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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK EVALUATION  
PRINCIPLES**

**ANĢĻU VALODAS MĀCĪBU GRĀMATU VĒRTĒŠANAS  
PRINCIPI**

BACHELOR THESIS

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## ANOTĀCIJA

Bakalaura darbā aprakstīts angļu valodas kā svešvalodas mācīšanā izmantoto mācību grāmatu izvērtējums, salīdzinot ar Valsts Izglītības Satura Centra izveidoto mācību priekšmeta paraugu angļu valodas mācīšanai. Pētījuma mērķis bija rast priekšstatu par mācību grāmatu kvalitāti, kas tiek izmantotas angļu valodas apgūvē 10. – 12. klasēs. Par pētījuma metodēm tika izvēlētas teorētiskā analīze, kvalitatīvā pētījuma metode, kā arī aptaujas analīze. Rezultātā tika atklāts, ka, izvērtējot pētījuma bāzes skolā angļu valodas apgūvē izmantotās trīs mācību grāmatas – ‘CHOICES Intermediate’, ‘CHOICES Upper-Intermediate’ un ‘Upstream Advanced’ – ‘Upstream’ (Express Publishing) ietver visvairāk no Valsts Izglītības Satura Centra izveidotā mācību priekšmeta parauga angļu valodas mācīšanai iekļautā tematiskā satura.

**Atslēgvārdi: angļu valodas mācīšana, mācību grāmatu vērtēšana, tematiskais saturs, vidējā izglītība**

## ABSTRACT

The Bachelor's Thesis deals with the evaluation of the textbooks used for teaching English as a Foreign Language in comparison with the Sample Programme for Teaching English on a Secondary Level developed by the National Centre for Education. The research was conducted to gain an insight in the textbook quality that are used for teaching Form 10 – 12 students in Secondary School. During the research, the topics in the textbooks were analysed. For the research, theoretical analysis, qualitative research method and survey analysis were used. The research revealed that, among the three textbooks 'CHOICES Intermediate', 'CHOICES Upper-Intermediate' and 'Upstream Advanced', which are used in the research base school, 'Upstream' (Express Publishing) includes more of the topics included in the Sample Programme.

**Key words: English language teaching, secondary education, textbook evaluation, textbook topics**

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## INTRODUCTION

English Language Teaching is a topical issue these days, when more and more people all over the world are willing to learn English to be able to participate in the ever-growing English-speaking society. English language proficiency is very highly appreciated. It can be a turning point for those willing to work or study abroad.

In Secondary Schools in Latvia, English most often is taught as a Foreign Language. The Centralised exam in English also may be chosen to graduate from the Secondary school. Thus, during the school years it is important for the student to acquire the necessary proficiency level to pass the Centralised State Exam. For the acquisition of the necessary skills, teachers use different sets of course books or textbooks and workbooks, and it is usually the teachers' responsibility to choose the appropriate textbook and other materials.

'Materials can be informative, instructional, experiential, eliciting or exploratory' (Tomlinson, 2012: 143). However, the textbooks for teaching English on a Secondary Level should consist of all the characteristics mentioned previously, because there are several items the student should know to be a competent language user and pass the Centralised State exam as well. The common practice for teaching English is to use a textbook. The textbook usually has several units that offer a variety of topics and issues for the student to discuss, thus, gaining the necessary competences for the language use. However, there are several advantages and disadvantages in using a textbook (Harmer, 2001: 234). One of them being that the textbook may not be fully applicable to cover all the topics and sociocultural issues planned by the teacher or mentioned in the State Framework for language teaching. Because of this reason, it is the teacher's responsibility to choose the most effective textbook, and use some additional materials or sources to cover all the topics, which also is a common practice (Hedge, 2008:359).

The topics that are included in the textbooks for teaching English is an important issue in the ever-growing English-speaking community. As Ročāne and Samuseviča (2016) explain, 'it is necessary to integrate modern events into the content of education which would not only promote the learning of knowledge, but also promote a sense of certainty of being able to influence the global events'. It means that, if the textbook cannot provide with the necessary topics for the students to discuss, the teacher must adapt and use additional sources to include the missing parts in the teaching process.

Several studies have been carried out on evaluation of different aspects of textbooks and textbook use as such (Basturkmen 2002; Borg 1999), but there are no studies on the quality of textbooks used for teaching English in Latvia. Furthermore, the discussion on language competence is spreading among language teachers, researchers and linguists, and the education system and approaches are being developed and updated consistently. Thus, every aspect of language teaching should be considered, including a study on textbook use and content.

The present paper investigates the textbooks used to teach English as a Foreign Language for Forms 10 – 12. The research base school was chosen randomly. The results of the Centralised State exam in English of the research base school are average. The books used in the investigation are '*CHOICES Intermediate Student's Book*', '*CHOICES Upper Intermediate Student's Book*' both compiled by Michael Harris and Anna Sikorzynska (Pearson Education Limited) and '*UPSTREAM Advanced Student's Book*' compiled by Virginia Evans and Lynda Edwards (Express Publishing). For the investigation, the topics included in the textbooks were analysed.

The **goal** of the study is to analyse the quality of the textbooks used for teaching Form 10 – 12 in Secondary Schools of Latvia. The above statement has allowed formulating the following **research questions**:

1. How to select an appropriate textbook?
2. What are the principles of textbook evaluation?
3. To what extent the topics and cultural issues in the textbooks are applicable to follow the State standard for teaching English as a Foreign language?
4. What is the teachers' opinion on the textbooks available for teaching Forms 10 -12?

**The enabling objectives** of the research are:

1. To analyse the theoretical sources on materials used for Foreign language teaching;
2. To study the materials on Textbook use for language teaching and textbook evaluation;
3. To review the official State Standard and the Sample Programme for teaching English in Secondary schools;
4. To develop a survey for English Language teachers;
5. To collect the necessary data for the research study;

6. To analyse the gathered data;
7. To draw relevant conclusions about the topics included in the textbooks used for teaching Forms 10 – 12 in the research base school.

To answer the formulated research questions the theoretical review and content analysis as a research approach was used. In addition, a survey analysis was done to gain an insight in the teachers' opinions on the English language textbook quality.

The research paper consists of six chapters:

**Chapter 1** deals with the theoretical review on the materials used for teaching English.

**Chapter 2** discusses the theory about textbooks for language teaching and the textbook evaluation principles.

**Chapter 3** is devoted to the information about the importance of topics in the English Language textbooks.

**Chapter 4** explains the State Standard and the Sample Programme for teaching English in Latvia on a Secondary level.

**Chapter 5** is devoted to the methodology and the procedure used for the research.

**The last chapter** discusses the analysis and results of the research.

## 1. MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

This chapter is devoted to the overall theory about the materials for language teaching. The main concepts of the field, as well as the opinions among linguists, will be discussed in the chapter.

To understand the importance of language teaching and the materials for teaching, it should be noted that ‘second and foreign language teaching is one of the world’s largest educational enterprises and millions of children and adults worldwide devote large amounts of time and effort to the task of mastering a new language’ (Richards, 2001: 1).

Having said that, it is necessary to explain the difference between ‘*second language*’ and ‘*foreign language*’. The distinction between the two terms is in the environment of the language learner. ‘*Second language*’ is the language which is spoken in the locale of the territory, while ‘*foreign language*’ is a language that has no direct link with the learner’s personal environment (Shrestha, 1983: 47). This reflects on the materials as well. The materials for second language learning are about the local environment of the learner, however, the materials for foreign language learning are about countries and cultures whose language is the language that is being learned. For instance, the English language textbooks which are used for foreign language learning are about life in Britain or the USA, rather than being about the life in the learner’s country (ibid.). Thus, in Latvia English is being taught as a foreign language.

To satisfy the need of every learner there is a range of materials that are usually used to teach the language, and Barakzahi and Kidwai (2015: 22) emphasize that English Language Teaching materials are the key factors in many language programs. These materials can be of two types – printed and digitalised. For instance, a textbook, and internet-resources (ibid., 2015: 22).

There are several types of materials which by McGrath have been distinguished in three groups. These are textbooks, commercial materials that are not provide as a part of the textbook (these being, grammar books, verbs charts, etc.) and teacher-prepared materials, which are distinguished further as – authentic print materials, authentic recordings, worksheets and quizzes, PowerPoint presentations, oral activities, games and realia (2013: 2 - 3). The author also lists an option where the students are engaged in finding the appropriate materials for the class.

In addition to the different materials, the quality and effectiveness of the materials is different. Brian Tomlinson gives as list of features characteristic of language teaching materials. 'Materials can be:

- Informative – informing the learner about the target language;
- Instructional – guiding the learner in practicing the language;
- Experiential – providing the learner with experience of the language in use;
- Eliciting – encouraging the learner to use the language;
- Exploratory – helping the learner to make discoveries about the language'

(2012: 143).

This list explains the way in which materials can be used primarily as a set of tools in the classroom to provide the learner with the necessary information, but materials should be something more than just bare information. For this reason, the teacher must adopt the available materials to reach the requirements of the teaching goals. However, in some cases, the teacher has no choice but to work with a curriculum that has been already developed.

'Generally, decisions about adopting language materials are made as a result of institutional requirements. Teachers are not called upon to give their opinions about the material to be used in their classes. (...) Most language materials adopted for classroom use are designed by international publishing houses without necessarily having any input from current teachers who have a better understanding of the day to day teaching of the subject' (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2010: 89).

There are several reasons why the development of materials for teaching English is a topical issue these days, because the English is spreading due to 'macro-acquisition'. Sandra Lee McKay (2012: 73) explains this idea by stating three main reasons for a serious consideration when deciding on what materials should be used. First, the spread of English suggests that many of the language learners will have a specific purpose for learning English. Secondly, the communication of the language learner will mostly be among other L2 speakers, not with the native speakers. And thirdly, many of the current English speakers use also another language or languages to communicate.

All the previously mentioned factors show, that the choice and the development of language teaching materials are of great importance, because the situation in the language learning society is changing. Thus, the teaching practices also should be aligned with the language learners' needs.

The following chapter will discuss the textbook as a material for teaching English as a Foreign language.

## 2. TEXTBOOKS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Chapter 2 gives an insight into theories developed by linguists about textbooks used for English Language teaching as a foreign language. Two factors for English language textbook evaluation are being discussed in detail as the basis for the research.

A key component in any language teaching process is the teaching materials – textbooks, tasks, written materials, videos, etc. (Richards, 2001: 251) It is clearly stated in the article ‘*English Textbooks for Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language: Do They Really Help to Develop Communicative Competence?*’ written by Luis Fernando Gomez – Rodriguez (2010) that ‘EFL textbooks are, indeed, a major necessity for most teachers, because the bulk of them feature an eclectic approach based on the current theories proposed by communicative trends’. The author explains it by saying that, for example, a task-based approach gives the learners an insight in problem-solving, whereas content-based approach gives the opportunity for the student to discuss interesting topics and world events to gain the communicative competence. The discussion on different topics also gives an understanding of the world in which the foreign language is spoken (ibid.: 332). Thus, the use of textbooks is necessary for the students to get acquainted with different issues of the language they are learning.

The choice of textbooks used for different English proficiency levels in secondary schools usually is a responsibility for every teacher separately, if the school has not determined which materials should be used. Tricia Hedge in her book ‘*Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*’ explains that the responsibility of choosing the textbook means that the teacher chooses a particular plan for the items that will be taught in the classroom (2008:358).

‘These plans have been called ‘product’ syllabuses as they focus on the product of learning, whether this is knowledge of a set of grammatical structures, or the communicative ability needed to participate in a set of situations or to talk about as set of topics’ (ibid.).

However, if the teacher has chosen a textbook, there are several options how to use it in the teaching process. ‘It can function as a core resource, as a source of supplemental material, as an inspiration for classroom activities, or even as the curriculum itself’ (Barakzahi, Kidwai, 2015: 21). Furthermore, there are advantages and disadvantages for using a textbook. Jeremy Harmer (2001: 304) explains the different opinions on the textbook usefulness in his book ‘*The Practice of English Language Teaching*’. It is said that, on one

hand, the textbook has an already developed coherent plan for acknowledging different aspects of language through motivating texts and designs, as well as ensuring the student to see the achievements as the units are completed. Furthermore, a textbook gives the opportunity for the teacher to feel confident about the materials they are offering their students. On the other hand, all the materials and tasks prepared in the textbook are usually of the same style and can be quite boring and even de-motivating for both the teacher and the student. Also, the textbooks may occur irrelevant or inappropriate in the culture in which the students are learning.

It is clear that there are several factors to consider when planning the course and deciding how much of the textbook should be used. This brings to the conclusion that teachers may find themselves in different situations, which Tricia Hedge (2008: 338) has described as their freedom in teaching English Language like it is displayed in the *Figure 2.1*.

*Figure 2.1. Teachers' freedom of choice in relation to course (Hedge, 2008: 338)*

**Less freedom**



- Following a prescribed syllabus in a set textbook
- Using a textbook syllabus but able to select material from it and adjust timings to suit the student needs
- Using a textbook for part of the available coursework activity (e.g. language-based, skill-based, or task-based work)
- Formulating a plan of work on the basis of student needs and selecting and designing materials to teach it
- Establishing goals in negotiating with learners and making decisions with them throughout the course about the next steps; choosing and designing materials to achieve the goals

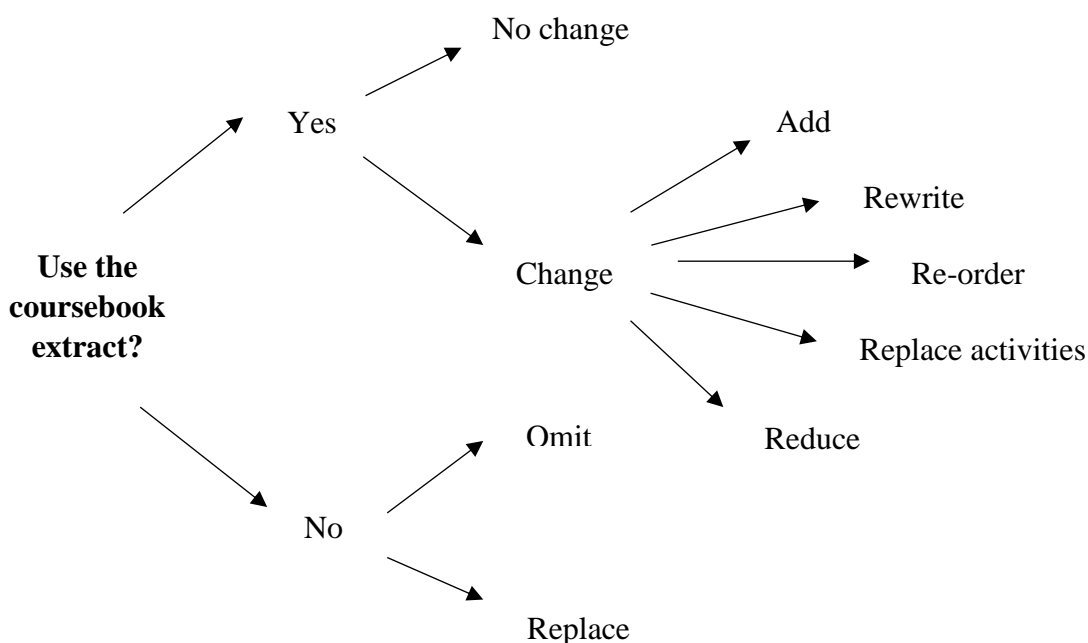
**More freedom**

Harmer (2001: 305) discusses the options how to use a textbook. Usually, teachers practice omitting some material and replacing it with some other when there is a need to follow some standard or plan, which is not the same for the textbook they have chosen. Of course, there is also a possibility to omit a specific unit or topic altogether if it is considered unnecessary. The author explains that even if the teacher chooses to teach the unit that is presented in the textbook, its contents also can be changed to make it more appropriate for the particular group of students.

Many teachers use different additional materials alongside with those offered in the textbook. It is a common practice, because many experienced teachers hold the opinion that every learner needs a specific approach to the language learning and it can be achieved by implementing other materials, such as role-plays, debates, communication games, extensive reading tasks, etc. (Hedge, 2008: 359).

To summarize the issue about the textbook content, Harmer (2001: 306) has developed a figure (See *Figure 2.2.*) which can be a helpful scheme for new teachers.

*Figure 2.2. Options how to use textbooks (Harmer, 2001: 306)*



As the figure shows, when evaluating the material that is offered in the textbook, there is a lot to consider and, if the teacher decides to change the material, a lot of work to be done for the course to be successful and practical. Tricia Hedge (2008: 339) emphasises that every teacher will be faced with the same problems as any textbook designer, if there is a need for a multi-dimensional course designing. They would have to set the goal for the course and decide on such factors like, which aspect of the language or skill, or content should be emphasised and practiced more.

The following chapter will look upon the theory about the topics and cultural context in the English Language textbooks.

### 3. THE IMPORTANCE OF TOPICS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

This chapter is devoted to the overview of the theories on the topics in the sociocultural context for English Language Teaching and the concept of socially responsible learning.

Firstly, before reviewing the theoretical material about the topics in the textbook, the idea behind the term ‘sociocultural context’ should be explained. Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) in the book *Teaching and Learning Languages: A Guide* have explained the theory and importance of the cultural aspect in language learning. Usually the understanding about a foreign culture is rather superficial. The authors state that culture has often been understood only as factual knowledge about a nation or society. For example, it usually includes some knowledge about cultural artefacts, works of art, places and landmarks, events and symbols or the living situation and quality of the culture. However, the understanding of a culture goes further than just basic rules for the students to memorise. ‘Culture is not simply a body of language, but rather a framework in which people live their lives and communicate shared meanings with each other’ (ibid. :19).

Whenever learning a new language, it is important to understand the cultural implications of the language that is being learned to facilitate communication among people. Therefore, every learner should get acquainted with the culture alongside with the language. Scarino and Liddicoat (2009) emphasise that learning just the cultural characteristics is not enough to promote successful communication. It is necessary for the learners to understand one’s relation to the foreign culture (ibid.: 21). This is the reason why the ‘sociocultural context’ is of such importance in language teaching. ‘(...)It involves learning to understand how one’s own culture shapes perceptions of oneself, of the world, and of our relationship with others. Learners need to become familiar with how they can personally engage with linguistic and cultural diversity’ (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009: 21). This matter should be taken into account when choosing the topics and issues for the language classroom discussion.

Aki Siegel (2014) in his article *What should we talk about? The authenticity of textbook topics* discusses the textbook content extensively, and he says that the topics that are discussed in the classroom and presented in the textbooks ‘are crucial parts of language teaching’ (ibid.: 336). The author explains that these topics facilitate student engagement, which, accordingly, facilitates willingness to communicate and, thus, also learning itself. It is important to choose the textbook and materials that not only include the topics that cover the minimum understanding of language use, but also the ones dealing with global issues and

cultural phenomena. It is discussed in the article written by Ročāne and Samuseviča (2016: 105) where it is stated that ‘the learning content should be supplemented with information on current affairs in the society that purposefully promote student's social responsibility and socially responsible behaviour.’ It means that in the learning process the teacher together with the student should discuss topics that would later help the student to integrate in society and be competent in the occurring events.

Moreover, the information offered in the language teaching materials should not be only about current events on a local level, but also international. The discussion on this matter has been raised because the textbooks produced for an international market have been developed from an anglocentric view, meaning that the cultural realia and language use have little relevance for the students who learn the language outside English-speaking countries (McGrath, 2013: 9). However, the choice of topics should be made considering learners (1) as member of a particular educational system, (2) as members of a class group and (3) as members of social group. These three factors are crucial to develop a successful course which would prepare the language user for different situations (Hedge, 2008: 343).

The role of education which promotes international understanding have been long recognised by supranational political bodies, for example, United Nations and the Council of Europe (Nicholls, 2003: 1). Thus, governments currently pay more attention to foreign language education as a response to globalisation trends and the recommendations given by the previously mentioned international organisations (Mikulas and Mikulasova, 2016: 233).

There is a reason why linguists, scientists and language teachers discuss the relevance and importance of topics in the language classroom. Ročāne and Samuseviča in their article *‘The Characteristics of Socially Responsible Learning in the Modern Context’* also emphasise that ‘the tendencies of the development of the modern world significantly impact the content and the goals of education’ (2016: 100). As the world is changing the approaches in education must align with the tendencies and the teaching content must be updated respectively.

People meet with culture every day and it is an integral part of every day life. This fact brings up the question how much of the cultural content is included in the education. The sociocultural content should be a major part in the classroom discussions, especially in those subjects that have a focus in humanities and those, which speak about and develop students’ intercultural competencies. The sociocultural competence is of great importance in foreign language learning, such as English, which currently is spoken among people from various cultures. The cultural diversity among English learners makes the communication more

complex as the speakers must be ready to take into account and adapt to the peculiarities of other speaker's cultural elements (Mikulas and Mikulasova, 2016: 233).

Having the necessary topics integrated in the classroom activities is not the only factor that influences the students' understanding of the world and culture. It is also important to integrate modern events in the discussion.

'We are living in deeply troubling times. The problems confronting our nation and the world can seem overwhelming. (...) The time is urgent for all schools and teachers to awaken their students' consciousness to the world and help them develop the knowledge and inspiration to make a better world, from local to global' (Wolk, 2009: 665).

Socially responsible learning means that by gaining knowledge about the global events in the classroom students also gain the certainty that they are able to influence the events in the world and, thus, it promotes their willingness to participate in social activities to improve the situation in their and others' lives (Ročane and Samuseviča, 2016: 101-102). 'If the students only receive information about a problem or a recent event but do not explore it more thoroughly and do not invent the possible solutions, then an awareness of a "dead end" is created' (ibid. :101). Steven Wolk has written an article that reflects the importance of socially responsible education nowadays. In the article '*Reading for a Better World: Teaching for Social Responsibility With Young Adult Literature*' he emphasises the necessity of integrating several topics in the education, because the new generation lacks understanding of the processes in the world. 'Most students will not develop this social and civic literacy and the courage to act on it unless teachers make this knowledge an explicit and essential part of our classrooms' (2009: 667). His proposal for socially responsible learning includes topics such as:

- Caring and Empathy;
- Social Problems and Social Justice;
- Government;
- Power and Propoganda;
- Social Imagination;
- Historical Consciousness and Historical Empathy;
- Multicultural Community;
- Global Awareness;
- War, Peace, and Nonviolence;
- Environmental Literacy (ibid.: 667-669).

Thus, the themes are a topical issue which should be considered when choosing a textbook for English Language Teaching and for teaching as such. The modern student lives in a time when one needs to be aware of the global events and be ready to participate in them.

Next chapter will give an insight in the State Standard and Sample Programme for teaching English as a Foreign Language.

#### 4. STATE STANDARD FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR FORMS 10 - 12 IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The following chapter deals with the State Standard and Sample Programme for teaching English in Secondary Schools. The chapter gives insight in the aims of the subject and discusses the syllabus regarding the social and cultural context.

The Cabinet of Ministers has adopted the State Standard in foreign languages (Online 1) which has served as a basis for the Sample Programme for teaching every subject in State schools, including foreign languages. The programme for language teaching has been developed on the basis of *Common European Framework of Reference*. Respectively, the Centralised exam results are compared to the levels described by CEFR (Online 2).

First, the Sample Programme (Online 2) for teaching English in schools states the main concepts that are compulsory. The two main concepts are Communicative and Language Competence, and Sociocultural competence. It means that through the three years of learning students should get acquainted with such topics as:

- Language as an information gathering tool;
- Language as a communication tool;
- Language system and its norms;
- Language culture and its functional styles
- Language as a part of society;
- Process and means of intercultural communication, etc. (Kursīte, 2008: 4).

All the mentioned concepts are meant to be acquired by studying the topics listed for each school year and are listed in the State Standard, Cabinet Regulation 281, '*Regulations Regarding the State General Secondary Education Standard, Subject Standards and Sample Education programmes*', Annex 2, Chapter 3. Furthermore, students have to acquire empathy and understanding towards other cultures and languages, as it is stated explicitly in the Annex 2, Paragraph 9. It enlists the four main attitudes that the student must acquire in the process of language learning:

1. Perceives with understanding the similarities and differences of different cultures (Subchapter 8.8.);
2. Appraises the importance of a multicultural environment (8.16.);
3. Appraises the differences of cultures and creatively uses the gathered information for enriching the culture of one's own (8.17.);

4. Perceives with tolerance the manifestations of Latvia and other state's sociocultural traditions and peculiarities in language (8.19.)

Secondly, all the mentioned competences and skills should be integrated and promoted in the classroom environment through discussion on different topics. The topics that are stated in the Sample Programme differ with every next year and supposedly cover all the necessary issues that a language user should be competent in (Table 3.1.).

*Table 3.1. List of topics for teaching English for the Forms 10 – 12 (Kursīte, 2008: 6-27)*

Form 10	Form 11	Form 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Languages</li> <li>• Arts and Literature</li> <li>• Technologies</li> <li>• Sport</li> <li>• Travelling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Business World</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Political Issues</li> <li>• The Law and Legal System</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Global Issues</li> </ul>

In the Sample Programme for teaching English as a Foreign Language it is shown that each of the five topics every year should take 20% of the classes to cover all the subtopics for the student to have equal level of knowledge in every social and cultural aspect (Kursīte, 2008: 6-27). The complexity of the topics for discussion, and, respectively the achievable English proficiency level, increases with every year. For example, in the Form 10 students should discuss topics such as Body Language, Types of Literature, Computers, Adventures in Holidays, etc. and the target proficiency level is B1 – B2. For Form 11 the topics are more difficult, such as Alternative energy, Business prospects, Education system, etc., and the Language Level should be B2. Accordingly, in Form 12 student should already acquire knowledge about National identity, Court system, Government, Consumerism and other topics, and reach the B2 – C1 level in English (ibid.).

And thirdly, the standard on foreign language teaching states the aims and goals of the subject, where one of them is ‘to use the foreign language knowledge and skills in sociocultural context to gather, select and pass down information’ (Cabinet Regulation No. 281. Annex 2, Chapter 2. (3.2.)). For the Programme of Humanitarian and Social Direction of General Secondary Education, which includes the foreign languages, it is also stated that the ‘objective is to ensure the possibility to develop the skill to orientate oneself in the socially

economical relationship of today's society', as well as 'to gain a deeper understanding of Latvian and other cultures in the Europe and world's cultural context' (Cab. Regulation No. 281. Annex 27., Chapter 3.) (Online 1). It implies that the student has to be competent in sociocultural aspects of the language. In addition, the ability to express oneself clearly and in detail is given as one of the skills for the student to achieve a B2 Level in the foreign language. If a student takes the Centralised Exam in English, he/she is considered to have the B2 Level if the result in the exam is between 70% and 94%. The mentioned percentile is an adequate result for a language learner, which means that the knowledge on several global issues and topics is the key to pass the exam with a good result.

To sum up, it would be important to say that the Sample Programme is only a guide for developing a fulfilling curriculum and the listed topics can be changed according to every teacher's and/ or School's individual programmes. Nevertheless, the aims and goals mentioned the Regulation comprise with the Sample, thus, making it a good example and aid in the teaching process to guide the students towards better language knowledge.

The following chapter will discuss the methodology and the procedure used for the research.

## 5. METHODOLOGY OF TEXTBOOK EVALUATION

Chapter 5 deals with the methodology used for the research and explains the research procedure.

The textbook evaluation as such is a complicated process and there are many items to put under consideration in order to decide whether the textbook is appropriate for the course or not. The authors of the article '*Thinking of the textbook in the ESL/EFL Classroom*' (2011) discuss this matter. They state that 'prior to selecting a textbook, educators should thoroughly examine the program curriculum. If the goals and curriculum of the program are clear and well defined, the parallels with certain textbooks may become obvious' (Wang, et. al., 2011: 94). In the article it is discussed that the textbooks used for language teaching should meet the needs of the learner, and the needs for learners are very different, thus, a list of principles for textbook evaluation have been summarised to show the most important characteristics of a textbook which can be evaluated. Some of the principles mentioned in the article are:

- The materials are up to date;
- Textbooks contain relevant material;
- They take into account the linguistic and cultural diversity of the learners;
- Visuals and graphics presented in the materials are clear;
- The layout and formatting is appropriate;
- Integrates different learning styles: aural, oral, visual, kinesthetic;
- Incorporates higher level thinking skills and problem solving;
- Promotes cross-cultural awareness;
- They address different learning styles; etc. (Wang, et. al. 2011: 94-95).

From the mentioned principles for textbook evaluation, the author of the present paper has chosen to evaluate the content or topics that have been included in the textbooks used in the research base school.

The research method chosen for the Bachelor Thesis is Qualitative research method, the content analysis in particular, for the investigation of the themes and topics of the English language textbooks. Qualitative data is also gathered from the open-ended questions in the survey for English Language teachers.

There are two basic approaches described in the '*UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*' that could be used for textbook research, and these are qualitative and quantitative methods (Pingel, 2010: 66). Although, each of the methods is

used to answer different questions (ibid.). ‘All research, whether quantitative or qualitative, must involve an explicit (i.e. auditable), disciplined, systematic approach to finding things out, using the method most appropriate to the question being asked’ (Hancock et.al. 2007: 6). Patton and Cochran (2002: 2) explain that this type of research has a specific aim, which is to understand some aspect of social life, and when using qualitative methods, the data for analysis generate words instead of numbers. ‘Qualitative research aims to answer questions about the ‘what’, ‘how’ or ‘why’ of a phenomenon rather than ‘how many’ or ‘how much’, which are answered by quantitative methods’ (Patton & Cochran 2002: 3). There are several types of qualitative studies:

- Ethnography
- Grounded theory (or some component of it, such as constant comparative approaches)
- Interpretative phenomenological analysis
- Discourse analysis
- Conversation analysis
- Content analysis (this term can refer to a quantitative technique)
- Narrative analysis, etc. (Hancock et. al. 2007: 10).

Yin (2011) emphasises the possibilities of using the qualitative method for the research as well, because the studies may be a part of both different social and humanitarian studies and different professions. Thus, for the present research the qualitative analysis was chosen, because it is the most effective for explaining social phenomena (Hancock, et.al. 2007: 7), in this case, the textbook content used in Latvia. ‘The nature of qualitative inquiry is to open the study through presenting the large, interconnected complexities of a situation’ (Creswell, 1999: 460). Thus, the paper includes **qualitative data**:

- Teacher-written responses to open-ended questions or questionnaires
- Analysis of topics discussed in the textbooks.

Naturally, qualitative research has its disadvantages. The main disadvantage that is usually discussed is that some professionals hold the opinion that the samples which are investigated using the qualitative approach are too small, and the results are usually generalised, thus making them somewhat unreliable. Although, the situation is different if the study aims at analysing a specific group or area, and the peculiarities of the group are the focus of the study (Hancock, et.al. 2007: 7), such as this particular study. Other criticisms

include the fact that the results may be biased by the researchers own opinions (Patton & Cochran, 2002 :2).

As an approach for a qualitative research the **Content analysis** was used. This approach can be used for studying visual, audial, or audio-visual data (Wimmer – Dominick, 2011: 156-157). Mikulas and Mikulasova (2016: 235) state that the content analysis is useful for investigation which results in a summarised description of a phenomenon presented by any media, such as, articles, books, letters, reports etc.

To conduct the research, first, a sample of one set of books used for teaching Forms 10 – 12 was made. For the analysis, the author randomly chose one Secondary School as a research base school, which has an average result in the Centralised State Exam in English. Second, the topics were listed for each Form separately and content analysis was used to compare it with the aims of language teaching stated in the State Standard, and topics and social issues listed in the Sample Programme. Third, a survey was distributed to English Language teachers in Latvia to gain a better understanding about the materials that are used in the classroom.

The following chapter displays the analysis of the obtained data - the themes and topics of each textbook, and the results of the Survey are demonstrated.

## 6. COMPARISON OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS AND THE SAMPLE PROGRAMME FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

This chapter deals with the analysis of the topics included in the textbooks. During the investigation, the topics and issues discussed in the textbooks are compared to the aims of the State Standard for teaching foreign languages on Secondary level, and to the topics listed in the Sample Programme. The chapter also introduces with the results of the survey.

### 6.1. Themes and topics in the Textbooks used for Forms 10 – 12

The results of the content analysis are shown for each of the books separately by describing the topics and displaying the results in Tables (See Appendices 1,2, and 3). Each subchapter, firstly, analyses the contents of the textbooks and then provides a comparison of the topics in the textbooks with the suggested topics listed in the Sample Programme.

#### 6.1.1. Topics in CHOICES Intermediate

The textbook used for teaching Form 10 in the research base school is ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ compiled by Michael Harris and Anna Sikorzynska. It has been published in 2012 and the course is for Language Proficiency level B1 – B2. The topics in the Sample Programme and the textbook topics are compared in a Table in Appendix 1.

The first item in the textbook is ‘Identity’. It speaks about nationality, languages, urban tribes, personal interests, feelings and opinions. The topic gives the opportunity for the student to speak about one’s own opinions and speak their minds about things like appearances, personal traits, other cultures and languages. The topic also includes tasks where students create dialogues about what they like among other cultures or urban tribes like goths, punks, skaters, etc. The tasks give the opportunity for the student to learn how to react on differences among people and respect other people’s opinions as well as appearances and beliefs.

The second topic in the textbook is ‘Big Events’. It includes overview about sporting events and games, and also birthdays and funerals, and the information on the Berlin Wall as a big event in the history that has a huge impact on the development of political situation. When students do the tasks on this topic, they are speaking about their emotions during the big sports events or celebrations. The students get to know how other people feel in the same situation, and hear stories from the history when speaking about the fall of the Berlin Wall in

1989. It offers a possibility to evaluate the events in the history and their reflection on the situation now.

‘Taste’ is the third topic in the ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ textbook. It includes materials about food and cooking, restaurants and a discussion on the history of desserts. While the materials about the food develops the student’s ability to express one’s preferences, the topic about restaurants and cooking gives an insight in the job of a chef and introduces to the famous chef Jamie Oliver as an example for a talented, hard-working and successful professional in the catering business.

The fourth chapter is a compilation of materials on ‘Houses’. It includes topics on different types of houses, makeovers at home and an informational text on housing in some African village. The students discuss the building of houses, opportunities, advantages and disadvantages of different types of housing. The materials also include a personal story about a man who built a floating house and now lives an eco-friendly life. These topics show the students what opportunities they have, however, they do not develop their skill in the area other than discussion on booking a hostel room. The text on the African village, on the other hand, displays how people are living in other areas of the world, thus, making the students aware of differences among living situations and luxuries.

‘Image’ is the theme of the fifth chapter in the ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ textbook. Firstly, it offers a discussion on appearances of famous people using their photographs. Secondly, there is a discussion on clothing for each personality and body type, as well as brands. Thirdly, it consists of dialogues and tasks which introduce with the possibilities of different opinions on other people’s appearances and style. This item is a useful topic for the student to learn to accept that different people have different tastes, which facilitates the understanding of choices of others. This topic also has a discussion on gossiping. This could be a good addition to the topic. This discussion may teach the students not to gossip about others by seeing how inappropriate it is to judge people by their looks or first impressions.

The next theme is ‘Heroes’. This theme includes texts about world-famous persons in the history as well as living today. People like Gandhi, Joan of Arc and Elizabeth I are mentioned alongside the heroes seen in Hollywood action films and local vigilantes. A very powerful text material in the chapter is about the heroic boy in Pakistan, who had been murdered for campaigned against child labour. This material teaches about the harshness of the world and, at the same time, inspires students to step up for their rights and well-being, as well as care for others who are in tough situations or are being abused.

Another theme in the textbook is ‘Adventures’. In this theme discussion about holidays, and extreme sports is included. The students also have the possibility to talk about experiences while travelling and give an insight in historical expeditions, the voyage of Vikings’ from Denmark to Dublin 1200 years ago. In the chapter students are supposed to express their opinions on different ways how to spend their holidays or travelling destinations.

The eight chapter of the ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ is themed ‘Habitat’. The topic includes issues like global warming, pollution, natural disasters, climate, green living and wildlife. In the first part of the chapter students discuss the environmental issues and afterwards talk about living in the wild and discuss the living situations in different areas in the world, including practices about travelling to the greener parts of it.

The ninth chapter in the textbook is about education. The topic of the chapter is ‘Learning’. This chapter includes issues that are essential in the discussion about education. The students discuss the subjects they learn, skills they develop while learning and talk about extra-curricular activities. The chapter offers materials and texts about successful co-operation among students, factors that influence learning and concentration and express their opinions on the school environment. This topic is very beneficial for the students to develop their understanding of the school life and the factors that influence their learning experience and the whole school environment.

The next chapter is ‘Careers’ which has a good impact on the students’ understanding about important choices and life paths like the previous chapter. This topic includes discussion about career areas, different jobs, the characteristics necessary for each professional, talents and stories of professionals about their experience in work. The students have the possibility to train their skill to write a CV and application for a job. This short chapter also has materials on possible jobs in future and opportunities on a global level. Such topic could be expanded even more with more experience stories and tips for the students to be ready for different situations in the future.

Then there is a chapter on ‘Inspiration’. Another beneficial topic for Form 10 they speak about art and the different ways to express one’s talent. This chapter has materials on art, theatre, stories about young artists in the history and their works. Students can discuss the different artistic professions where one can express his/her creativity.

The last chapter in the textbook is about science – ‘Innovation’ is the topic of the chapter and it includes several materials and discussions about inventions, research areas,

technology, literature about science and experiments. The topic gives an insight in several books about scientific discoveries and technology.

When comparing, the topics included in the ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ with the Sample Program topics, the plan in the book is rather different than in the Sample. The Sample Programme offered 5 main topics:

- Languages
- Arts and Literature
- Technologies
- Sport
- Travelling

The first topic – Languages – have 5 subtopics that should be included in the discussion. These subtopics should promote an understanding of how the language works in the process of communication in the sociocultural context. The subtopics are as follows: Linguistic diversity in the world; Learning a foreign language; Language and culture; Varieties of English; Body language. In the textbook, only the ‘Language and culture’ was discussed and very briefly. However, all the subtopics are important for the language learner. Furthermore, the discussion about Language and its role in the cultural context gives an essential insight in the connection between the language and the culture. These subtopics teach how the language could be used as a tool in the process of understanding the cultural diversity in the world.

The second topic from the Sample Programme has not been discussed in the ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ textbook at all. The Sample Programme has included a topic on Arts and Literature with six subtopics – Creativity and talent; Traditional and modern art; Performing arts and visual arts; Types of literature; Literature and language: figures of speech; Screen versions of books. All the mentioned issues are important for the students to gain knowledge about art as a concept and the importance of art in the cultural context as well. However, this topic has not been included in the textbook. Of course, the teacher can choose not to follow the plan the textbook offers, and discuss the topic with the help of some other materials, if necessary.

Regarding the topic on ‘Technologies’ in the Sample Programme, the textbook for teaching Form 10 in the research base school again includes very little amount of the suggested material. The Sample Programme enlists four subtopics in the discussion about technologies. Opportunities provided by computers; Computers and addiction; Future

technologies; Exploring the space – these subtopics are suggested as suitable issues to discuss in the language learning classroom. The book has provided only a discussion about future technologies, although in the century when technologies are being developed at high speed, all the subtopics could be useful for the student to understand the tendencies in one's own culture and country as well as in others.

A little more discussion has been included about Sport. From the six subtopics in the Sample Programme, two are included in the discussion for teaching Form 10. The two subtopics are Kinds of sport and Extreme sports. Although the mentioned matters can help the students to learn about sport, the subtopics that are being left out could offer a deeper understanding of the sport in the sociocultural context. For example, discussion about Sport and our health, and Active lifestyle could help language learners to see the similarities and differences in the way people look after their health by physical activities in different countries. Or the subtopic Sport and business could show how sport can be not only about winning or losing, but also about making money.

The last suggested topic in the Sample Programme is travelling, and it enlists six subtopics – Active holidays; Tourism information centres; Adventure holidays; International and domestic tourism; Problems when travelling; Travelling as a way of learning. This topic from the five has been included as a separate discussion in the 'CHOICES Intermediate' textbook. Although it does not provide with materials about tourism information centres or international and domestic tourism, it offers a variety of tasks about active holidays and adventures, and problems when travelling such as solving problems in the hotel or difficulties with the itinerary, thus, giving a good insight in the process of travelling the world and ways how to do it. Nevertheless, it could be useful to include materials and discussions about travelling as a way of learning, because it would promote the understanding about turning experiences into knowledge while seeing the world and meeting with different cultures.

To sum up, from the five topics in the Sample Programme, only Travelling has been discussed as a separate topic, however, the amount of lessons planned for this topic is still rather small. The topic comprises only about 8% of the overall teaching plan. It means that the teacher must go through the discussions very fast if he/she chooses to go over all the chapters in the textbook. The other topics in the Sample Programme are discussed only if they are related to the other topics in the textbook, for example, discussion on Languages has been included as one separate material in the chapter about Identity.

Nevertheless, the textbook has two very important chapters that are useful in every stage of the Secondary education and these are 'Education' and 'Career'. Although they have not been listed in the Sample Programme for teaching Form 10, these topics help the students to gain knowledge about their opportunities and processes in the field of education and job prospects.

If the textbook topics are compared to the aims of the subject that are stated in the State Standard, then it could be said that in the Form 10 the students already are being introduced to the issues helping them to achieve the sociocultural competences. Among the chapters in the 'CHOICES Intermediate' there are discussions and materials which make the students to evaluate and perceive with understanding the differences among cultures and languages.

#### **6.1.2. Topics in CHOICES Upper Intermediate**

For teaching Form 11 in the research base school the textbook 'CHOICES Upper-Intermediate' is used. This textbook is also compiled by Michael Harris and Anna Sikorzynska, it is published in 2013 and the course level is B2.

The course starts with a chapter on 'Relationships'. There are materials and texts about family members, communication with the family members, different types of families as well as about family traditions in other parts of the world and starting one's own family. This topic is very important for young students, because sometimes they do not understand their parents or think their parents and relatives do not understand them. In this chapter the problem in communication are discussed and the students have the opportunity to evaluate their relationships in the family.

The second chapter in the textbook is of great importance in educating adolescents too. The topic is 'Campaigns'. This topic comprises several materials and discussions about campaigns that are for and against some issues. For example, disabled people's rights, women's rights, peace, public transportations, animal cruelty, global warming, poverty, corruption and many others. When discussing this topic, the students hear and see several examples of how the people must act to make the world a better place and help to improve the living situation in the country and the world. It also includes a story from the past when African American girl in the 1950s started to stand up for the rights of black people. By discussing these topics, the students in the classroom environment start gain an understanding about their rights. Furthermore, they learn about respecting other people's lives and rights. In

the chapter a text on fashion industry and computer manipulated photos, which nowadays have a huge impact on young girls.

The third chapter is about 'The Media'. Another important topic in an adolescents' education. The materials introduce the students to the reality how the news in the media are written and why people should not believe everything that is written in the magazines, newspapers and online. The discussion about these matters help the students to learn how to put the information given in the news under consideration.

The next chapter in the 'CHOICES Upper-Intermediate' is named 'Advertising'. Another useful topic for young people which helps them to understand the world of advertising. They discuss and read about the advertising trick that are used to attract the customer. The materials include information about internet advertisements and slogans used for better results. The students also have the possibility to express their opinions on which advertisements are better, and experiences in advertisements compared to the actual product after purchasing it.

The fifth chapter in the textbook is 'Well-being'. First, the topic introduces students to different illnesses and injuries that may occur, and then offers materials about health problems and issues in the world. In addition, it explains how time management and state of one's mind can influence one's well-being. In this chapter the students see the differences among people who look after themselves and the ones who do not consider the limitations of their bodies. Time management as such is an important topic for the learner to discuss and see the value of planning ahead.

The sixth chapter in the textbook is called 'Genius'. Firstly, it introduces with the information about Darwin and Darwinism, which enables to educate the students about a successful scientist in the history together with the theory of evolution. The materials also mention several other genius minds in history. The chapter includes a text with excerpt from a book in which another great mind is described – an excerpt from 'The Final Problem' by Arthur Conan Doyle, a passage about Sherlock Holmes and Moriarty. Besides the excerpt from a literary work, students discuss great musicians and success story of Bill Gates. This topic facilitates the students to think about their talents and ideas and encourage to develop their skills further.

Next topic in the book is 'Communities', which includes materials related to groups of people who hold similar viewpoints and have similar life-styles. The subtopics for the chapter are 'Nomads', 'Matriarchy', 'Bikers', 'Empathy'. Through all the subtopics the students get

acquainted with the concept of understanding within a community. They engage in discussions about the traditions and values of different communities and gain knowledge how to respect a community as a whole, thus, again learning to respect different people and their opinions. In the ‘Matriarchy’ subtopic students talk about gender roles in the society. This discussion facilitates the student’s awareness of the importance of this issues nowadays.

The eight topic in the textbook is ‘Landmarks’. This topic speaks about landscapes and their types and features, landmarks around the world and their significance, and architecture. As an example of a great landscape in the chapter information about volcanoes is included. The chapter also provides text on the significance of people living in a city and what would happen if people disappeared. A discussion on great bridges around the world is included for the architecture subtopic, as well as information about The Panthenon and Rio de Janeiro as tourist destinations. The chapter includes discussions about travelling and at the same time introduce the students about the people’s role in the urban environment.

The ninth chapter is ‘Business’. When going through this topic, students get acquainted with employment types, entrepreneurship, products and services. This chapter includes a variety of materials about success stories of young entrepreneurs and stories about working experience from young workers. The students discuss the opportunities and problems for young workers, as well as the situation in the job market. The topic also includes material about developing a business idea, and the possibilities of young entrepreneurs.

Chapter number ten is about ‘Design’. The topic includes both design of clothes and technology, such as computers, robots and smart vehicles. This topic gives insight in the processes of designing an original item and iconic designs that changed the view on design since they appeared.

Similarly to the ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ for teaching Form 10, the plan of ‘CHOICES Upper Intermediate’ for teaching Form 11 differs from the Sample Programme, where another five topics have been enlisted to supposedly cover the necessary matters to promote a successful language acquisition:

- Environment
- The business world
- Relationships
- Education
- Health

For the discussion about environment, the Sample Programme lists six different subtopics – Flat, house, neighbourhood; The weather and climate; Pollution and e-waste; Alternative energy; Eco-friendly attitude to the environment; Traffic jams and alternative means of transport. Two of the mentioned subtopics have been included in the textbook, which is a rather small portion of what the Sample Programme suggests. However, the included materials are on weather and climate and pollution, which are important issues in the society today for each country separately and in the world. The introduction to the problems in this field can be a guide to the students' awareness about the global issues and the importance of one's actions, thus facilitating the learner's competences in the sociocultural context.

For the topic about the business even seven subtopics have been listed as possible plan for the discussion. The seven subtopics are: Types of business and jobs; Market economy; Marketing; Business culture; Discrimination at work; Work perspectives in Latvia and abroad; Applying for a job and interviews. This list of topics is very important in the process of gaining sociocultural understanding, because it provides not only the aspects of business as such, but also the processes in business around the world and the connection between businesses in one country as well as within several countries and markets in the world. However, the textbook offers materials only about Types of business, business culture and includes practice for applying for a job. It could give enough material about the issues in business, but there are no materials about the job market in Latvia or problems at a workplace, like discrimination or harassment, which are topical issues now.

The third topic in the Sample Programme is Relationships. This topic with the five subtopics is the one which is discussed the most in the 'CHOICES Upper Intermediate'. It has materials about Family values, different Celebrations and Relationships at school and work. Although the chapter in the book is rather short, it gives an overview of the situations in this area, also providing materials about families in other cultures. Nonetheless, it could include more discussions about the family traditions in the English-speaking countries, as it is the culture whose language the students are learning, thus, it would help to understand their culture more. The topic in the textbook excludes information about Generation gap and Male and female stereotypes, and these subtopics, like the missing topics about job market and workplace problems, are very topical in the society nowadays and should be introduced in the classroom.

The topic about Education with the six subtopics in the Sample Programme – School routines; Education system in Latvia and abroad; Forms of learning; Student exchange; Study

skills and strategies; Interest groups – is included in the textbook, and most of the suggested topics are discussed by including several materials. However, the information that may be more useful for the next university student is not included in the textbook. For example, the learners would benefit from learning about study skills and strategies as well as having knowledge about forms of learning. The discussion about the school routines or relationships with other students is by no means unnecessary, but the learners should be also introduced with the information that would help them in the future.

The last topic listed in the Sample Programme is very poorly discussed in the ‘CHOICES Upper Intermediate’ textbook. The topic about Health enlists five subtopics from which only one has been included – Traditional and alternative medicine. The materials about Health care system, Healthy lifestyle, Bad habits and addiction or Nutrition and health have not been included in the learning plan of the textbook. The situation is similar to the topic about education. Materials about medicine is, of course, necessary, however, the learners could gain more knowledge about the situation in medicine by discussing also processes in health care system, both in their country and elsewhere in the world, or effects of healthy lifestyle and proper diet.

In conclusion, this textbook comprises more topics of those listed in the Sample Programme than the previously analysed one. In this book the topics ‘Business World’ and ‘Relationships’ are discussed more for the students to get an insight in the issues and processes. However, the amount of time for each of the topics is less than the Sample Programme recommends – each of the two topics take 10% in the whole plan. Of course, it is, if the teacher chooses to discuss all ten topics in the textbook.

If compared with the aims and necessary competences in the State standard, this textbook has less of the compulsory competences than the ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ textbook, however, the topics include more necessary information for young adults, who have to be ready to make important life decisions in less than two years.

### 6.1.3. **Topics in UPSTREAM Advanced**

The textbook used to teach English to Form 12 in the research base school is ‘Upstream Advanced’. The book is published in 2003 and compiled by Virginia Evans and Lynda Edwards.

The first topic in the book is ‘Things to shout about’. In this topic, the materials are about celebrations of life, such as birthdays, graduations, weddings, anniversaries etc. It also

includes stories about success, for example, inspirational texts written by several Champions in different sport disciplines. Students after reading the materials discuss their views on working hard to become successful. This chapter also includes discussions about success in career. Here as an example is a biographical text about Steve Jobs, to encourage students to work for their dreams and ideas. They exchange their opinions on what qualities and skills a person should have to be successful. In addition, the chapter is based not only on the materials about famous people and great achievements in sport and career, but also small achievements in life and family, like buying a new house or learning how to ride a bike. The topic is expanded further by introducing the students to the reality that people feel bad even if they are successful; that bare success and wealth is not the only key to happiness in life. By this addition the authors of the textbook facilitate the students understanding of different factors in life that are important. The chapter includes discussions about the quality of life as well.

The second chapter in the textbook is called ‘Escape Artists’. The topic of the chapter is travelling, entertainment and holiday. Firstly, as a way of entertainment reading books is mentioned, and the series of ‘The Lord of the Rings’ is given as an example. It is characterised as a modern masterpiece and gives an insight in the book, thus suggesting reading as a way of relaxation and entertainment. Secondly, the students discuss activities with their family and pastimes. The topic includes materials and tasks about camping, hitch-hiking and other outdoor activities with friends and family. Students discuss their own ways of relaxation as well as their hobbies. The chapter includes also materials related to holiday and relaxation, e.g. the value of sleep. Thirdly, movies about places both real and imaginary and fictional characters are shown as another way of escaping and an alternative option for travelling.

The topic of the next chapter is ‘People Power’. It is devoted to relationships and communication among people. The materials include an in-depth analysis of the generation gap, i.e. a text written by a psychotherapist who explains the role of grandparents in a person’s life. This topic also speaks about types of families. The discussion about family includes also topics like finding a life partner and the more unsettling topic of a divorce. These matters are complemented by tasks about importance of communication and self-confidence, emotions and ways of expressing them, and learning to read people’s emotions from their body language and facial expressions. The chapter has materials and tasks about friendship and the issue of adolescents of today – peer pressure. In the end the tasks give an

insight in student life and relationships, which helps the adolescents to understand how to react in different situations.

The fourth chapter in the 'Upstream Advanced' textbook is 'Growing Concerns'. The topic is about problems in community. It starts with materials about what technologies and approaches the police is using to fight crime, thus giving insight in the complexity of the process. It introduces to organisations that help to fight crime and offer help to people in different situations. There are also materials about volunteers who have dedicated their life and energy to help others who need it. The discussion moves forward to human rights, animal cruelty and issues that might happen to everyone, i.e. unemployment. The students have the opportunity to discuss the reasons for losing a job and give their opinions on how to solve the problem. Then the topic about legal system, the law and courts is included.

The fifth chapter in the textbook is about 'Our Changing World', in which the students are introduced to problems of the environment, technology, disasters and other issues the world might meet in the future. The discussion about Artificial Intelligence is used for the students to discuss and speak about their opinions and predictions about the way technology will develop in the nearer or farther future. This chapter also comprises tasks about the tendencies and advance in technology, as well as the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of technology in the everyday life. This discussion is of great importance now when technology is used for the simplest of our daily chores and people should consider the impact these gadgets and machines make. The discussion about the technology is expanded to the topic of space travel and genetically modified food. For the young people, it is important to start realising the world they are going to live in. In addition, the topic introduces the students to great innovators and scientists of the past, without whom the world would be very different now.

The next chapter is dedicated to job prospects. It is called 'A Job Well Done'. The topic starts with a view on different kind of jobs – those which must be done during the night. They discuss the upside and downside of these positions. Then the topic offers a discussion about different jobs and professions and the factors that may affect the choice of a career path. In addition, the materials include tasks about the relationships with the colleagues. Another issue represented in the chapter on job and career is recruitment. The students in the classroom environment look through job advertisements and apply for a position after discussing what they expect from a job. The topic includes the discussion about working environment too. Furthermore, it is complemented by an article about how important it is to

balance the work and personal life. Redundancy is another important issue, which included in the topic, thus explaining about the reasons for it. This topic and the included practice is very important for the students in Form 12, because they are almost in the working age and should be ready to choose their work area.

The seventh chapter in the textbook used to teach Form 12 is about health and is called 'Fit for Life'. In the beginning of the topic, the students are introduced to key discoveries in the science of medicine. Then the students talk about health problems and their treatments. For practice, there are tasks about making appointments with doctors included in the chapter. Then sports are discussed as a good way to keep one healthy and fit. To have a better understanding about the effects of active lifestyle, the topic offers an interview with a football referee. Also, the importance of a healthy diet is discussed.

The next chapter in the 'Upstream Advanced' is 'Live and Learn'. This chapter about education gives insight in different matters about the school environment and the issues in education. A very good material in the chapter is an article written by a first-class degree holder, who explains the tricks how to study successfully. Thus, the students in the class have an opportunity to discuss the characteristic a university student must have to achieve the best results. When going through this topic, students also get an understanding about the school system and the work of teachers. The topic is complemented by tasks about applying for a university and how to choose the university where to study, as well as with the discussion about the life while being a university student.

The ninth chapter is devoted to personal image and fashion. It is called 'The Image Business'. The topic introduces the students to a story about the life and work of a fashion designer. The tasks include discussions about the importance of the personal image in the professional sphere and how the appearances affect first impressions. The chapter expands in terms of describing different images, for example, the topic includes also materials about films and photography, and paintings as well. An important issue that the topic touches upon, is the body image and how it is represented in advertisements and fashion industry.

The last chapter in the 'Upstream Advanced' is about shopping and consumerism. In the chapter 'Shop Around' the students discuss the policies of prices in supermarkets, different types of shops and the product variety. The topic includes discussions on several approaches to sale and problems in pricing. The students learn about advertising tricks and the abundance of advertisements. Furthermore, it includes an article about how the advertising companies are changing their methods in advertising to make them more appealing to young

people, because they are the ones who usually believe in the advertisements more. The topic also introduces the students to problems about loans and online shopping.

The topics in the Sample Programme for teaching Form 12 are more complex and could provide the learner with additional understanding of sociocultural problems and how every person is a part of the society. The five main topics are:

- Culture
- Political issues
- Laws and the legal system
- Communication
- Global issues

The first topic of the Sample Programme for teaching Form 12 is Culture, and this topic is not included in the ‘Upstream Advanced’ textbook. The Sample Programme suggests seven subtopics for discussion – Cultural diversity; Religion and beliefs; National identity; Latvia, its history and culture; Life standards in different countries; Culture shock; Pop culture. This topic with all the mentioned subtopics would extremely useful to promote the understanding about sociocultural phenomena in the world, but none if the issues has been discussed in the textbook. The materials about cultural diversity are not included as additional materials for other topics either.

The second topic in the Sample Programme – Political issues – also has not been included in the plan of the textbook. Again, the lack of discussion about these topics prevents the students of gaining knowledge about sociocultural issues in the world which are affected by politics. Without this topic, the students also do not discuss the politics in Latvia and European Union. Other subtopics in the Sample Programme are: State system; Political ideologies and movements; The government; Political parties; Conflicts and their causes. The topic should, nevertheless, be discussed by the teacher using additional materials and sources, because young adults should be aware of the implications and processes in the political sphere. The students should also acquire knowledge about the importance of personal involvement in these events.

Fortunately, the third main topic is included in the ‘Upstream Advanced’ textbook. The subtopics in the Sample Programme are: Rules and restrictions; Petty crime and serious crime; Crime and punishment; Court system; Honesty and lies; International crime. Most of the subtopics are discussed in the textbook, excluding only International crime and materials about Honesty and lies. However, the two items can be a part of discussion in the other

matters, because they are very closely related. The materials about Law and the Legal system like the topic about Business world in the previous years, can facilitate the students' knowledge and understanding about sociocultural problems and processes. It is because crime occurs everywhere in the world, and the discussion and the materials can give insights in different situations and solutions, which, accordingly, would improve the students' awareness of the connections and differences among cultures and nations.

The next topic in the Sample Programme is Communication, which consists of five subtopics: Traditional forms of communication; Mobile telephones; Mass media; The news; Advertising and consumerism. This topic as a whole is very important nowadays, when communication is everything. It has been included in the plan of the textbook and it discusses most of the subtopics that have been listed in the Sample Programme. Three subtopics have been included in the book, maybe, the most important being the topic about Advertising and consumerism. For the young adults in the Form 12 this topic is supported by useful materials about the tricks of advertising which would help the students to analyse their role as consumers. Nevertheless, the discussion about mass media and the news should be offered to the learners, because the information presented in the media is not always true or has been altered, and the knowledge about the issue could help the students to think more critically.

The topic listed as the last one to discuss in the English classroom for Form 12 is Global issues. It is another important and practical topic for the students to gain knowledge about the connections between the people and nature in global context. The textbook includes materials about four of six subtopics in the Sample Programme – Human rights; Rich and poor; Global warming and Catastrophes – leaving Global economy and Global advertising and branding out of discussion. The two excluded examples, nevertheless, can be integrated in the teaching process alongside with the other topics, if the teacher decides so. Nowadays all the mentioned issues are of great importance and every language learner should be aware of the processes in this area.

In conclusion, the 'Upstream Advanced' textbook offers a variety of topics necessary for the young adults who are soon graduating from Secondary School and have to be ready for the next stage in their lives. However, if compared to the topics in the Sample Programme, the textbook can offer a rather small portion of them. Although, there are topics the book includes that the other two textbooks do not offer, for example a topic about the legal system and the law, it cannot provide with all the necessary matters that a young language learner is supposed to know.

Nevertheless, the textbook has an advantage in the approach how the topics are presented. Compared to the ‘CHOICES Intermediate’ and ‘CHOICES Upper Intermediate’, this textbook gives a more in-depth analysis of each of the ten topics, including other materials related to the main theme. Thus, it can be more effective in the development of a student’s understanding about the processes around.

If the textbook is compared to the aims of the State Standard for teaching English, it comprises more of the materials and discussions by which the necessary competences can be developed. The textbook serves as an effective tool to facilitate the learners understanding about the issues in the world, thus facilitating a socially responsible learning.

The Table 6.1. shows the overall analysis of the three textbooks according to the topics of the teaching plan listed in the Sample Programme for Forms 10 – 12.

**Table 6.1. Topics of the three textbooks compared to the whole list of the Sample Programme.**

<b>ALL TOPICS IN THE SAMPLE PROGRAMME</b>	<b>CHOICES Intermediate</b>	<b>CHOICES Upper Intermediate</b>	<b>Upstream Advanced</b>
Languages	+		
Arts and Literature		+	+
Technologies	+	+	+
Sport	+	+	+
Travelling	+	+	+
Environment	+	+	+
The Business World	+	+	+
Relationships		+	+
Education	+	+	+
Health		+	+
Culture	+		
Political issues			
Laws and the Legal System			+
Communication		+	+
Global Issues		+	+

From the information displayed in the tables it can be concluded that the textbooks are rather similar, because most of the topics are repeated over the three years of Secondary school. However, none of them present materials about political issues and include very little information about languages. Another problem is that, if the teacher does not use any additional materials, the learners do not discuss the matters in Latvia. All textbooks are published in the United Kingdom and are meant for teaching English as a Foreign language, thus, they do not contain any references to Latvia.

In conclusion, it could be said that there is a need for developing a set of textbooks specifically for the education system of Latvia to promote the understanding of Latvia's role in the global context and the reflections of language in the sociocultural context.

## **6.2. Survey analysis**

For the purposes of gaining an overall insight in the opinions on the textbooks available for teaching English a survey was developed and distributed via internet to the English Language teachers in Latvia. The questions for the survey were selected based on the textbook features discussed in the present paper. The survey was anonymous and consisted of three open-ended questions and one 'yes/no' question. It was filled out by 28 respondents, whose answers are analysed and described in this subchapter.

### **1. What English language Textbooks do you use for teaching Forms 10 - 12?**

The answers for the first questions include several textbooks and publishers, such as 'Choices', 'First Certificate Expert', 'Prime Time 4', 'New Success' and 'Upstream'. Some respondents answered that the 'Choices Upper- Intermediate' student's book is used with 'First Certificate Expert'. The reason for the change of the textbook publisher most probably is because there is no 'Choices' textbook for Advanced level, which is necessary for the Form 12. In addition, one of the authors of the 'First Certificate Expert' is Virginia Evans, who is also one of the authors of 'Upstream'. It could mean that the content of the 'First Certificate Expert' is of equal quality as the 'Upstream' textbook.

Three of the respondents answered that he/she uses all levels of 'Upstream' which, according to the results of content analysis, is a good choice, because these textbooks offer a wider range of topics about social issues and events that would be beneficial for the student's language and cultural understanding.

Among the answers which stated that several books are being used, there was also an option where only 'Prime Time 4' is being used for teaching Forms 10 – 12. If there are no additional material used in the teaching process, the student may have some difficulties to achieve the best results in the Centralised State exam. It is since the 'Prime Time 4' textbook is an Intermediate level course (B2). A similar situation is with the answers that stated that only 'Choices' are being used. As mentioned previously, these textbooks offer courses only up to Upper-Intermediate level.

Among the 28 answers there was also some that said there is no specific textbook used in the classroom. The materials are being selected from several, including the internet.

## **2. Do you use any additional materials in the classroom? Please name them, if any!**

In the second question the respondents were asked to list some of the additional sources and materials that are used in the language teaching process if they are used at all. Interestingly, all respondents listed at least one additional source. The most common being resources from the internet.

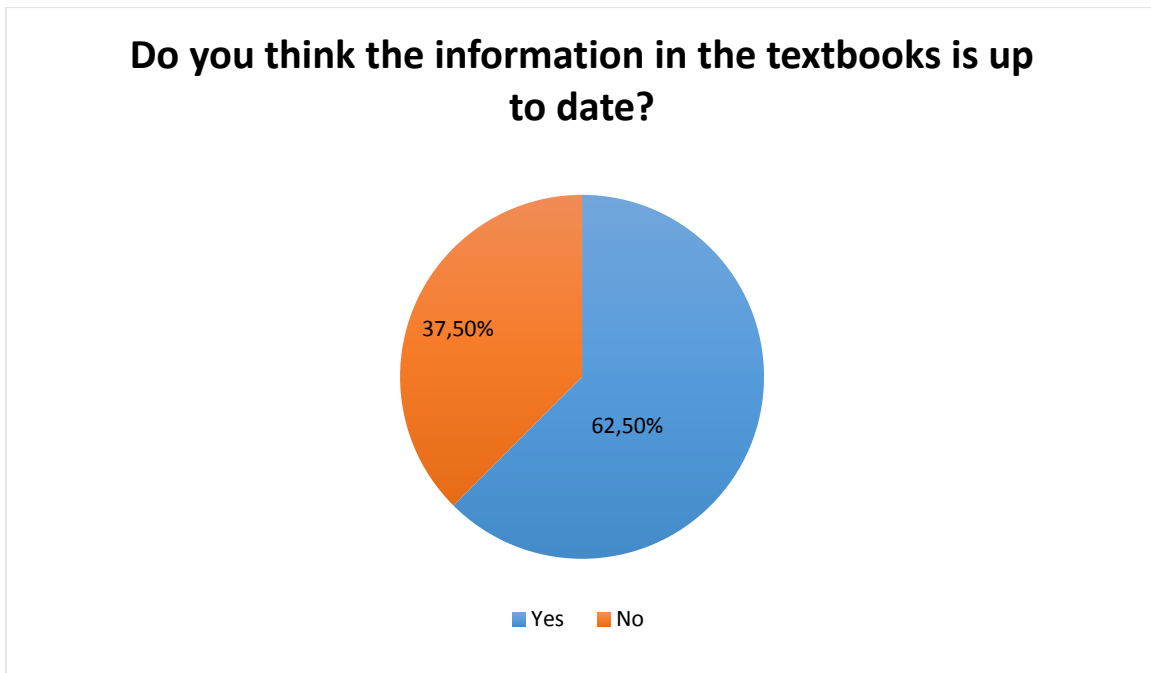
There is a variety of several internet sources mentioned in the answers. The one webpage that is the most frequent is *youtube.com* when the materials are shown using the overhead projector. There are also online learning webpages mentioned where a variety of materials are being taken, such as *Quizlet.com*, *myenglishpages.com* and *onestopenglish.com*. Some of the respondents mentioned *TedTalk* and social media as a source for materials in English class.

Besides the internet also the CD recorder and the Teacher's materials for the textbook is stated as a source for additional materials. Very common materials in the paper format are exam papers of previous years and grammar exercises. Other answers include flashcards, pictures, literature readers.

## **3. Do you think the information offered in the books is up to date?**

One question in the survey has been presented as numerical data. The question was about the information given in the textbooks. The answers to the question are displayed in the *Figure 6.2*.

Figure 6.2. Do you think the information in the textbooks is up to date?



**4. Please, list any advantages or disadvantages of the English language textbooks you use!**

The answers to the last question include several factors by which the textbooks used for teaching English on a Secondary Level are evaluated. The teachers were asked to list advantages and disadvantages of the textbooks they use for teaching Forms 10 – 12. The answers are listed below:

**ADVANTAGES:**

- Up to date information;
- Interesting texts;
- Useful grammar and language use exercises;
- Additional IT tools and videos;
- Flashcards;
- Creative ideas;
- Additional reading and vocabulary materials;
- The Teacher's book have speaking activities;
- The textbook has vocabulary skills pages and cultural aspect, cultural exercises;
- Good communication tasks;
- Listening tasks;

- Exercises to practise all 4 skills (mentioned by the majority of respondents);
- Good texts.

**DISADVANTAGES:**

- Too much grammar;
- Not enough Reading materials (mentioned by the majority of respondents);
- heavy to carry;
- not up to date if older than 4 years;
- the textbook does not have exercises for different proficiency level students in one class (mentioned by several respondents);
- Books are mainly for ESLstudents not for foreign language studies;
- There are no perfect ones

From the given answers, it can be concluded that the majority of the English language teachers is satisfied with the contents of the textbooks they use, however, they all use additional materials to make the teaching more efficient and appealing to the learner. This could mean that the textbook materials should be updated more, taking into consideration the specifics of the language learner needs.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present Bachelor Thesis has been dedicated to the research focusing on topics in the English language textbooks used for teaching English to Forms 10 – 12 in a randomly chosen Secondary school in Latvia. The goal of the research was to investigate the topics in the textbooks and to find out to what extent the topics in the set of textbooks comply with the Sample Programme developed by the National Centre for Education. There are several principles by whom the textbook could be evaluated, for the present paper the textbook thematical content was chosen as a research item. Thus, the research questions for the present paper were as following:

1. How to select an appropriate textbook?
2. What are the principles of textbook evaluation?
3. To what extent the topics and cultural issues in the textbooks are applicable to follow the State standard for teaching English as a Foreign language?
4. What is the teachers' opinion on the textbooks available for teaching Forms 10 -12?

The research has allowed formulating several conclusions.

The amount of theoretical material about the English language teaching and the materials used in the process is very large. Several studies have been carried out to analyse the textbook quality and the necessity to develop more sophisticated materials. Nonetheless, no material which would answer the research questions formulated by the author of the present paper was found.

For the purposes of the research, the qualitative research method was used. It allowed to conduct an in-depth analysis of the topics included in the set of textbooks.

The research revealed that the textbook containing the most of the topics included in the Sample Programme is 'Upstream Advanced' compiled by Virginia Evans and Lynda Edwards, published in 2003. This textbook contains materials that give the students more in-depth understanding of the topics they are learning. In addition, this textbook allows to develop the students' competences which are stated in the aims of the State standard for teaching foreign languages on a Secondary level more profoundly.

However, the research showed that the content of the set of textbooks that are used in the research base school is rather similar. It means that many the topics for the learners to discuss are repeated, thus excluding some other topics that would be necessary for a language learner. For example, the topic 'Political issues' had not been included in any of the

textbooks, but the materials about technology and education are in all of the three books. The mentioned topics are by no means unnecessary, however, if the content would be more balanced over the three years of Secondary school, the students may gain more profound understanding about the issues in the world. By having a discussion about a wider range of topics, the students' language proficiency also increases.

In addition, none of the textbooks contained materials about Latvia and the respective issues of Latvia in the global context. The reason for it is the fact that all textbooks had been developed and published in the United Kingdom, and these books have materials related more to the social problems and matters of their nation. As a result, the language learners gain more knowledge about the situation abroad rather than learning about the country they live in.

Another problem that was revealed during the research is that the books lack materials about the language as such. The State standard lists several language and sociocultural competences, which the learner should acquire in the process of learning. The competences include intercultural communication, but the textbooks analysed in the present paper lack the material about multiculturalism. In the author's opinion, the textbooks should contain such materials, because the language that is being learned is a foreign language, meaning that it would be used in communication with people from other cultures and the language user should be acquainted with the differences among cultures.

Overall, the findings of the research show that the textbook set used in the research base school contains most of the topics listed in the Sample Programme, but the teacher must decide on which topics omit or replace, if he/she is willing to teach the students all the topics that are suggested in the Sample Programme.

The survey revealed that the teachers of English language are satisfied with the textbooks for teaching English, however, all 28 respondents mentioned some disadvantages of the textbooks they use. The results showed that there is no textbook that would be chosen explicitly over others, meaning that every teacher has different plans for the courses and they choose the textbook they consider the most appropriate.

Another conclusion from the survey is that the English language textbooks do not fully satisfy the need of a language learner, because all of the respondents answered that they use additional materials in the language teaching.

Like it had been mentioned in the theoretical review, the quality of the textbooks could be improved if the developers and authors would consult with the language teachers. Furthermore, a set of textbooks could be developed and published in Latvia to include the

materials about the country in the global context and maybe compile the textbooks in a way that the content would be more balanced. It may help the learner to understand the role of Latvia in the world and also increase the language proficiency.

The research revealed that there are problems in the textbook quality, but the sample used for the research was small. The issue could be analysed further in order to gain more precise and reliable findings.

## THESES

1. There are several types of materials for language teaching and they are used for different purposes.
2. The development of teaching materials is a topical issue, and there are many factors to take into consideration when choosing the most appropriate ones for language teaching.
3. Textbook is an important component in the language teaching process, and usually it is the teacher's responsibility to choose the most appropriate textbook for English language teaching.
4. English language teachers must decide how much of the textbook material they will use in the teaching process and what additional materials will be used to make the course more successful and practical.
5. The topics discussed in the language classroom are of great importance, and they should cover not only the materials for successful communication, but also materials about global issues and processes.
6. Intercultural competence is important in foreign language learning, because the language speakers will mostly speak to other non-native speakers, thus, the understanding about different cultures is necessary for a successful communication.
7. The Sample Programme enlists a variety of topics which serve as a good basis for developing a course that would result in high language proficiency and reach the aims of the State standard for teaching English on a Secondary level.
8. During the investigation, it was concluded that the textbook which contains more of the topics listed in the Sample Programme is 'Upstream Advanced'.
9. The research has revealed that the set of textbooks used in the research base school are rather similar in terms of the topics that are included, however, the 'Upstream Advanced' offers a deeper insight in the issues.
10. The results of the survey showed that English language teachers in Latvia use different textbooks and are mostly satisfied with the contents of the textbooks, but all of the respondents mention that they use additional materials in the language teaching process.

11. As it was observed during the research, the textbooks do not contain materials related to Latvia, thus it could be useful to develop a set of textbooks for English language learner in Latvia.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

<b>Topics in the Sample Programme for Form 10</b>	<b>CHOICES Intermediate</b>
<b>LANGUAGES:</b>	
Linguistic diversity in the world	-
Learning a foreign language	-
Language and culture	+
Varieties of English	-
Body language	-
<b>ARTS AND LITERATURE:</b>	
Creativity and talent	-
Traditional and modern art	-
Performing arts and visual arts	-
Types of literature	-
Literature and language: figures of speech	-
Screen versions of books	-
<b>TECHNOLOGIES:</b>	
Opportunities provided by computers	-
Computers and addiction	-
Future technologies	+
Exploring the space	-
<b>SPORT:</b>	
Kinds of sport	+
Sport and our health	-
Active lifestyle	-

Extreme sports	+
Sport and business	-
Records in sport	-
<b>TRAVELLING:</b>	
Active holidays	+
Tourist information centres	-
Adventure holidays	+
International and domestic tourism	-
Problems when travelling	+
Travelling as a way of learning	-

## Appendix 2

<b>Topics in the Sample Programme for Form 11</b>	<b>CHOICES Upper Intermediate</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENT:</b>	
Flat, house, neighbourhood	-
The weather and climate	+
Pollution and e-waste	+
Alternative energy	-
Eco-friendly attitude to the environment	-
Traffic jams and alternative means of transport	-
<b>THE BUSINESS WORLD:</b>	
Types of business and jobs	+
Market economy	-
Marketing	-
Business culture	+
Discrimination at work	-
Work perspectives in Latvia and abroad	-
Applying for a job and job interviews	+
<b>RELATIONSHIPS:</b>	
Family values	+
Celebrations	+
Generation gap	-
Male and female stereotypes	-
Relationships at school and work	+
<b>EDUCATION:</b>	
School routines	+

Education system in Latvia and abroad	-
Forms of learning	-
Student exchange	+
Study skills and strategies	-
Interest groups	+
<b>HEALTH:</b>	
Health care system	-
Traditional and alternative medicine	+
Healthy lifestyle	-
Bad habits and addiction	-
Nutrition and health	-

### Appendix 3

<b>Topics in the Sample Programme for Form 12</b>	<b>Upstream Advanced</b>
<b>CULTURE:</b>	
Culture diversity	-
Religion and beliefs	-
National identity	-
Latvia, its history and culture	-
Life standards in different countries	-
Culture shock	-
Pop culture	-
<b>POLITICAL ISSUES:</b>	
State system	-
Political ideologies and movements	-
The government	-
Political parties	-
Conflicts and their causes	-
Latvia and European Union	-
<b>LAWS AND THE LEGAL SYSTEM:</b>	
Rules and restrictions	+
Petty crime and serious crime	+
Crime and punishment	+
Court system	+
Honesty and lies	-
International crime	-
<b>COMMUNICATION:</b>	

Traditional forms of communication	+
Mobile telephones	+
Mass media	-
The news	-
Advertising and consumerism	+
<b>GLOBAL ISSUES:</b>	
Global economy	-
Global advertising and branding	-
Human rights	+
Rich and poor	+
Global warming	+
Catastrophes	+

## Dokumentārā lapa

Bakalaura darbs “English Language Textbook Evaluation Principles” (Angļu valodas mācību grāmatu vērtēšanas principi) izstrādāts LU Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

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Darbu pieņēma:

Darbs aizstāvēts bakalaura gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē

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