Teachers' classroom practices are related to their definitions of fluency (Tavakoli & Hunter 2018), and therefore it would be important that teachers are familiar with the concept of fluency and know how to promote it. Research on teachers' perceptions could, in turn, have implications for designing textbooks (Tavakoli & Wright 2020). Nevertheless, these two perspectives, fluency in textbooks and fluency in teachers' conceptions, have not been combined in research, and this study seeks to complement previous textbook research by including a survey on teachers' views of the fluency-related activities provided by textbooks, in addition to a textbook analysis.

3   Material and methods

To answer the two research questions, two types of data were collected. The first part of the study was a textbook analysis of fluency-enhancing activities in upper secondary school textbooks of English in Finland using theory-based content analysis. The method combined quantitative analysis based on descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis of example activities. The material and methods of the textbook analysis will be presented in Section 3.1. The second part of the study was a questionnaire for upper secondary school English teachers, examining teachers' perceptions on teaching fluency and fluency-enhancing activities in textbooks. The responses were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. Section 3.2 will introduce the procedures and participants for the questionnaire.

3.1   Textbook analysis

A textbook analysis was conducted to examine the types of activities that textbooks of L2 English contain to promote speech fluency. The materials used to study this first

research question were four series of textbooks for the A syllabus of English in Finnish upper secondary school, each of which contains eight books. Thus, the total number of books in the study was 32 (see Appendix 1 for the references for the analysed text-books). The series were *Insights* (2015–2018, Otava), *On Track* (2014–2019, Sanoma Pro), *Open Road* (2010–2011, Otava) and *ProFiles* (2010–2011, WSOYPro).

The chosen textbooks were examined to identify and categorise fluency-focused activities. The framework for categorization consisted of the following categories: 1) consciousness-raising and strategy training, 2) repetition and pre-task planning, 3) formulaic sequences and 4) discourse markers. This was a modified version of fluency activity classifications used in the studies of Rossiter et al. (2010) and Tavakoli and Hunter (2018). Tavakoli and Hunter (2018) adapted Rossiter et al.'s (2010; see Section 2.2) framework in their study, with some changes made to the original framework: they combined formulaic sequences and discourse markers into one category and created a separate category for fluency strategy training, as well as added pre-task planning in the category of rehearsal and repetition. Similar to Tavakoli and Hunter's (2018) framework, the framework of the present study includes fluency strategy training and pre-task planning in addition to Rossiter et al.'s (2010) categories, due to research findings of their usefulness in promoting fluency (see Section 2.1). In contrast, discourse markers were kept as a separate category, because their function is so different from other formulaic sequences. Even though free-production activities were found to be the most common activity type by Rossiter et al. (2010), this category was not included in the present study, as the focus was on activities that have been found to explicitly address fluency in the narrow sense. Table 1 shows the similarities between the categories of the present study and the studies of Rossiter et al. (2010) and Tavakoli and Hunter (2018), with the categories of the present study in the left column.

TABLE 1.   Categories of fluency activities.

The present study	Rossiter et al. (2010)	Tavakoli & Hunter (2018)
1 a) consciousness-raising	✓	✓
1 b) strategy training	-	✓
2 a) repetition	✓	(combined with planning)
2 b) pre-task planning	-	✓
3) formulaic sequences	✓	✓
4) discourse markers	✓	(combined with formulaic sequences)

The activities were categorised by the first author for their main activity type, the name of the book series and the number of the course. The activities were included in the calculations only if the main focus was on one of the fluency-enhancing cat-

egories. However, it was somewhat open to interpretation what the main focus of the activity was.

For example for Category 1, consciousness-raising and strategy training, para-phrasing activities were very common in the books, but these activities were only included in the category of strategy training if there was an explicit focus on how paraphrasing can be done. Otherwise, the main focus was estimated to be to practise the target vocabulary, and these kinds of activities were not included in the category. In Category 2, repetition and pre-task planning, repetition was defined as task repetition (see Section 2.1), and the repetition of single phrases belongs to Category 3, formulaic sequences. For Category 3, formulaic sequences, an activity was included if it required the use of specific phrases. Phrase lists were commonly provided to accompany activities, but if the phrases were not necessary for accomplishing an activity, it was not included in the category. Many written exercises focused on formulaic sequences, with the aim of finding certain phrases in the texts, but these written exercises were excluded. Fillers can be considered both fluency resources and discourse markers (see Section 2.1), and thus in the present study they were included in Category 1, consciousness-raising and strategy training, instead of Category 4, discourse markers. In the analysis, the frequencies of the activities per activity type, per course and per book series were calculated to produce descriptive statistics.

3.2   Questionnaire on teachers' perceptions

The second research question about how teachers view the usefulness of textbooks in promoting speech fluency was examined using a Webropol questionnaire sent to upper secondary school teachers of English in Finland. The aim of the questionnaire was to provide general insight into how teachers perceive teaching fluency, particularly in terms of fluency-focused textbook activities. The questionnaire was designed to cover two content areas: views on teaching speech fluency and fluency-enhancing activities in upper secondary school textbooks of English. In total, the questionnaire consisted of 28 items, and it was conducted in Finnish (the English translation is included in Appendix 2). The questionnaire started with a definition of speech fluency, asking if the definition was familiar to the participants. Most items concerning teaching speech fluency were directly from the study of Tavakoli and Hunter (2018: 339), and they were translated into Finnish. These items asked the participants to assess their knowledge about promoting speech fluency and the related research findings on a Likert scale. The questionnaire section on fluency-enhancing activities in textbooks asked about teachers' opinions on the number and usefulness of these activities in textbooks. This section was developed specifically for this study, since there are no previous studies that investigate teachers' conceptions of promoting fluency in textbooks.

The questionnaire was piloted with a few participants, and the final version of the questionnaire was shared on two Facebook pages for English teachers in Finland, as well as by e-mail through the mailing list of the Association of Teachers of English in Finland in December 2022. Answering the questionnaire was voluntary, and a data protection notice was attached to the questionnaire. In total, 26 participants answered the questionnaire. Most of the participants were between 30 and 59 years of age, while two participants were under 30 years old and one was over 60 years old. The participants represented teachers with varying amounts of teaching experience, although experience between 11 and 30 years was the most common. The textbook series used by the participants in the last ten years were also asked as background information, and out of the textbooks examined in the present study *Insights* had been used by 22 participants, *On Track* by 7 participants, *Open Road* by 15 participants and *ProFiles* by 6 participants. Most of the teachers chose several options, as there have been three different curricula with different textbooks in the last ten years, and they may also have taught in different schools using different series. The answers to the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics, and the connection between the background factors and the other answers was not analysed using inferential statistics due to the small sample size. Therefore, the teacher survey can be viewed as exploratory, as it provides some insight into a topic that has not been studied extensively.

4   Results

4.1   Results of the textbook analysis

There were in total 64 fluency-focused activities in the textbooks in question, corresponding to the categories of consciousness-raising and strategy training, repetition and pre-task planning, formulaic sequences, and discourse markers (see Section 3.1). Over half of these activities (35) featured on course 8, which is the specialised, optional course on oral skills mentioned above. The main interest of this study is in the types of activities that the books provide to promote fluency. The analysis revealed that formulaic sequences were clearly the most common activity type, with 39 activities. Consciousness-raising or strategy training were the focus of 18 activities, while repetition or pre-task planning featured only in four activities and discourse markers in three activities. These results are summarised in Table 2.

TABLE 2. The number of fluency activities by activity type.

Category	Number of fluency activities
1) consciousness-raising and strategy training	18
2) repetition and pre-task planning	4
3) formulaic sequences	39
4) discourse markers	3
Total	**64**

The number of fluency-focused activities was fairly similar across all textbook series in the study, with the number ranging from 12 to 20. Figure 1 presents the distribution of fluency-focused activities by activity type in each book series separately. This sheds light on how fluency may be approached differently by different textbook writers. Figure 1 shows how consciousness-raising and strategy training, as well as formulaic sequences are addressed by all the series. However, there are some differences as well: while *Insights* includes all four activity types, *On Track* mostly focuses on formulaic sequences.
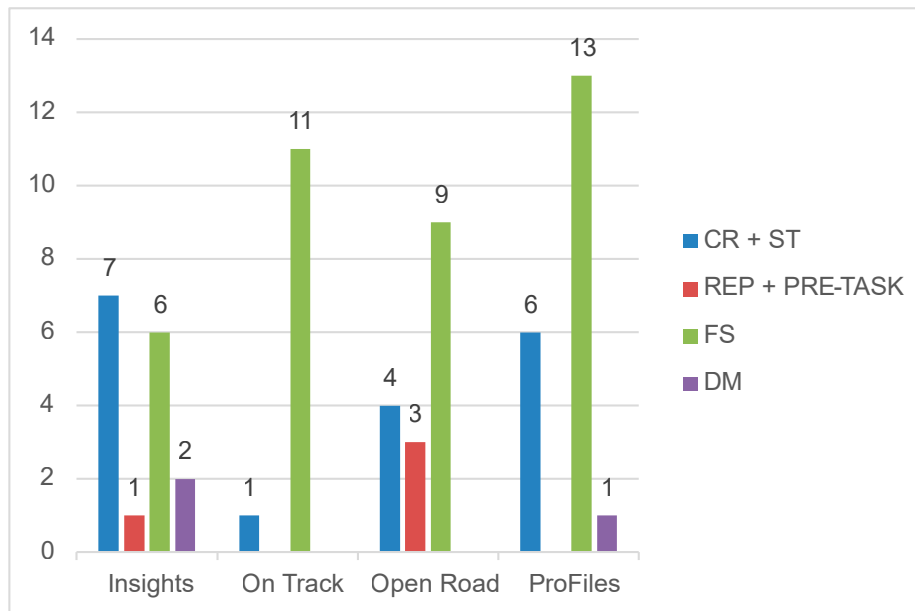

FIGURE 1. The number of fluency activities (n=64) by series and by activity type (CR + ST = consciousness-raising and strategy training; REP + PRE-TASK = repetition and pre-task planning; FS = formulaic sequences; DM = discourse markers).

To complement the quantitative analysis of fluency activities, the purpose of the examples in this section is to illustrate how principles of promoting fluency, presented in the theoretical section, have been implemented in textbooks. While formulaic sequences were the most common activity type in the data, explicit awareness-raising on the importance of formulaic sequences was not very common. A typical activity on formulaic sequences included a ready-made list of phrases that the students were to use in an activity, for example in exercise "5F Saying 'no' tactfully" from *On Track 8* (2017: 103). In the exercise, a list of "Key phrases" was provided, and the students were explicitly instructed to "[u]se the phrases from the list" in the dialogues. All the activities on formulaic sequences found in the data can be considered to aim at repetition of the phrases.

Consciousness-raising or strategy training most often co-occurred in the same activity, as usually there was first a tip about how to solve a problem, which can be considered consciousness-raising, and the activity itself focused on practising the strategy, that is strategy training. An example activity from *ProFiles 1* (2011: 60) demonstrates this kind of typical activity. There was first a "Learning tip" box that explained the importance of talking around a word and provided typical phrases for this. The activity itself consisted of two lists of words that were to be explained to a partner.

There were only four activities that were considered to focus either on task repetition or pre-task planning. Out of these four activities, three involved task repetition and one activity had a pre-task planning component. An example of task repetition (see Section 2.1), when the same presentation is given several times, is from *Insights 3* (2016: 55). In this activity, students prepare a presentation of an artwork in groups, after which half of the group give the presentation to other class members, while the other half circulate and listen to the presentations of other groups. Activity "5 Boycott!" in *Open Road 8* (2010: 130) is the only example with explicit instructions on pre-task planning. The task is to record an interview between an interviewer and an activist, and the pre-task planning instruction reads "Make rough notes of what you'll say, then practise the interview once or twice, and finally, record it".

The number of activities focusing on discourse markers in the data was low, only three activities. All the three activities on discourse markers in the data were of the same type that Rossiter et al. (2010; see Section 2.1) suggest in order to practise macro-organizers: the task is to give a presentation or a speech using the signpost phrases that are provided, as in exercise "6J My topic today is…" in *ProFiles 8* (2011: 74). The task was to prepare a presentation and include phrases from the list "Useful signposts when giving a presentation", for example "I'd like to start by…" or "Now let's move on to…" (*ProFiles 8* 2011: 73).

4.2   Results of the questionnaire on teachers' perceptions

To complement the textbook analysis, this study also included a teacher question-naire to explore teachers' views on practising speech fluency in textbooks. The results demonstrated that more than 90% of the participants reported that they knew at least to some extent how speech fluency can be taught in foreign language classrooms. When asked about practising speech fluency in their specific teaching context, upper secondary school English classes, 73% agreed to a large extent that it is important to practise speech fluency in that teaching context, and the remaining 27% agreed to some extent. 65% agreed at least to some extent with the statement that there is enough time for practising speech fluency in upper secondary school.

These results about teachers' understanding of speech fluency are background for examining the results of the actual topic of this study, teachers' views of fluency-en-hancing activities in upper secondary school textbooks of English. The participants found it important that textbooks contain activities promoting speech fluency: 92% agreed with this statement to a large extent, as Table 3 shows. They were also asked about their view of the quantity of fluency-focused activities in the books that they have used, and over 60% stated that the number had been sufficient at least to some extent. Still, the majority, over 80%, wished for more fluency-enhancing activities in textbooks. Table 3 shows the total distribution of answers, where most participants agreed with these two statements to some extent. It must be noted that the individual participants who were to a large extent satisfied with the number of activities did not think that there should be more of them, and, in contrast, those who were not happy wished particularly strongly to have more fluency activities in textbooks. As for the extra materials, the wish to have material focusing on fluency was even stronger, as 58% agreed to a large extent that there should be more material for practising speech fluency in the extra materials.

TABLE 3.   Teachers' views of the quantity of fluency activities in materials (n=26).

Questionnaire item	corresponds to my view…			
	to a large extent	to some extent	to a limited extent	hardly at all
It is important that upper secondary school English textbooks include activities to promote speech fluency	92% (24)	8% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
The upper secondary school English textbooks that I have used have contained enough activities focusing on speech fluency	12% (3)	50% (13)	27% (7)	12% (3)
Textbooks should contain more activities focusing on speech fluency	35% (9)	50% (13)	15% (4)	0% (0)
There should be more material for practising speech fluency in the extra materials connected to textbooks	58% (15)	31% (8)	12% (3)	0% (0)

The participants' views of the quality of fluency activities in textbooks were examined with three statements, whose answers can be seen in Table 4. The activities were mostly seen as useful, as more than 80% agreed with this statement at least to some extent, but few participants found the activities very interesting or relevant.

TABLE 4.   Teachers' views of the quality of fluency activities in textbooks (n=26).

Questionnaire item	corresponds to my view…			
	to a large extent	to some extent	to a limited extent	hardly at all
Textbook activities focusing on speech fluency are useful	23% (6)	58% (15)	19% (5)	0% (0)
Textbook activities focusing on speech fluency are interesting	12% (3)	42% (11)	42% (11)	4% (1)
Textbook activities focusing on speech fluency are relevant	8% (2)	54% (14)	35% (9)	4% (1)

TABLE 5.   Teachers' use of textbooks for promoting fluency (n=26).

Questionnaire item	corresponds to my view…			
	to a large extent	to some extent	to a limited extent	hardly at all
During my classes, I use most of the activities that textbooks provide for promoting speech fluency	15% (4)	62% (16)	23% (6)	0% (0)
I often complement textbook activities with further instruction on how students can enhance their speech fluency	23% (6)	58% (15)	15% (4)	4% (1)

Two of the statements concerning fluency-enhancing activities in textbooks aimed to examine teachers' practices of using textbooks in teaching fluency. These statements and the distribution of the answers to them can be seen in Table 5. More than 70% of the participants agreed at least to some extent with the statement that they use most of the fluency-focused activities that the textbooks contain. Over 80% stated that they complement textbook activities at least to some extent by giving further instruction on enhancing speech fluency.

5   Discussion and conclusion

This study viewed the theme *Language as a key to a changing world* through one particular aspect of language proficiency, speech fluency, and in one particular context, L2 English in Finnish upper secondary school. More specifically, the focus was on textbooks: the aim was to examine the types of fluency activities that textbooks of L2 English contain, as well as to explore teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of textbooks in promoting speech fluency. This provides some insight into how textbooks contribute to the development of speech fluency, an important skill in the changing world.

Overall, all four textbook series examined in the present study addressed speech fluency to some extent, although they differed in terms of the most common activity types. When compared with suggestions from previous fluency research (e.g., Wood 2010; Dörnyei 1995; de Jong & Perfetti 2011; see Section 2.1), many principles of promoting fluency could be identified in the activities. In total, formulaic sequences were the most common type, which is in line with the studies of Rossiter et al. (2010) and Diepenbroek and Derwing (2013) as well (see Section 2.2). In contrast, consciousness-raising appeared to be more common in the data of the present study than in

the results of Rossiter et al. (2010). Based on this finding, teachers in Finland using the textbooks examined in the present study might be better equipped to raise learners' awareness of fluency features than teachers in Canada using the textbooks examined by Rossiter et al. (2010). Nevertheless, there seemed to be less task repetition in the Finnish textbooks compared to the Canadian textbooks examined by Rossiter et al. (2010) and Diepenbroek and Derwing (2013). Given the small number of activities in this category as a whole, it appears that teachers should add task repetition and pre-task planning to ready-made activities themselves, if they wish to use these techniques to promote fluency. Our study also has implications for textbook writers: as our analyses showed that some of the series, such as *On Track*, relied mostly on a single fluency activity type (formulaic sequences), while others, notably *Insights*, included a broader range of types, this is something to consider when designing future English textbooks. To maximally benefit learners' fluency development, ideally, the textbooks would contain a range of different fluency activity types (Rossiter et al. 2010).

The questionnaire on teachers' perceptions aimed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the usefulness of textbooks in teaching fluency. The participants largely agreed that it is important to practise speech fluency in upper secondary school English lessons, and it is even more important that textbooks include activities for promoting speech fluency. The Finnish teachers of English in the present study reported clearly more knowledge of promoting speech fluency than the teachers in the study of Tavakoli and Hunter (2018; see Section 2.2), about half of whom answered that they knew how speech fluency can be taught, whereas the percentage was over 90 in the present study. However, it can be argued that the small sample may consist of motivated and interested teachers, and the result cannot be generalised beyond the sample. Furthermore, the participants were somewhat satisfied with the number of fluency-focused activities. On the one hand, this may signal that the number of fluency-focused activities has been sufficient, but on the other hand, the participants may have a broader view of what promotes fluency and confuse fluency teaching with general communicative activities, as the teachers in the study of Tavakoli and Hunter did (2018; see Section 2.2). Nevertheless, the majority wished to have more fluency activities in textbooks and in teachers' materials.

To summarise, this study examined textbooks from the perspective of speech fluency, an important part of language proficiency that has not been studied previously in textbooks used in Finland, as other aspects, such as pronunciation, cultural and linguistic diversity and oral exercises in general have received more attention (see Tergujeff 2013; Roiha et al. 2024; Mäkelä 2005). The textbook study must be seen as a case study, even though it included the most widely used textbooks from the previous two curricula. The teacher questionnaire related to fluency activities on textbooks also provided new information on a topic that has not been studied, although the analysis must be considered exploratory due to the relatively small number of participants.

In this study, the participants self-reported their knowledge and practices in a multiple-choice questionnaire, which may not equal what they actually do in classrooms (Borg 2015). Ideally, it would be complemented with classroom observations to shed more light on how the teachers would promote learners' fluency in practice (Tavakoli & Hunter 2018). Another factor to study further would be the support provided by teachers' materials for teaching speech fluency. Teachers expressed a wish to have more material for promoting fluency in teachers' materials, but the contents of teachers' materials were not examined in the present study. It would also be interesting to compare the most recent textbooks to the books examined in the present study in order to explore whether there is more focus on speech fluency in the newer materials. In addition, upper secondary school textbooks could be compared to books used in other levels of education.

All in all, the general importance of speech fluency is recognised by the teachers who participated in the present study. Considering the teachers' answers and the variety of fluency activities in textbooks, speech fluency does not appear to be a totally neglected component in Finnish upper secondary school. This is encouraging considering the importance of fluent speaking skills in a globalised world. However, teachers are expected to be aware of fluency activities and complement materials themselves to promote fluency. Given the guiding function of textbooks, a large variety of fluency activities in textbooks and teachers' materials would increase the likelihood that speech fluency is addressed in classroom practices.

Acknowledgments

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APPENDIX 1. Analysed textbooks

Daffue-Karsten, L., M. Davies, T. Kae, R. Myller, P. Rantanen & P. Vuorinen 2014. *On Track 1*.
    Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.
Daffue-Karsten, L., M. Davies, T. Kae, R. Myller, P. Rantanen & P. Vuorinen 2015a. *On Track 2*.
    Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.
Daffue-Karsten, L., M. Davies, T. Kae, R. Myller, P. Rantanen & P. Vuorinen 2015b. *On Track 3*.
    Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.
Daffue-Karsten, L., M. Davies, T. Kae, R. Myller, P. Rantanen & P. Vuorinen 2016a. *On Track 4*.
    Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.
Daffue-Karsten, L., M. Davies, T. Kae, R. Myller, P. Rantanen & P. Vuorinen 2016b. *On Track 6*.
    Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.
Daffue-Karsten, L., M. Davies, T. Kae, R. Myller, P. Rantanen & P. Vuorinen 2017. *On Track 8*.
    Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.
Daffue-Karsten, L., M. Davies, T. Kae, R. Myller, P. Rantanen & P. Vuorinen 2019a. *On Track 5*.
    Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.
Daffue-Karsten, L., M. Davies, T. Kae, R. Myller, P. Rantanen & P. Vuorinen 2019b. *On Track 7*.
    Helsinki: Sanoma Pro.
Elovaara, M., J. Ikonen, J. Myles, A.-M. Mäkelä, L. Nikkanen, M. Perälä, O.-P. Salo & T. Sutela
    2011a. *ProFiles 1*. Helsinki: WSOYpro.
Elovaara, M., J. Ikonen, J. Myles, A.-M. Mäkelä, L. Nikkanen, M. Perälä, O.-P. Salo & T. Sutela
    2011b. *ProFiles 2*. Helsinki: WSOYpro.
Ikonen, J., A.-M. Mäkelä, L. Nikkanen, O.-P. Salo & T. Sutela [2009] 2010a. *ProFiles 5*. Helsinki:
    WSOYpro.
Ikonen, J., A.-M. Mäkelä, L. Nikkanen, O.-P. Salo & T. Sutela 2010b. *ProFiles 6*. Helsinki:
    WSOYpro.
Ikonen, J., A.-M. Mäkelä, L. Nikkanen, O.-P. Salo & T. Sutela 2010c. *ProFiles 7*. Helsinki:
    WSOYpro.
Ikonen, J., A.-M. Mäkelä, L. Nikkanen, O.-P. Salo & T. Sutela 2011a. *ProFiles 3*. Helsinki:
    WSOYpro.
Ikonen, J., A.-M. Mäkelä, L. Nikkanen, O.-P. Salo & T. Sutela 2011b. *ProFiles 4*. Helsinki:
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Ikonen, J., A.-M. Mäkelä, L. Nikkanen, O.-P. Salo, T. Sutela & L. Säteri 2011. *ProFiles 8*. Helsinki:
    WSOYpro.
Karapalo, E., P. Keltto, M. Kilmer, P. Kuusivaara, T. Päkkilä & A. Suonio 2015. *Insights: Course 1*.
    Helsinki: Otava.
Karapalo, E., P. Keltto, M. Kilmer, P. Kuusivaara, T. Päkkilä & A. Suonio 2016a. *Insights: Course 2*.
    Helsinki: Otava.
Karapalo, E., P. Keltto, M. Kilmer, P. Kuusivaara, T. Päkkilä & A. Suonio 2016b. *Insights: Course 3*.
    Helsinki: Otava.
Karapalo, E., P. Keltto, M. Kilmer, P. Kuusivaara, T. Päkkilä & A. Suonio 2017a. *Insights: Course 4*.
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    Helsinki: Otava.
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Karapalo, E., J. McWhirr, J. Mäki, T. Päkkilä, M. Sadeharju & R. Silk 2011. *Open Road: Course 7*. Helsinki: Otava.

McWhirr, J., J. Mäki, T. Päkkilä, M. Riite & R. Silk [2008] 2011. *Open Road: Course 1*. Helsinki: Otava.

APPENDIX 2. English translation of the questionnaire.

Statements 1-7 in item 2 are based on the questionnaire of Tavakoli and Hunter
(2018: 339).

I Teaching speech fluency
This study defines speech fluency as follows:
Fluency refers to effortlessness and ease of speech, and it is one component of oral
proficiency, separate from complexity and accuracy. Fluency is linked to for example
speed, pauses and repairs.

1. How familiar is the above definition of speech fluency to you? *
Very familiar
Somewhat familiar
Not very familiar
Not familiar at all

The following statements are related to teaching speech fluency.
2. Choose the option that corresponds to your view the best. *

Corresponds to my view to a large extent	Corresponds to my view to some extent	Corresponds to my view to a limited extent	Corresponds to my view hardly at all

I know how speech fluency can be taught in L2 classroom.
I know how to help my learners improve speech fluency.
I know the kind of activities that help promote speech fluency.
I know learning strategies that help learners improve their L2 speech fluency.
I feel confident about helping my learners improve their speech fluency.
I know recent research findings about how to promote speech fluency.
I think recent research in speech fluency can help me with my classroom teaching
practice.
It is important to practise speech fluency in upper secondary school English classes.
There is time to practise speech fluency in upper secondary school English classes.

II Fluency-enhancing activities in upper secondary school textbooks of English
3. Which textbooks have you used in teaching upper secondary school English in the last 10 years? You can choose several options. *
Elements
Insights
New Insights
On Track
Open Road
ProFiles
Quest
Studeo
Other, what?

The following statements are related to fluency-enhancing activities in upper secondary school textbooks of English.

4. Choose the option that corresponds to your view the best. *
Corresponds to my view to a large extent
Corresponds to my view to some extent
Corresponds to my view to a limited extent
Corresponds to my view hardly at all

It is important that upper secondary school English textbooks include activities to promote speech fluency.
The upper secondary school English textbooks that I have used have contained enough activities focusing on speech fluency.
During my classes, I use most of the activities that textbooks provide for promoting speech fluency.
Textbook activities focusing on speech fluency are useful.
Textbook activities focusing on speech fluency are interesting.
Textbook activities focusing on speech fluency are relevant.
Textbooks should contain more activities focusing on speech fluency.
There should be more material for practising speech fluency in the extra materials connected to textbooks.
I often complement textbook activities with further instruction on how students can enhance their speech fluency.

5. What kind of differences have you noticed between different textbooks in terms of the materials that they include for practising speech fluency?

6. How often do you create your own materials or find materials from other sources for practising speech fluency? Estimate the average during one course. *
Almost every lesson
A few times during a course
Once during a course
Less frequently
Never

7. Give examples of materials that you have used.

8. Would you like to add a comment on teaching speech fluency and fluency activities, for example specify a previous answer or add something that was not asked in the questionnaire?

III Background information

9. Age *
Under 30
30–39
40–49
50–59
60 or above

10. Gender *
Male
Female
Other
I prefer not to answer

11. When did you complete teacher training? *
2012–2022
2002–2012
1992–2002
1982–1992
Before 1982
I have not completed teacher training

12. How many years have you worked as an English teacher in general upper secondary education? *
Less than a year
1–5 years
6–10 years
11–20 years
21–30 years
31 years or more

13. How many years have you worked as an English teacher in total? *
Less than a year
1–5 years
6–10 years
11–20 years
21–30 years
31 years or more