



English Language Learning in Kindergarten Through Play

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Play & Learn project

The main aim of the project Play & Learn is to establish the use of play and games in class and for learners' development in an early stage of language acquisition, and to promote the

professional development of educational staff (knowledge and skills) within children's bilingual education from an early age.

Project objectives:

1. To enable the educators with an age-appropriate approach and play-based methodology and adjust accordingly to the English as a second language learning and teaching
2. To equip the educators with the suitable resources in order to deliver courses on English language learning at an early age of education
3. For children, to use English effectively for any purpose from a very young age and to familiarize themselves with the curriculum for primary school
4. To develop children's interest and appreciation of language learning

The Handbook:

The present Handbook is considered to be a support for educators' professional growth focused on the usage of a Play-based approach while teaching English to preschool age children. It can be a useful resource for kindergarten teachers to promote their collaboration with foreign

language professionals when providing very young learners with the best teaching practice and an age-appropriate skill development.

Our Handbook is an initial stepping stone to the wider range of resources within the project Play & Learn.

The Handbook consists of 3 chapters:

SECTION I

Play-based theory on second language acquisition and its connection with the various components of preschool education

SECTION II

Good practices from partner countries, lessons learned, and impact of the application of this methodology

SECTION III

An introduction to the upcoming project results



SECTION I

Play-based theory in second language acquisition





1. What is play-based method

WHAT IS SLA?

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a new research area that draws on a range of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, and pedagogy.

It means that SLA is interdisciplinary instead of unidisciplinary since it draws on a wide range of concepts, viewpoints, ideas, theories, and practices from other disciplines. Nonetheless, the origins of SLA can be traced back to the question of the native language's (NL) role in acquiring other languages. Language transfer is the word for this essential phenomenon, which has several theoretical bases. As a result, the historical overview of SLA centres around the central topic of language transfer, on which theorists have expressed both pro and con viewpoints.

For example, early theorists such as behaviorists and contrastive analysts believe that language transfer is a major source of errors, however later theorists in the 1970s and beyond denied that language transfer is a major source of errors.

Mitchell and Myles (2004) separated SLA's history into three periods: the 1950s and 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s and beyond. Behaviorism, structuralism, and the contrastive analysis theory all stressed the relevance of NL in the construction of SL during the initial period. When Chomsky's revolution resolved the function of mind in language learning, the second phase began. This word altered the concepts of NLA and SLA, with error analysis as a by-product.

However, the domain saw major paradigm transformations in the third phase, which spanned the 1980s and beyond. Essentially, empirical evidence generated by Morpheme Order Studies and a conceptual framework produced by Krashen's Monitor Model are benchmarks in the development of SLA as a self-contained building of many rooms.





USING PLAY-BASED METHOD IN SLA – BENEFITS AND METHODS

Our belief that children learn via play's natural inquiry process has a strong research foundation. This behavior has been extensively explored and recorded by anthropologists, developmental psychologists, and neuroscientists (Whitebread, 2012). Dewey (1910) drew the link between children's natural experimenting in play and the scientific inquiry process more than a century ago.

Play, according to Vygotsky (1978), has a significant impact on a child's development by supporting speech development, cognitive processing, self-awareness, and self-regulation. Play refines the prefrontal cortex of the brain, according to neuroscientists, and play increases the creation of a protein involved in the differentiation and formation of new neurons and synapses (Gordon, 2003).

Play deprivation, on the other hand, has a detrimental impact on brain development and problem-solving abilities (Pellis, 2014). Children who fail to acquire socio-emotional skills, such as forming healthy peer connections, are frequently treated using play treatments (Fantuzzo and Hampton, 2000).

Play is vital in the development of L1 language abilities, in addition to assisting children's general cognitive and social development. Even in the lack of fully developed language capacity, Vygotsky's work has been critical in recognizing how play helps children to generate meaning based on resources (actual or imagined) in their immediate setting to communicate feelings and share intents

and ideas with other children. Where there is a gap in a child's interlanguage, for example, the use of physical items or movement might compensate. This not only enables for the expression of meaning, but also for the collaborative creation and scaffolding of language (Weininger & Daniel 1992).

To develop linguistic skills and strategies, children can use play activities to transmit skills and information to solve issues, explore, and analyze current processes. Children also develop metalinguistic abilities when talking about their play (Frost, Wortham, Reifel 2001). Play, language use, and language development are all linked to children's general cognitive and social development, since language helps them arrange and understand their feelings and experiences, as well as identify and make sense of their sensory capabilities.

Research on games and their benefits for language development is a valuable source of knowledge regarding play-based learning. Recently, a lot of work has begun to be done explicitly in the domain of L2 learning. Playing and interactive games, according to Gee (2007), include a number of learning concepts and contain a variety of design aspects that are especially important to language development. Interactive games and playing in general especially in younger ages, for example, can influence vocabulary acquisition and can aid in the development of listening skills (Milton, 2012); and it can help in the improvement of university students' reading abilities and efficacy (Lu 2011). Language learners have been proven to benefit from immersive (Gee, 2007), linguistically rich, and cognitively difficult settings provided by massively multiplayer online role-playing games (Sylvén, Sundqvist, 2012).



However, the benefits of games and play are not only limited to linguistic development. They also have an important impact in the affective domain. According to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (1981), learners acquire a language better when they have high motivation, positive attitudes, high self-confidence, and low anxiety. Environments that lower learners' affective filter are more likely to help learners to use the L2, receive comprehensible input, and engage in L2 interaction. It has been shown that games and play can provide this type of context (Gee, 2007).



So, it is worth noting that playing research has created a slew of problems that need to be answered.

Despite the fact that there is a plethora of research on role-playing, none of them explain or elaborate on how role-playing promotes other components of the English language.

For example, little research has been done on how role-playing might help youngsters acquire literacy abilities. On a larger scale, best practices and tactics for optimizing the role-play strategy's potential significance in English language learning should be examined.



ELEMENTS OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING

According to Vogel (Vogel, 2022), play-based learning should include the following elements:

Self chosen:

A child voluntary chooses to play, how they'll play, and for how long. An adult may initiate play insofar as he or she invites or suggests play.

Enjoyable:

This emotional aspect is important. There may be some frustrations or disagreements during play but overall it's pleasurable.

Unstructured:

A child has ample time to explore and discover during play. They're directed by their own interests, not by any prescribed rules or plans.

Process-oriented:

There is no end or learning goal. Instead, it's the process of play that's important.

Make believe:

Play often involves imagination, 'make believe', or 'playing pretend'.



2. Benefits for teachers

STAFF PROFESSIONALISATION AS A KEY COMPONENT OF PRE-SCHOOL SETTINGS' QUALITY

Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has risen up the policy agenda in the European Union and beyond in the last years. Launched in 2019, the European Commission's Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care provides key principles and a European approach to high-quality early childhood education and care systems based on good practices in the EU Member States and state of the art research. Its statements describe the main features of high-quality services as identified in practice and are aimed at providing orientation for the development and upholding of early childhood and education care systems.

Indeed, the abovementioned Framework identifies Staff as one of its cornerstones: professionalisation of ECEC staff is intended as directly linked with a better quality of services and better developmental outcomes for children, as well as for their overall well-being, identity development and self-esteem. Staff working conditions and professional

development are thus seen as essential components of ECEC quality, and are composed of pre-service training at the vocational, bachelor's or master's level, and the ongoing professionalisation processes that take place, such as in-service-training or lifelong learning initiatives related to ECEC.

The main quality challenges referred to the Staff area mainly pertain to initial (pre-service) and continuing (in-service) training enabling well-qualified staff to fulfil their professional role, also benefiting linguistically and culturally diverse groups, from minority, migrant and low-income families; and to the deployment of supportive working conditions boosting the career's attractiveness, creating opportunities for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation between ECEC staff and parents.

MULTILINGUALISM AS A MAJOR AREA TARGETED WHEN REFERRING TO PRE-SCHOOL STAFF PROFESSIONALISATION

Among the major themes and areas targeted when referring to the staff professionalisation in Early childhood education and care environments, multilingualism plays a central role. In most settings, this area includes projects supporting staff to enhance their own language competences and/or ability to teach language skills. For example, there is a project focusing on this competence include the 'CLIL, My Open Window on the World Around Me!' initiative, which promoted language learning and intercultural awareness through the CLIL approach, in order for the ECEC workforce to become able to foster children's language learning and interest in other cultures.



It is important to note that some countries are introducing reforms to lower the starting age for the compulsory learning of the first foreign language, to date mainly referable to the period of primary school. This has of course an impact on the requirements, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, of the staff enrolled in the pre-primary settings, who do not always possess the ideal knowledge in order to be able to promote multilingualism among children, or even apply specific methods such as the play-based one.



THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSES

With special regard to play-based learning in second language classes, there is no much literature focusing on the staff perspective, being the main research focus on the impact of teachers' professional development - in general or with reference to specific themes e.g., diversity inclusion etc. - in terms of student outcomes.

However, it is possible to proceed backwards and consider the influencing factors impacting educators with respect to play-based learning and related approaches in second language classes, such as:

Social opportunities:

Issues relating to this dimension may include e.g. hyper diverse pre-school settings, where female students may refuse (directly or through families) to take part in physical activities in front of male teachers or male students.

Physical opportunities:

Factors referring to this dimension may include e.g. bureaucratic procedures within ECEC administration regarding the logistical needs of teachers such as material, tools and budgeting. Also, time investment concurs in these considerations, influences adopting new approaches.

Motivation / lifelong learning:

More experienced teachers may show less desire to apply play-based learning than their younger counterparts. Indeed, the latter could be more enthusiastic to learn and apply new educational strategies. This means that teachers' willingness of incorporating play-based learning into their second language classes could be affected by a lack of knowledge and skills in play-based learning.



3. Benefits for students

PROS OF PLAY FOR CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Play is a very important component of a child's life. Researchers have been trying to see whether play should be part of children's learning process and if so, what the benefits for children are. A general overview of research reveals that play should be part of children's learning from an early age because play is a primary reality for children and it affects many aspects of their life (Miller and Almon, 2009).

It is scientifically proven that children's brain develops through play because it allows them to explore, problem solve and express themselves naturally (Pang and Simncelli-Bulak, 2017).

Another important benefit of learning through play is that no matter what the subject of learning is, it is more likely that children will have a higher level of motivation and engagement in learning if they are having fun at the same time. For example, pretend play can also be used to practice communication and language skills where children act out different scenarios (Kjoberg, 2020).

At this point, it is important to clarify that child-initiated and child-led play are the ones with the most effect on children's learning and this should start at the kindergarten level. When children are given the space to engage in their own playing their confidence builds up, and they can focus their imagination in even more complex ways (Miller and Almon, 2009). When it comes to language development, studies show that children are born with a natural disposition to communicate and this disposition takes the form of the languages used in their language community (Mhathuna, 2012). It is also stressed that language development is affected by the environment which should encourage children to create secure, warm and responsive relationships with both other children and adults. These kinds of relationships can be built in the context of kindergarten through play activities which also allow children to learn how to get along with peers and develop empathy (Kjoberg, 2020).



PLAY-BASED ACTIVITIES FOR SLA

Play-based learning has more benefits in relation to second language learning. Research shows that when children play games it is easier for them to learn a second language because games allow them to expand their vocabulary naturally, and they develop their listening and speaking skills (Hewes, 2022). Playing itself creates a relaxed environment, and children can express themselves freely as they know that it is acceptable to make a mistake because there will be no drastic consequences. An example of such a game is role-playing or “pretend play”; it makes children interested in participating and becoming active learners, especially for children learning English (Dorathy and Mahalakshmi, 2011). Language acquisition, through role-play, allows children to communicate in different social contexts and acquire different roles.

According to a study at a school in Thailand, what made learning English as a second language easier was using games within the classroom. The conclusion of this study was that there is a positive effect of using play in learning a second language and it made learning more enjoyable and meaningful for children (Hewes, 2022).

In conclusion, research regarding play and learning in school demonstrates that play can be both fun and educational if it is given the right time and space.

Especially in kindergarten, it is of paramount importance that play is included in children’s daily programme since it is essential for their future academic learning (Kjoberg, 2020). Children are more likely to engage more in learning if play is involved while the process of learning itself happens naturally and effortlessly. It is also important the environment that children are in (parents and educators) are efficiently informed regarding the importance of play in education in order to guide children properly.





4. What is not play-based method

IS THIS ACTIVITY A PLAY?

There is a strong opinion that play is not 'work'. Play is not directed or prescribed by an adult and there's no desired outcome in play like in more 'work-oriented' activities. Recently, certain activities have been labeled as "play-based learning" when in fact they're gamified work. For example, using a song or game to get children to differentiate between "big A" and "little a" is not play-based learning - it's work disguised as play. This theory represents play which is called "Free play".

"Free play" methodologists say that if there's an agenda for the activity, it's likely not true play-based learning. Play-based method is not focused on teaching young children cognitive skills and knowledge through structure and routine. Play-based method helps a child develop holistically through social-emotional learning, developing confidence and motivation, and practicing cognitive skills. In play-based learning, children choose their own activities for the day.

Such a description of play-based theory can distract a specialist who plans to implement a new method - the play-based method in language lessons. To avoid a situation like this, we also would like to emphasize topics about guided play and teacher-constructed playful learning. The difference between these two "play-based" methods is that in teacher-constructed learning the teacher takes the lead role, gives instructions and sets expectations. Whereas, in guided play children take the lead role and choose how the previously prepared space and materials will be used. In this situation the teacher guides and supports children by intentionally planning and conducting the play.

Play is not an obstruction to academic learning, nor is it lazy teaching. Purposeful play experiences can be constructed to create deeper learning experiences that a child will remember and internalize. According to Gabel, high-quality classrooms that utilize play-based, hands-on learning activities are well-thought-out, intentional spaces. In an exceptional play-based atmosphere, there are no worksheets to showcase understanding and learning; instead, the formal documentation is gathered through learning stories, anecdotal notes, and photo assessments (Resilient Educator, 2022).



PLAY-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMS: CONS

Indeed, apart from widely-accepted advantages, there are certain disadvantages that should be taken into consideration while implementing play-based learning. In the study Parker, Thomsen and Berry (2022) point out such cons:



- children may not be exposed directly to learning letters, numbers, or scientific concepts
- they may not score as highly on standardized testing (until after first grade)
- they can find themselves in dangerous situations
- conflict and arguments over resources and game rules often come up
- resistance from parents and other educators may occur, particularly for older children
- standardized tests encourage 'teaching for the test' which privileges direct instruction and memorization
- some children prefer not to learn through play, or they may dislike certain types of play
- a lack of continuity between preschool and school pedagogies and clarity around the role of learning through play at school
- a lack of consensus about the intended outcomes of education



OBSTACLES TO INTEGRATING PLAY INTO PRE-PRIMARY SYSTEMS

Why is learning through play not deeply integrated in many countries' pre-primary programmes? Various factors contribute to this (Learning through Play, 2022):

- Lack of understanding of the value of play as a foundation for academic concepts - rote memorization and recall of information remain the norm in many settings. Education officials and staff may not realize the critical role of play in building children's understanding of mathematical, scientific and literacy concepts.
- Parental or caregiver misconceptions about play - many people believe that play is frivolous and that play opportunities take time away from 'true learning', which is caused by a lack of understanding of the benefits of play in children's education.
- Curriculum and early learning standards that do not address play - many countries have curricular standards yet they seldom include play-based learning activities. For example, a review of Early Learning and Development Standards of 37 countries revealed that only in one third of the standards, the concept of playful learning was well integrated.
- Lack of teacher professional development that focuses on learning through play - many teachers are not adequately prepared to implement play-based learning. They may think of 'learning materials' only as workbooks or charts on the wall, rather than objects that children can explore and use in their learning. Even if teachers see the need for such hands-on materials, there are often inadequate resources, and no training to help teachers find or create play materials with low cost-locally available materials.
- Large class sizes that limit children's freedom to play - when more than 30 children are in a relatively small space, it is challenging to give children active experiences with materials or even have enough materials for all children. Large classes also make it difficult for teachers to support children's play through personal conversations and thought-provoking questions.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policies, pre-primary implementation plans, teacher training plans, resource allocations and quality assurance strategies should reflect the growing evidence that play-based early learning environments provide the most developmentally appropriate critical foundation for success in school and beyond.

Ensure that the value of play for children's development and learning is widely understood and enacted in pre-primary sub-sector plans and policies and reflected in resource allocations.

Ministries of Education should have clear standards and statements that preserve the unique play-focused, developmentally appropriate approach that is essential to quality services.

Ensure that pre-primary curriculum is developmentally appropriate and anchored in child-centred learning and experiences.

Create partnerships with families and communities to create continuity in the experiences of children in pre-primary and home settings and to tap into family and community resources, including locally available materials and the time of caregivers.

In addition, the role of families must be recognized by the system, and they should be supported and empowered to actively participate in shaping children's learning through play. So, some necessary recommendations to ensure the implementation of play-based learning can be pointed (Learning through Play, 2022):

Use quality professional development initiatives to provide teachers and other personnel, including administrators and principals, with knowledge and skills that build capacity to implement playful learning across settings and for all children.

Use collaborative approaches, including collaborative professional development, to extend play-based learning into the early primary grades and beyond, using these methods to foster engagement and build academic competence.

Create a shared vision around quality standards that focus on and capture learning through play.

Broaden the scope of competencies and skills that are assessed to capture those that are developed through learning through play.



5. Comparison of methods

DIFFERENT THEORIES & METHODS ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING – A HISTORICAL APPROACH

Theories that have been formulated for the teaching of a foreign language have each emphasized different aspects of the language.

Initially, there was the grammatical translation method with the focus on grammar and syntax with emphasis on memorization (Porcelli, 1994). Later on, the audiolingual method was used, which also involves visual and auditory stimuli (Pichiassi, 1999). Naturally, within the above-mentioned traditional approaches, the balanced development of the four macro-skills could not be achieved. The learning theories that followed tried to prove the failure of the above approaches and moved to another extreme, completely marginalizing the teaching of grammar (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

The communicative approach after the 70's moves one step further and adds activities that resemble real communication conditions. This approach has been led by studies, such as those of Hymes (1972) and Halliday (1978), which demonstrate the connection of language with social life and therefore consider it necessary to develop communication skills but integrated in communication environments (Passalis & Papachristou 2001).

Of course, the communicative approach was criticized by cognitive learning theories, as the former did not deal with issues related to how the learning process takes place and how it is gradually constructed (Zagka, 2007). Foreign language teachers used in their teaching texts from various cognitive subjects, but always giving priority to the teaching of the foreign language and not of the content. However, when the above approach began to be applied to the teaching of a second language, then the need arose to learn the content of the courses of the curriculum, nevertheless the emphasis remained on the teaching of the language (Zagka 2007a).

Consequently, as new needs and requirements arose, the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology gradually came to the fore, which has a dual purpose, the balanced teaching of both the foreign language and the content of the curriculum and combines various advantage and from various approaches.



CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL) METHODOLOGY

Prior to 1970, there was only one subject taught in a curriculum in some areas in a foreign, local, or minority language. It seems that this action was presented more as an urgent need than as a new good practice for teaching a language, as those areas were either bilingual or close to borders. During the decades of 1970 -1989 the Canadian experiment appeared. In Canada, the educational programs implemented are known as immersion programs.

The acronym CLIL is the initials of the term Content and Language Integrated Learning. The translation suggested by the Eurydice research (2006) is: Teaching a non-language course through a foreign language. To clarify that the term CLIL was established in Europe (Dalton-Puffer, 2007) in the mid-1990s and was adopted by EUROCLIC23 (European Network of Administrators, Researchers and Practitioners) (Coyle 2007).

Essentially, this methodological approach is combinatorial and concerns the parallel and balanced teaching of a foreign language and a cognitive subject. The textbooks and all the teaching material related to the subject are in the

foreign language and the student is called to achieve the comprehension of the subject to understand, learn and produce at the same time the language through a process of its decoding, composition and analysis. of. It is emphasized that neither weight nor priority is given to the teaching of language or that of the subject, but both are balanced.

In the case of CLIL, it actually seeks to teach two lessons in one (Marsh, 2010) and the content to be an incentive to process and discover the structure and various functions of language, without marginalizing one of them at any stage of teaching two objectives (language and content). In fact, language is not structured gradually but functionally, as the content is what determines the language to be taught (Vorylla, 2012).

As for the levels of education where it is applied, these are the primary and the secondary. There are, however, some countries that organize CLIL-type activities from kindergarten (Eurydice, 2006), but it is considered quite a difficult approach by most researchers.



MONTESSORI METHODOLOGY

Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian medical doctor, created the Montessori Method of education. Her focus as a medical practitioner was in assisting mentally ill youngsters in learning more effectively. Montessori had always had a simple belief in her mind that children taught themselves. Maria was often emphasizing how too much adult interference hinders children's learning (Montessori, 2007).

Dr. Maria Montessori felt that each learner is a unique individual who has the ability to surprise us with previously undiscovered abilities. She believes that in order to properly develop the unseen, educators must offer students the opportunity to explore their surroundings. Teachers could assist them with sensory-based teaching methodology.

Although she was fully aware of the existence of "English medium schools" in India, which are today known as English-language immersion schools, Dr. Montessori did not expressly define a specific strategy to SLA in her work (Rosanova, 1997).

She was also thought to support young children learning a foreign language, preferring the direct conversational method, which included games, songs, drawings, or charts (Stevens, 1913). Nonetheless, the transferability of Montessori language practices was not expressly employed in SLA. The need to incorporate L2 programs into Montessori schools came later, partially as a result of changing cultures and their demands.

It is important to underline that the only resources provided to pupils in regular Montessori classrooms are those produced by Montessori herself. Bringing non-Montessori items into Montessori classrooms raises serious problems (Lillard, 2016). However, due to a scarcity of Montessori materials for SLA, there is a pressing need to investigate how alternative materials can be used without jeopardizing the Method's integrity, possibly leading to Montessori materials that support children's developmental SLA needs or aid in the process of becoming bilingual. Thus, it needs extra research and focus in order to apply Montessori practices in the SLA procedure in early childhood education.

CHILD-LEAD LEARNING

Child-led learning is a term to describe educational programs in which children decide what they want to study. In other circumstances, it includes giving children control over how long they spend on a specific subject as well as the techniques and resources they use to learn. It is frequently carried out in a home-schooling or private tutoring setting.

In this sort of setting, a youngster is frequently allowed full rein to engage with information as he/she sees fit. Instead of standard question and answer worksheets, this may involve doing art, singing, or role-playing. Depending on the context, parents and tutors collaborate to achieve balance and present resources that complement and support the child's requirements.



Various terminologies and interpretations of child-led education have been used throughout time and in various contexts, such as scholarly and informal, practitioner-driven educational discourse. Holt (1972) advocates "learner-directed, non-coercive, interest-inspired learning; while Mintz (2012) defines learner-centered education as an approach based on the student's interest rather than curriculum driven, where someone else has an idea of what you should be learning.

Thus, child-led learning allows kids to make their own decisions while also encouraging them to do so. It is proved that also confidence and

independence enhanced to children since young age can definitely assist on foreign language acquisition, but unfortunately there is no specific literature that we could be based on, but definitely is a great approach to lead younger children to better second language acquisition through play setting.

PLAY-BASED THEORY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

As we analysed in the previous section dedicated to play-based method, Piaget's ideas, Bruner's cognitive theory, and Vygotsky's social interaction theory are all used in most research on play. Play is a wide word describing a number of actions that may be seen in people of all ages. Play, according to Piaget, is a spontaneous activity including experiments and testing when children learn in stages via interactions and experiences with their surroundings and the world around them. Children add new information to their schemes and change prior knowledge while playing. Children discover and learn a variety of things that help them build their cognitive abilities. (Piaget, 1962).

Bruner (1983) presented three methods for portraying children's cognitive development in terms of how knowledge is kept and encoded in their memories. Action-based, iconic (image-based), and symbolic (language-based) representations are the three modalities and this idea has a significant impact on language teaching and learning.

Bruner's approach may be used to teach youngsters a pleasurable first or second language. The educator, for instance, might offer children with tools or resources to play with during play time (e.g., on a playground). When the children are playing, the instructor can support them and speak to them in the target language. As a result, teachers should make learning easier for students and provide scaffolding during free play to help them develop their spoken language.

Some research has looked into the influence of role-playing in SLA. SLA (Norwegian language) of Turkish children living in Norway was researched by Aukrust in 2004. The research included 27 children (5-12 years old) state primary & pre-schools. Aukrust observed and discovered that children who participated in and visited playgroups improved their language abilities significantly, specifically spoken communicative language.



Furthermore, Snow and Blum-Kulka (2004) conducted a throughout literature review on the value of peer discussion in preschools for linguistic development and social skills. The investigations were divided into three categories: children's peer conversation, language socialization, and second language acquisition. The authors discovered that peer conversation, which happens multiple times during peer play, is crucial for L1 and L2 input and development. Moreover, peer discussion plays an important role in the development of children's social skills and culture.

Pomerantz and Bell (2007) also focused on the importance of language play in language development. They demonstrated that play is an imaginative method for teaching a language in situations that are analogous to real-life situations. Cook (2012) explored language play in the formation of a second language, and Pomerantz and Bell's work was significantly connected to Cook's (2012) hypothesis. He claims that youngsters like fun language even if they don't grasp the songs. It's like to liking a song without being able to comprehend what it's about. Children eventually would be able to comprehend the meaning and application of language. As a result, using play as an approach for learning a language is critical. Finally, Cook recommended that play should be integrated into the language

curriculum and Tomlinson - Masuhara (2009) pointed out the role of physical games on the acquisition of SLA (in most cases English).

Piker (2013) was also concerned about the impact of early childhood development on bilingual learners' language development. A significant subject to explore is how the preschool environment influences and strengthens a child's language as well as its implications on educational outcomes and accomplishment. As a result, Piker implemented ethnographic research to look at the influence of free play on dual language learners' English language learning. During free play "sessions", the researcher observed 17 children (L1 Spanish) in a preschool class in the United States. The children's interaction was investigated in order to understand how Spanish speaking youngsters with a variable degree of knowledge and experience improve their L2 (English) (English). So, the study indicated that play methods should be used in the curriculum.



CONCLUSION

In the fields of SLA there is a large corpus of study on the best methodology of acquisition. Children learn best when they are immersed in situations that are important to them. Surprisingly or not, playing gives excellent learning opportunities and as it is proved from the previous analysis children find playing really important for them. It activates a variety of brain regions, which has been proved to be incredibly beneficial in the development and learning of a second or foreign language.

This section examined different studies that prove the value of playing in teaching English as a second language to kindergarten-aged children and we also explored different methods that could be used in different ages for the SLA. As a result, it is suggested that play-based learning for SLA should be incorporated into the early childhood curriculum.



SECTION II

Good practices





6. Results of the questionnaire

Teaching experience and analysis of daily episodes play a highly significant role, it is said by the project partners. That is a way to gain a really valuable information from the initiators who are still in the line of duty. And that is why the online questionnaire was organized in partnership countries to obtain a set of the so-called Good practice examples and a wider insight into the process of teaching foreign languages to preschool-age children.

In total, the feedback of 144 educators was obtained which includes viewpoints, conclusions and sharing good practice. Although the original purpose was to survey the teachers of English as a second language teachers, we faced the fact that the amount of them in partnership countries was relatively small and it was difficult to keep in touch with them.

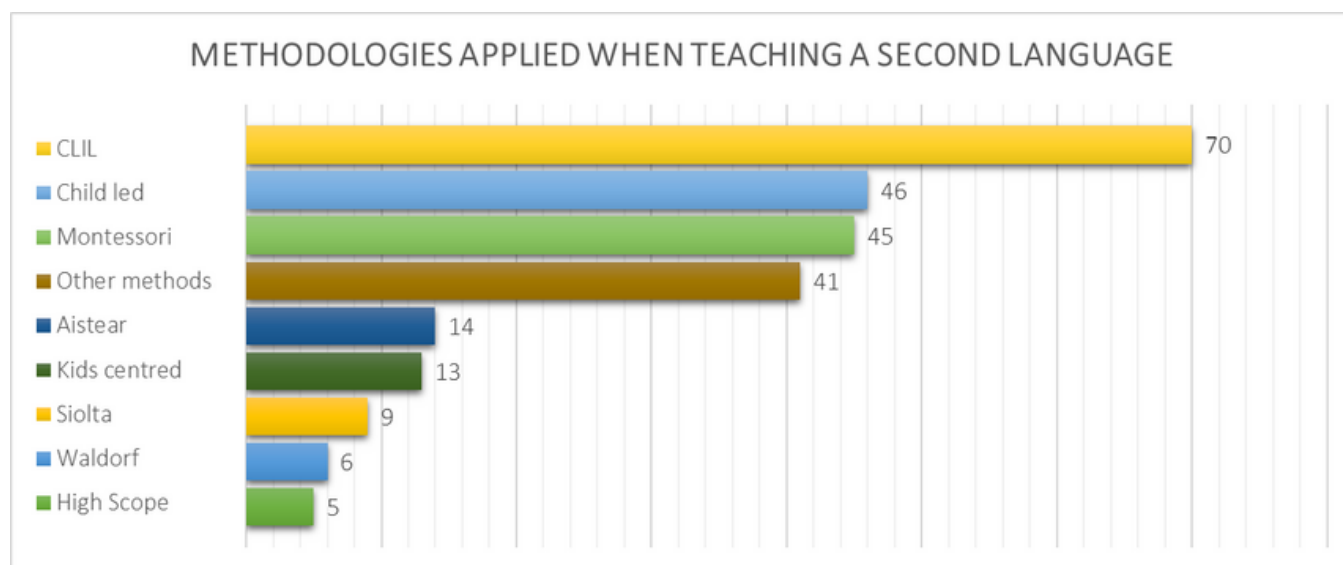
At the beginning of the research, a large number of English teachers were approached for filling in the questionnaire, but the activity of respondents was extremely low. This can be attributed not only to the "natural drop-out" of respondents or the small percentage of respondents who wanted to give their opinion but also to the specific situation in each country. In Latvia English in preschool education is an extracurricular class - a class which is not mandatory, and it is the free choice of parents to choose English classes for their children or not. Therefore, there are only few teachers who teach English in pre-school, especially in current circumstances when schools in Latvia have a significant shortage of language teachers (for students in any stage of education). In Latvia the English language is mandatory from the first grade (from 6 - 7 years old).

A similar situation is in Turkey, where second language teaching starts and is mandatory in the second grade (7 years old), in Italy, based on national law, the compulsory teaching of English starts from the first year of primary school (from 6 years old), in Cyprus the national law does entail that English as a second language is obligatory from first grade (approximately at the age of 6). In Ireland, of course, English is the native language. The largest number of answers we received from Greece, where from the school year 2021-2022, the English language is introduced in the morning compulsory program of the kindergartens of the country through creative, experiential activities. The introduction of English is made available to teachers for two teaching hours per week, in each section of the morning compulsory program of kindergartens, in collaboration with the kindergarten teacher of the department. The kindergarten teacher during these hours remains in the classroom taking an active part in the learning process, based on the needs and the organization of activities, as co-decided by the two teachers.

In order to collect Examples of Good teaching practice from different countries, primary teachers of French, Russian, Spanish, German, Irish, sign language (for deaf children) and the teachers of the state languages of partnership countries - English, Italian, Turkish, Greek, Latvian (as a foreign language for minorities) - were addressed to share their experiences. They represent different institutions, most often - state educational establishments (54%), but also private pre-schools/creches, non-governmental organizations or work as private service providers (freelance teachers).

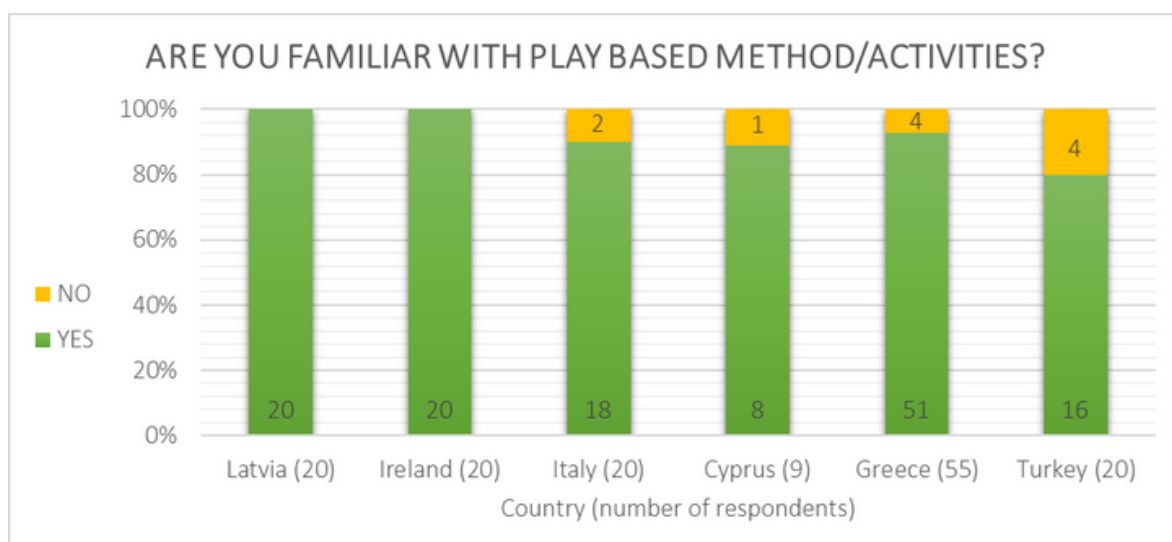


What are the methods and tools applied in teaching a foreign language to preschool children? There is a wide range of them, however, we would like to note those ones most often indicated by the teachers.



While comparing national data we see CLIL is the most frequently applied method in Latvia, Cyprus and Greece (10, 4 and 42 respondents, respectively), but in Ireland they are Child-led approach (14) and Aistear (13), in Turkey it is Child-led (18), but in Italy - Kids-centred methodology (13). Only two methods - CLIL and Montessori - were mentioned in all partnership countries. In our Handbook they will be dealt with further, as well as the Child-led approach which took the second position.

It should be especially noted that initially none of the surveyed educators mentioned the Play-based method, not even listing other methods used in their work, therefore we asked for a separate answer about the use of the Play-based method and got the following result:

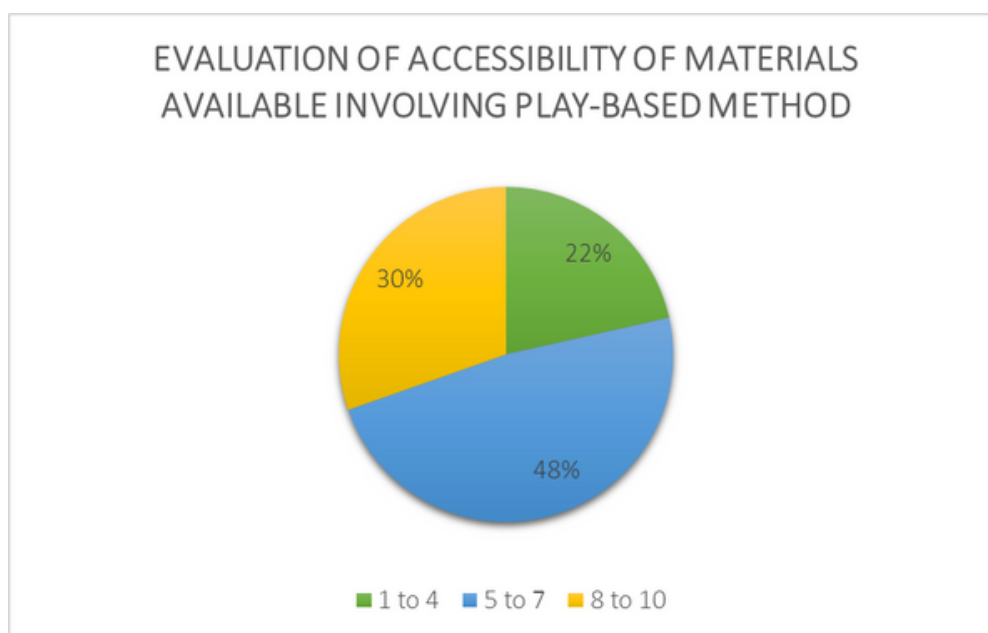




As the table shows, the play-based method is known to the majority of educators (134), except 10. Do those educators who know the Play-based method also use it? In partnership countries 75-92 % of educators use it.

But what could be the reasons preventing teachers from using this method? The availability and quality of materials are two of them. The pie chart

shows the teachers generally (135) gave their assessment of availability of materials and from this we can conclude-the assessment of availability varies greatly achieving the best possible rating but also not flatteringly rating it unsatisfactory or weak (22%).



We want these ratings to improve significantly, therefore, with the help of this project we have planned to create valuable resources. For both us and educators it is important because 117 respondents indicate that second language should be taught from the early age-starting from preschool and what is not less important - as the first option, teachers name the English language.

We would love to share with you the ideas, methods and resources that educators have already indicated in their use when teaching the second language to preschool children. Definitely, it is necessary to mention the fact which is not unimportant - the isolated use of methods in language classes is practically impossible; in order to achieve the best possible result, teachers use various methods, teaching techniques and their combinations. So, the following figure - word cloud - shows a mix of methods.





We also want to highlight the benefits mentioned by educators while using the play-based method in English classes. Educators are the ones who see the best feedback and gains of using the method in the classroom.

Better:

communication skills, competition skills, collaborative/cooperation skills, socialization skills, socioemotional skills, problem-solving, understanding of other people and cultures, action in new situations, creativity, language use in real conditions, produced speech in the second language, management of success and failure, critical thinking, adaptation to different environments, reasonable thinking skills, understand the usefulness of language

Students become more familiar with the language using objects they have already come in contact with.

Play:

actively helps children explore their environment and the world around them, has an important role in learning and is used to further children's learning in all areas of the creche, promotes physical fitness, builds imagination, encourages independence, helps engage critical executive function skills like inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility, and working memory

Learning outcomes are visible for a long time.

Children are most receptive to learning during play and exploration and are generally willing to persist in order to learn something new or solve a problem.

Play-based activities:

is spontaneous way of learning in pre-primary age, makes learning processes more participatory and stimulating, amplifying the pedagogical goal, stimulates neuronal elasticity, stimulates curiosity and enthusiasm accelerate learning, reduces anxiety and judgmental stress, helps children to "open up" more easily, helps children learn to apply theoretical knowledge and gather information about the world through senses, helps reduce a boredom, increases attention span.

The game involves. You cannot learn if you don't get involved.

Play-based activities help to be involved.

Improved:

teamwork/team building, latent learning and embodiment, fine motor skills, vocabulary, hand-eye coordination, motivation, literacy, self-esteem/self-confidence, development of empathy, the flexibility and ability to learn throughout the course of life, experiential encouragement in language acquisition, ability to hold information more easily, improvement of following rules.



7. How to teach a second language using play-based method

INTRODUCTION

As it was stated in the previous sections of the manual and as many studies revealed, integrating language play pedagogy in children's second language classrooms has a very positive impact. Children usually have higher academic results with routes in language learning through play, as language play offers them with fun and social learning opportunities, which serves as a foundation for second language acquisition.

Language play relates to any education process that encourages children to modify language units, such as words, phrases, and sentences, for enjoyment and especially for language learning reasons (Crystal, 2001). Lantz-Andersson (2018) defines language play as a collaborative activity that introduces youngsters to the structure and usage of a second language and allows them to build their socio-pragmatic skills. Language play, according to Sterling and Loewen (2015), happens when children logically play with a language, regardless of the language level or form.

So, all those studies usually examined language play from diverse perspectives, but they all came to the same conclusion: language play happens when children play with language units with the primary goal of learning and acquiring a language in an enjoyable, practical, and engaging way.





PLAYING APPROACHES IN SLA

It is a common belief that play has a significant educational value in both teaching and learning languages, as foreign language mainly literature points out the significant benefits of the game as a tool for teaching and learning languages. More specifically, children possess an amazing ability to assimilate language through play and other activities that involve the element of fun (Scott & Ytreberg). In addition, according to Toth (1995), play gives shy students the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings through their participation in it.

The value of play as an educational tool is also pointed out by Lewis & Bedson (2000), who emphasize that the game adds variety to the learning process and helps increase students' motivation to use the target language. Wierus and Wierus (1994) also report that play helps to create a relaxed atmosphere, which in turn helps students remember the object taught faster and better.

The importance of play as a teaching tool lies in the fact that play allows students to make mistakes and learn through trial and error, while at the same time helping them to recognize their limitations and discover their potential (Ludvigsen, Creegan & Mills, 2005). According to Newton (2005), the fact that each game contains different elements and exercises different skills (memory, movement, observation, listening, speaking) is an important tool for satisfying different learning styles. At the same time, the author points out that the game is suitable for practicing vocabulary and language structures in the target language, as well as for practicing pronunciation.

The contribution of the game to the evaluation of the learning process is also remarkable. In particular, it is claimed that play can be a means of feedback, showing for example to the teacher whether students need additional vocabulary training in the target language on a topic or not (Newton, 2005).

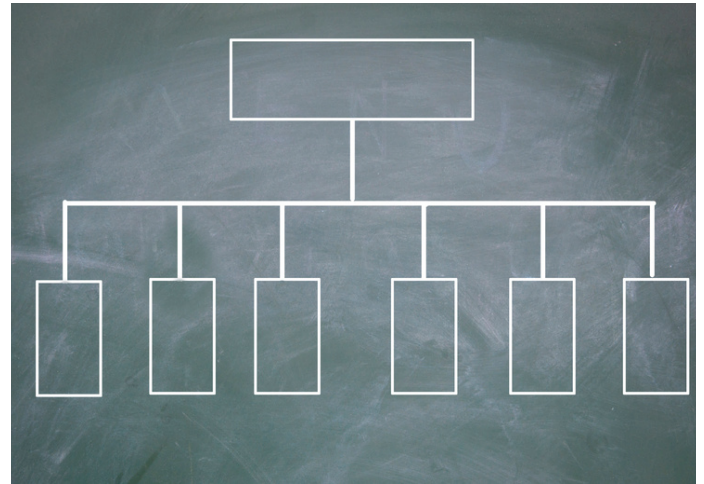


PLAYING CLASSIFICATION

Recognizing the different types of play can help to further understand the importance of play in a child's overall development. At the same time, Hughes (1996) argues that each type of play contributes to a different aspect of the child's development, namely cognitive, social, emotional and physical-motor.

In particular, the game can take many forms and manifest in many ways

(Zigler, Singer, Bishop, 2004; Coplan, Rubin, 1998) such as:



- Lonely - when the child plays alone.
- Parallel - when children play side by side, occasionally looking at each other.
- Companion - when the child plays with other children and with the same toys.
- Collaborative - when playing the same game with other children, having a common goal and specific roles.
- Sensory - motor game (6 months - 2 years), when children explore the physical properties of an object.
- Exploratory - when children are engaged in the accumulation of objects.
- Motor game or physical activity game, such as running, climbing, seesaw and other rough mobility games.
- Functional - when children understand the purpose of toys and use them appropriately.
- Constructive - construction, when it uses some materials to build something.

- Rule play - where children play together following rules (for example a board game or a ball game).
- Symbolic game - a game of pretense, where children substitute objects and attribute properties to objects.
- Rough and tumble game - when children engage in a fun quarrel, pushing other children, but not in an aggressive mood (Gordon, Kollack-Walker, Akil, & Panksepp, 2002).



According to National Council for Curriculum and Assessment - Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework - Guidelines for Good Practice,

there is another classification of play as well:

Creative play	It involves children exploring and using their bodies and materials to make and do things and to share their feelings and thoughts. They enjoy being creative by dancing, painting, playing with recycled materials, working with play-dough and clay, and using their imaginations.
Games with rules	In the beginning children often play by their own rather flexible rules. In time they also partake in more conventional games with 'external' rules. Language is an important part of games with rules as children explain, question and negotiate the rules.
Language play	It involves children playing with sounds and words. It includes unrehearsed and spontaneous manipulation of these, often with rhythmic and repetitive elements. They also love jokes and funny stories
Physical play	It involves children developing, practising and refining bodily movements and control. It includes whole body and limb movements, co-ordination and balance. Children gain control over their gross motor skills first before refining their fine motor skills.
Exploratory play	Involves children using physical skills and their senses to find out what things feel like and what can be done with them. Children explore their own bodies and then they explore the things in their environment.
Manipulative play	Includes manipulating objects and materials. This type of play enhances physical dexterity and hand-eye co-ordination.
Constructive play	Involves building something using natural and manufactured materials.
Pretend game	It includes pretending with objects, actions and situations. Children use their developing language to move from thinking in the concrete to thinking in the abstract. Children act out real events and they also take part in fantasy play about things that are not real, such as fairies or super heroes.
Socio-dramatic play	Involves children playing with other children and/or adults. It provides opportunities for children to make friends, to negotiate with others, and to develop their communication skills. This play helps extend language.



GOOD PRACTICE/APPROACH EXAMPLE

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment had designed an approach on teaching English as second language through playing - "The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework - Guidelines for Good Practice".

As it is described in the Aistear guidelines, each lesson consists of three moves. In the first move, called circle time, children and adult playmates sit together with the teacher in a circle and engage in Language Play and Physical Play.

As a warm-up activity children may do a brainstorm, listen to the teacher tell a story or do different tasks according to the theme's lesson. This kind of warm-up activity is a key preparatory activity for oral language practice, known as a 'round' according to Mosley (2005: 45). To encourage participation, learners are invited to use formulaic speech to contribute their own ideas (see below). An important aspect of this stage is to make learners feel confident and safe. Shy learners may be offered soft toys to make them feel secure, and no one is forced to speak at this point.

In the next move, called centers, learners choose one of three groups set up around the room and led by an adult playmate. Centers are designed for learners to experience Creative Play, Games with Rules, and Pretend Play. The emphasis here is on the target language that learners used or heard during circle time as used in a range of meaningful play activities that learners choose from. In this move, the dialogues can be extended and improvised with the assistance of the adult playmates.

In the final move, chitchat, the children sit together with the teacher afterwards to talk and share their

ideas and feelings, to show their play objects or activities to other children, and to demonstrate what they have learned. The focus here is on encouraging reflection and giving learners a chance to share their success.

The table below shows an example of themes that can be taught through a list of different activities, all performed in English (Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework - Guidelines for Good Practice, 2009).

Chapter	Week / Theme
1 Face and Body	1 / My body
	2 / Clothes
	3 / Routine
	4 / Sickness
	5 / Review Chapter 1 - A super doctor
2 Family and Friends	6 / Family
	7 / Home
	8 / School
	9 / Sports
	10 / Review Chapter 2 - A sporting family
	11 / My town
3 Festivals	12 / Food
	13 / Fruit and vegetable
	14 / New Year
	15 / Review Chapter 3 - Let's party

Here an example of the timetable for a one-week play-based instruction is presented:

Move	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Circle time	Language Play and Physical Play – Say vocabulary and point or touch the body parts – Sing, dance, and act following the songs – Listen and repeat – Connect body parts of a superhero – Talk about their superhero	Language Play and Physical Play – Sing, dance, and act following the songs – Listen and repeat – Connect body parts of a superhero – Talk about their superhero	Language Play and Physical Play – Sing, dance, and act following the songs – Say vocabulary and point or touch the body parts – Ask and answer questions – Whisper and guess
Centers	<u>Creative Play:</u> Create at least one superhero cooperatively <u>Games with Rules:</u> Identify a superhero playing like a quiz show <u>Pretend Play:</u> Pretend superhero to help people in different situations		
Chitchat	Sharing opinion and expressing feelings toward play activity of the day	Sharing opinion and expressing feelings toward play activity of the day	Sharing opinion and expressing feelings toward play activity of the day

More examples and samples to use for educators and parents who will be reading the current manual can be found here:
https://ncca.ie/media/4151/aistear_theearlychildhoodcurriculumframework.pdf

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

In order to carry out such playful approaches to teaching activities, each topic unit must be designed with learning material (Tomlinson, 1994).

According to Tomlinson, therefore, the learning material designed in this intervention should:

- 1 Contain rich audiovisual material to stimulate children's attention
- 2 Enable the child to explore in a multi-sensory context
- 3 Be attractive and fun, as well as flexible to use
- 4 Relate to students' personal experiences and pre-existing knowledge
- 5 Consist of activities that are not too short, but not too long, so as not to distract students
- 6 Satisfy the multiple types of intelligence of students
- 7 Activate the motivations of young students for communication in the target language through familiar and interesting topics in a natural context as much as possible
- 8 Enable children to express their creativity, both verbally and through movement, non-verbally.





8. Lesson plans

INTRODUCTION

The process followed for the implementation of the thematic units, presented in the practical part below, was based on the approach applied by Willis in 1996 according to whom each activity is organized in three stages: the pre-task stage, the task-cycle and the focus on

language elements. In the context of the foreign language class, activities are planned in these stages in order to involve students in the use of language, to solve a problem and finally to reach a practical result, beyond that of learning a grammatical / syntactic phenomenon.

First stage

In the first stage the goal is for the young students to activate their pre-existing knowledge in L1 through stimuli that they will find in the space, and then the teacher helps them get acquainted with the new words, as well as to mobilize for the activities that will follow. At this stage familiar images are presented in combination with sound or graphic representation of the word.

For example, through a computer, interactive presentation programs or with the use of real images (flashcards) in an attractive and fun way for young students. Both the image and the sound are stimuli that facilitate the connection of the new vocabulary with the already existing experience and consequently constitute a memory strategy for easier memorization of new words (Griva & Semoglou, 2013).

Main stage

After that follows the main stage, during which an attempt is made to structure the new knowledge and all the activities are aimed at the use of the new vocabulary.

The activities at this stage are carried out mainly either in pairs or in groups and less on an individual level. The main goal here is the active involvement of young students in activities in a stress-free environment.

Final stage

In the final stage, the emphasis is on consolidating of the new vocabulary or new language structures that were indirectly attempted to be taught. Specifically, the activities here can be shorter, more creative and

enjoyable, giving the opportunity to complete the lesson in a fun way, in order for young students to want to repeat the lesson (Griva & Semoglou, 2013).



PRESENTATION OF THE DIDACTIC STAGES

Specifically, during the experimental process of using play-based method 3 thematic units were designed, each of

which followed the three specific steps of the Willis' method.

First stage

- 1 Visual stimulus that catches the attention of students
- 2 Vocabulary preconception
- 3 Activation of pre-existing knowledge

In the initial stage, the teacher created the framework for the infants' contact with the new vocabulary and the new language structures in the target language. Before entering the organized stage, the teacher always used a free open approach when children will discover the corners with relevant material by themselves and when they were interested, the process of play-based activities started.

Through the computer or using original images (flashcards), the teacher introduced the young students each word in the target language separately, accompanied by its corresponding English written form. After the young students heard the word from the teacher, they were asked to repeat it to assimilate the pronunciation of the word, but also the word itself. Besides, telling fairy tales or stories could be used to activate the imagination and thinking of the students.

Main stage

- 1 Practicing the new vocabulary in creative and artistic activities
- 2 Functional use of the target language
- 3 Group and collaborative work

The following stage included mainly creative and artistic play-based activities to ensure a pleasant and fun learning environment in which the toddlers would use the new vocabulary. Those activities included painting, construction, puzzles, role-play games, pantomime, music, rhymes and songs, creating a possible semi-directive framework of communication and interaction.

It is worth noting that the playful activities took place mainly at the team and corporate level, thus creating a learning environment of noble rivalry and cooperation. Toddlers were asked to work together and help each other in pairs or groups to accomplish the activities.

- 1 Transfer of new knowledge to motor activities in groups or in pairs
- 2 Recycle new vocabulary and language structures
- 3 Unloading from the previous stages

The last stage included fine motor activities and games aimed at repetition of the new vocabulary and language structures and developing and cultivating mainly the gross motor skills of young students in a relaxed and playful context. The typical activities could be ball games, wreath games, running-hunting, dancing.

The games were adapted to the age of the young students and to the needs of each lesson, in order to serve specific teaching objectives.

The activities at this stage were carried out in pairs or in groups to relax from the previous stages and have fun while revising the new words and language structure learnt as well as keep their desire to continue play-based activities in L2.



LESSON PLAN IDEAS – TEMPLATE 1

Lesson Plan 1 (Duration 60 minutes)

Topic Me, myself and I (First lesson)

Learning objectives:

- Language / communication skills:
 - Students / toddlers are able to name the parts of their face
 - Vocabulary:
Nose, Eyes, Ears, Mouth, Hair
 - Verbal / communicative acts:
Naming the parts of the face
- Cognitive skills:
 - To connect familiar concepts (facial features) from L1 (mother tongue) with those in the target language
 - To correspond and focus their attention
 - Use rhyme and rhythm to learn new words and structures
- Social skills:
 - To obey commands motor skills / abilities
 - Respond to visual and auditory stimuli (visual and auditory perception)

Procedure:

- Classroom organization: all students / toddlers together
- Surveillance media: images / flashcards, PC

NOTES:



Lesson Plan 1 continuation

1 FIRST STAGE:

- The children play in the corner with the parts of the body and the pre-existing knowledge of the children in L1 about our facial features is activated. The presentation of the vocabulary is done by using flashcards that are already stuck in the corner with the body parts. Then the teacher shows a picture with a point of the face one by one, pronounces the word in the target language, and then encourages the children to repeat the word and touch the part of the face named in the target language (TPR).
- The teacher places the flashcards in different places on the floor beforehand. The children play with the body parts and when they are interested in the cards, the teacher asks them to bring him the flashcard that he will ask for. For example: "Anastasia, eyes, can you go and bring me the picture of the eyes?". If the child has some difficulty, the teacher goes with him to help get the right picture. The process is completed when all the children are playing.

NOTES:

2 MAIN STAGE:

- *Using a song, the teacher shows how to touch the parts of the face. At first, the song is heard only once from the PC. The teacher then sings the song slowly verse-by-verse, encouraging the children to repeat and touch the corresponding part of the face that is named each time, that is, to do the corresponding act (TPR).*

Touch your eyes, eyes, eyes

Touch your ears, ears, ears

Touch your mouth, mouth, mouth

Touch your nose!

NOTES:

3 FINAL STAGE: Flitsam says ...

- The children stand up on their laps. The teacher gives instructions to the children using the phrase used in the song "Touch your ..." and the vocabulary of the facial features. Children, however, should be careful and only follow the instructions suggested by Flitsam. So, for example, if the teacher says: "Flitsam says, touch your nose", the children should touch their nose. If, however, he says: "Touch your nose", the children must remain still, since the order was not given by Flitsam. After a few trial attempts, the incorrect responses are counted.

NOTES:



LESSON PLAN IDEAS – TEMPLATE 2

Lesson Plan 2 (Duration 60 minutes)

Topic Orientation (First course unit)

Learning objectives:

- Language / communication skills:
 - Identify and name objects
 - Respond by executing specific commands
 - Vocabulary:
Left/Right
 - Verbal / communicative actions:
 - Responding to instructions and directions: *Stop, Turn left, Turn right, Stand up, Sit down*
 - Repeat the colors: *orange, red, green*
- Cognitive skills:
 - Focus their attention
 - Activate mnemonic strategies
 - Understand and assimilate concepts through movement
- Social skills:
 - Keep their turn and play by the rules
 - Take on motor skills / abilities
 - Respond to visual and auditory stimuli (visual and auditory perception)
 - Be oriented in space (right and left side) and react to signals

Procedure:

- Classroom organization: all students / toddlers together, each individually (individually)
- Media: surveillance cards / flashcards

NOTES:



Lesson Plan 2 continuation

1 FIRST STAGE:

- The pre-existing knowledge of the infants about the signs that exist on the road is activated through the corner that there is in the classroom with the traffic signs and the means of transport. On the wall the educator sticks the flashcards of the new vocabulary he/she wants to work on.
- Once the students are interested in these new flashcards, the teacher starts to show them the signal flashcard, saying the word and all students repeat it together.

NOTES:

2 MAIN STAGE: Flitsam says ...

- The students are standing. The teacher introduces the Flitsam doll and explains that Flitsam will give instructions to the infants using the vocabulary and the directions of the specific game / unit. Students, however, should be careful to follow only the commands suggested by Flitsam. For example, if the teacher says "*Flitsam says, turn right*", the students should turn right, if he says only "*sit down*", the students should stay still, since the command was not given by Flitsam. After a few test attempts, the children's incorrect responses are counted.

NOTES:

3 FINAL STAGE: Traffic lights

- Students impersonate car drivers and stand one behind the other. On the floor are placed the traffic signs "*Stop*", "*Turn left*", "*Turn right*" as well as cards with the colors "*red*", "*orange*" and "*green*". Each infant is individually asked to move along the path with the signals.
- Every time he sees the color "*green*", the child is asked to drive his car quickly, then slowly when he sees the color "*orange*" and to stop in front of "*red*" or the signal "*Stop*". Accordingly, each time the child sees the "*Turn left*" or "*Turn right*" signal, he should make the appropriate movement while driving his car to the finish.

NOTES:



LESSON PLAN IDEAS – TEMPLATE 3

Lesson Plan 1 (Duration 60 minutes)

Topic My family

Learning objectives:

- Language / communication skills:
 - Name family members
 - Recommend / present family members
 - Vocabulary:
Mum, Dad, Brother, Sister, Grandpa, Grandma, Family
 - Verbal / communicative actions:
Introducing members of the family: *This is my... (dad, mum...). This is my family.*
- Cognitive skills:
 - Connect familiar concepts (family members) from L1 with those in the target language (L2)
 - Use rhyme and rhythm to learn new language structures
 - Improve social skills and communicate verbally, learning to work in pairs (in a group)
 - Take on motor skills / abilities
 - Respond to sound stimuli (auditory perception) and visual stimuli (visual perception)

Procedure:

- Classroom organization: two students / toddlers together (pairwork), all students / toddlers together
- Surveillance tools: asymmetrical puzzle pieces, computer, pictures (flashcards), handkerchief, "the magic box"

NOTES:



Lesson Plan 3 continuation

1 FIRST STAGE: Jigsawing the members of the family or the whole family

- The puzzle is already on the corner with the family members. Children freely play in the classroom and when the new puzzle grabs their attention, we start working with it.
- The teacher encourages the infants to match pairs, gives them asymmetrical puzzle pieces and invites them to form a family member.
- Then they are asked to name the image of the family member in the target language. After that pairs are given different puzzle pieces to put together in order to be formed another family member. The process is completed when each pair of children "reconstructs" three different puzzles.

NOTES:

2 MAIN STAGE: Song singing

- By using a rhythm from the PC, teacher encourages the children to repeat each verse of the song after her/him.
- The teacher then sings the song at a slower pace, giving the children some time to say the correct word in the target language while showing the children the flashcard of a family member or the whole family.

This is my mum, This is my dad, This is my family!

This is my grandma, This is my grandpa, This is my family!

This is my brother, This is my sister, This is my family!

NOTES:

3 FINAL STAGE: Taking on roles

- The children stand upright forming a circle and the teacher chooses one to get out of the circle.
- Then, she/he asks each child in the circle to take a picture of a family member from the "magic box" by chance and hold it in his hands showing the picture. In this way, the children take on a role of family.
- The teacher then closes the eyes of the chosen child with a handkerchief and invites him to go around the circle. Music plays and as soon as the music stops, the selected child is asked to touch the child in front of him/her and name his/ her role, depending on the flashcard, saying for example: "*This is my grandpa*".

NOTES:



SECTION III

Upcoming project results



ONLINE TOOLKIT FOR EDUCATORS AND SCHOOLS



The Play&Learn toolkit will gather resources centred on the use of play and games in second language classes in pre-school settings, backing young learners' development and their experience of play as a means of education (formal or non-formal). Indeed, this tool will help pre-school teachers to deliver second language classes to children. Educators will be working with the children by performing those resources in easy and simple ways.

Play is not generally regarded as a serious contributor to language learning and as such is not implemented in formal education. For this reason, the consortium is eager to develop its own, alternative approach to teaching children in second language classes. The aim is to be able to provide teachers with tools that will enable them to work deeply with young learners.

The toolkit will include resources such as:

- Lesson plans in various fields (Face and Body, Family and Friend, Sports, means of transport etc.)
- Interactive materials
- Videos and music appropriate to be used
- A collection of effective games that could be used or made within the class with the children
- Drama play as a tool, which will be used in schools (kindergartens, nursery, day-care)





ONLINE LEARNING NETWORKING PLATFORM

The online learning networking platform will be developed to include training modules providing the knowledge needed to deliver play-based language learning courses for kindergarten educators.

The platform will be compatible with desktop and mobile devices which will enable to engage distant learners into the training procedure.

The e-learning platform will include:

- All the training materials and the toolkit that consists of the training program for educators and the toolkit with material, resources, and lesson plans
- A networking forum in which all educators will be able to connect with each other and exchange ideas and good practices. The visitors will have the option to register themselves and create their personal profile which will enable them to use the chat room and communicate in pairs, groups or in a common forum.





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