



Research Papers in *Language Teaching and Learning*

Hellenic Open University
School of Humanities

Volume 11

February 2021

Innovations and Trends in Early Foreign Language Context

Guest editor:
Thomai Alexiou

P A T R A S



Research Papers in *Language Teaching and Learning*

Editor-in-chief:

Nicos Sifakis, *Hellenic Open University*

Assistant editors:

Eleni Manolopoulou-Sergi, *Hellenic Open University*

Christine Calfoglou, *Hellenic Open University*

Editorial assistants:

Vasilios Zorbas, *University of Athens*

Stefania Kordia, *Hellenic Open University*

Special advisor to the editors:

Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra, *University of Athens*

Advisory board:

Thomai Alexiou, *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*

George Androulakis, *University of Thessaly*

Michael Beaumont, *University of Manchester*

Yasemin Bayyurt, *Boğaziçi University*

Maggie Charles, *University of Oxford*

Bessie Dendrinou, *University of Athens*

Zoltan Dörnyei, *University of Nottingham*

Richard Fay, *University of Manchester*

Vassilia Hatzinikita, *Hellenic Open University*

Jennifer Jenkins, *University of Southampton*

Evangelia Kaga, *Pedagogical Institute, Greece*

Evdokia Karavas, *University of Athens*

Alexis Kokkos, *Hellenic Open University*

Antonis Lionarakis, *Hellenic Open University*

Enric Llorca, *University of Lleida*

Marina Mattheoudaki-Sayegh, *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*

Bessie Mitsikopoulou, *University of Athens*

Anastasia Papaconstantinou, *University of Athens*

Spiros Papageorgiou, *Educational Testing Service*

Angeliki Psaltou-Joycey, *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*

Barbara Seidlhofer, *University of Vienna*

Areti-Maria Sougari, *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*

Julia-Athena Spinthourakis, *University of Patras*

Editorial board:

Anastasia Georgountzou, *University of Athens*

Eleni Gerali-Roussou, *Hellenic Open University*

Vasileia Kazamia, *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki*

Kosmas Vlachos, *University of Athens*

Vasilios Zorbas, *University of Athens*



Research Papers in *Language Teaching and Learning*

Table of Contents of Volume 11, 2021

Special Issue: Innovations and Trends in Early Foreign Language Context

Guest Editor: Thomai Alexiou

	<i>pp.</i>
Editorial	4
Guest editor's Introduction	6
Section 1. Innovations and trends in preschool contexts	11
The Pre-A1 Level in the Updated Common European Framework of Reference for Languages <i>Thomai Alexiou & Maria Stathopoulou</i>	11
Teaching EFL at Spanish Preschools: A comparative analysis from two different teachers' perspectives <i>Beatriz Cortina-Pérez & Ana Andúgar</i>	30
Care and language pedagogy in preschool education from a distance: a teacher-parent synergy <i>Alexia Giannakopoulou</i>	53
Measuring vocabulary at early ages: Introducing Pic-lex <i>Thomai Alexiou</i>	66
<i>Peppa Pig</i> : An innovative way to promote formulaic language in pre-primary EFL classrooms <i>Natassa Kokla</i>	76
#LetMeepleTalk: Using board games for EFL preschoolers <i>Athanasios Karasimos</i>	93
Is a 'a little doll' truly a little doll? Morphology teaching through children's stories <i>Marina Tzakosta, Chysavgi Dertzekou & Georgia Panteloglou</i>	104
"Listen to my story, play and interact": Greek preschool children learning English in a digital environment <i>Eleni Korosidou & Eleni Griva</i>	124
Section 2. Innovations and trends in primary settings	137

Using digital technologies in the Early Foreign Language Classroom <i>Daniela Elsner & Astrid Jurecka</i>	137
Young learners, Maths, EFL and Chess: With CLIL they all progress <i>Thomas Zapounidis</i>	150
Validating Pic-Lex for pre-primary and primary school age children <i>Chloe Mills & James Milton</i>	159
Raising Intercultural Awareness in Teaching Young Learners in EFL Classes <i>Ioannis Karras</i>	173
Developing young foreign language learners' persuasive strategies through intercultural folktales <i>Isaak Papadopoulos & Joan Kang Shin</i>	185
ADDITIONAL PAPERS	203
Interactive whiteboards in EFL from the teachers' and students' perspective <i>Christina Nicole Giannikas</i>	203
Greek teachers' beliefs on the use of games in the EFL classroom <i>Panagiota Koufopoulou & Evangelia Karagianni</i>	220
The practicum as a motivating force to choose teaching English as a career <i>Stamatia Klangou & Areti-Maria Sougari</i>	238
The effects of metacognitive listening strategy instruction on ESL learners' listening motivation <i>Corbin Kalanikiakahi Rivera, Grant Eckstein, David E. Eddington & Benjamin L. McMurry</i>	251
The L2 motivational self system profile of Greek adolescents <i>Zoe Kantaridou & Eleanna Xekalou</i>	268
Promoting intercultural competence of migrant learners through computer mediated activities in the EFL classroom <i>Maria Matsouka</i>	284
Book review. <i>Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity.</i> Reviewed by Qiudong LI & Longxing LI	309
Book review. <i>Error Analysis in the world: a bibliography.</i> Reviewed by Eirini Monsela	316

All articles in this Journal are published
under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)



EDITORIAL

The eleventh issue of RPLTL is a special issue on early foreign language teaching and learning. The domain is an extremely important one, especially relevant in the era of the global dominance of English, where the pressure to expose very young learners to English is increasing, and so is relevant research. The special issue sheds light on many different aspects of this reality, with reference to extensive original research, that ranges from comprehensive descriptions of established curricula for teaching young learners, to organizing the teaching and learning process in the distance education mode, to teacher education concerns, to implementing online technology, teaching content through English, and raising younger learners' intercultural awareness.

The issue is rounded up with six more papers that fall outside the realm of the special issue and refer to the use of interactive whiteboards, teachers' perspectives about using games for learning, the impact of the practicum on teachers' professional decisions, the importance of metacognitive listening strategy instruction, Greek adolescents' motivational profiling, and the promotion of intercultural competence of migrant learners through computer mediated activities. The issue also includes two book reviews.



As the cliché goes, all good things must come to an end. As I am passing the torch to my worthy successor, Thomai Alexiou, I cannot but bring to mind the past twelve years at the helm of what turned out to be a unique academic journal, both in and out of the Greek context. I strongly believe (and this is backed by the number of visitors and downloads of papers, the citation of many papers in other publications, and also the integration of its papers in the reading lists of various undergraduate and postgraduate curricula around the world) that RPLTL has fully succeeded (a) in promoting the best of research that is carried out within the M.Ed. in TESOL (and currently teaching English as a Foreign/International Language) of the Hellenic Open University (HOU) and (b) in attracting original research from respected scholars around the world. This realization makes me really proud and grateful to everyone who contributed in this wonderful journey, over the past dozen years.

I would like to sincerely thank all colleagues, HOU tutors, for their extremely significant contributions—without their hard work and commitment this journal would not have been possible. I would also like to thank all the authors, both graduates of the M.Ed. and colleagues from both inside and outside Greece, for their engagement and perseverance. Collectively, they have made RPLTL what it is.

On a final note, I would like to thank Thomai for taking over as editor-in-chief and wish her the very best of success in this new task.

Nicos C. Sifakis
Editor-in-Chief



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 6-10

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Special Issue: Innovations and trends in Early Foreign Language Context

Introduction

Thomai ALEXIOU

Early foreign language education is now normal and not merely a passing trend. Although there is still room for discussion regarding the impact of early language learning on future language success, the benefits of starting young have long been established. An early start by itself, of course, guarantees nothing. Future language success seems to be depended largely on other more essential and practical factors such as continuity and quality of input, huge amounts of exposure, rich linguistic context, a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary and from primary to secondary education and so many others.

All these notwithstanding, systematic studies have provided tangible results and the consensus seems to be that early language education certainly does no harm. On the contrary, it seems to develop the child holistically and therefore is an opportunity in a child's future language development. The linguistic benefits (e.g., enrichment of vocabulary and phrases, pronunciation, language awareness and faster acquisition of oral comprehension skills) -although considerable in many cases- are not the most significant ones. Pedagogical gains including cognitive, socio-cultural and affective/emotional gains have been demonstrated throughout the years, unveiling multifaceted privileges for early starters. Especially when it comes to pre-primary and preschool years (a turning point in a child's life), this pedagogical value deserves special attention, and, thus, a synergy between all stakeholders is vital.

Therefore, it is sensible to present some of the innovations and trends regarding early EFL in the hope of enhancing both the discussion and the quality of education in this field. The volume serves as a testimony of the miracles teachers perform as well as the vision academics share for education and at the same time constitutes a valuable source of contributions made in the field.

The volume covers an array of different parameters and factors that target the holistic development of the child. It is a rich discussion on the dimensions of the Pre-A1 level, child friendly measurement tools, the possibilities technological advances and multimedia offer (such as reading pens, digital board games, cartoons), the essence of interculturalism, non-conventional teaching methodologies and approaches even during the COVID era –all highlighting the huge potential of EFL at preschool and primary age.

This volume is divided into two subparts: Innovations and trends in preschools and innovations and trends in primary schools.

The first 8 papers focus on the preschool context and their implications in EFL.

Thomaï Alexiou and **Maria Stathopoulou** bring the new Companion CEFR into the Early Language Learning (ELL) classroom. This fills a gap in the current literature since they critically review and analyse the Pre-A1 descriptors and they explore ways that they can be translated into teaching methodology and pedagogies, language programmes and curricula for early language learning. The paper ends by concluding that the new Pre-A1 level illustrative descriptors although useful as benchmark can be further enriched with common thematic areas, a threshold of lexis and a clear emphasis on plurilingual competence. The authors propose the idea of integration of language in the curriculum rather than the consideration of it as a separate subject in future studies in pedagogy and language.

Beatriz Cortina-Pérez and **Ana Andùgar** present data from their project in Spain and an analysis from two different perspectives: that of the EFL specialist teacher and the Pre-primary practitioner. There are many similarities. However, EFL specialists appear to prefer communication-oriented strategies and agree with a more language-centred approach while preschool teachers favour child-oriented strategies and a more natural teaching approach, aiming at developing children globally and integrally. They unanimously state that cooperation is the key factor and that there is a need to establish mechanisms to ensure, strengthen and promote this cooperation.

Alexia Giannakopoulou presents a framework for preschool education designed for the needs of change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She presents the main characteristics of a ‘distance learning strategy’ in a preschool setting in order to foster continuity of digital teaching and learning. Despite the practical issues that emerged from this distance mode, children remained active in the learning process, teachers and peers maintained their rapport while it appears that this process helped the teachers bond with the children’s families.

Thomaï Alexiou presents Pic-lex, a new picture-based vocabulary size test, in both English and Greek, for very young learners up to primary age. This game-like measurement test sketches the vocabulary profile of young learners and relates the scores to CEFR bands. Preliminary studies have shown evidence of good reliability and validity. The paper sheds light on the importance of vocabulary size assessment

in the early years while Pic-lex aims to improve the process of vocabulary testing in young learners and help to provide a model of vocabulary learning. This can in turn work as a tool for monitoring children's progress and designing interventions where needed.

Alternative means of materials are the focus of the next 2 papers. **Natassa Kokla** examines the effect of the cartoon series 'Peppa Pig' on preschoolers' EFL formulaic language acquisition. Results reveal that preschoolers can benefit considerably from merely watching 'Peppa Pig', and explicit instruction can lead to significant formulaic gains. More specifically, the 4-year-old control group doubled and the 5-year-old control group almost tripled their scores compared to pre-tests. The effects appear age-related and older learners generally scored higher than younger ones.

Athanasios Karasimos investigates the potential of using board games with preschoolers in EFL pedagogy. He proposes that every genre can be used to teach a specific language skill (e.g., speaking via board game streaming presentation or developing thematic vocabulary) in CLIL and early language contexts. The author argues that the pedagogical benefits of the approach (such as developing cooperation skills and solidarity, sharing responsibilities and following rules) are also cultivated through the use of board games in the language classroom.

Marina Tzakosta, Chysavgi Dertzekou & Georgia Panteloglou present a framework for teaching the morphology of Greek through the children's story 'Aki-aros-itsa'. The results demonstrated that intervention can facilitate the assimilation of derivational rules and principles. The authors conclude that children's stories provide a natural and efficient way of teaching the morphology of Greek L1. They also emphasise the significance of explicit and focused teaching instruction in the teaching material for the acquisition of the morphological elements, vocabulary and general enrichment of Greek.

Further technological intervention is considered by **Eleni Korosidou** and **Eleni Griva** who adopt a multimodal approach to foreign language (FL) teaching to preschoolers. The implementation of their educational framework showed that digital narratives and multimodal activities provided children with plenty of opportunities to interact in a gamified environment and contributed to developing their listening comprehension skills and foreign language vocabulary. Play-based digital learning activities did keep children's interest and attention high while sustaining positive attitudes towards foreign language learning.

The second group of papers involves learners in primary settings. **Daniela Elsner** and **Astrid Jurecka** show evidence of how technological tools and, more specifically, digital reading pens proved to be useful in a primary foreign language classroom in Germany. They show that digital reading pens are suitable tools for vocabulary learning as they provide students with a reliable "language model". Reading pens may particularly be suitable in homework practice or self-directed study inside or outside the classroom. The authors propose that reading pens may have a positive

effect on students' motivation and autonomy as well as increase in the practice time outside the classroom.

Thomas Zapounidis explores the relationship of chess to CLIL and its benefits for primary EFL contexts. The innovative incorporation of chess in the mainstream syllabus of a primary school in Greece (as it is the case with a number of countries) is well argued in the paper. Multiple benefits of chess on young learners are presented and the proposal of teaching chess in a foreign language in accordance to the CLIL methodology is discussed.

Chloe Mills and **James Milton** attempt to validate Pic-lex in its first pilot version. The picture-based receptive vocabulary test for children speaking English appears reliable and valid and a high correlation was found between Pic-lex and other test scores. In this pilot version, a ceiling effect was noted as well as an effect on frequency scores and the authors offer suggestions for further development of the test. They conclude that the test can have positive implications for vocabulary interventions in several contexts.

Intercultural competence is a virtue discussed in the last two papers. **Ioannis Karras** argues the significance of raising intercultural awareness in teaching young learners in EFL classes. He discusses the impact of intercultural awareness on both teachers' and learners' social identity, as well the multiple implications in foreign language pedagogy. The author advocates the development of an intercultural dimension and sensitivity in school curricula and materials. A list of practical suggestions for EFL teachers who want to develop intercultural awareness is offered so as to integrate an intercultural approach in their young learners' classrooms.

Isaak Papadopoulos and **Joanna Kang Shin** present an educational project that aims to develop young foreign language learners' persuasive strategies using intercultural folktales from South-Eastern Europe. Children in the project made use of their linguistic repertoires in order to communicate effectively and incorporate the desired strategies while the use of folk tales helped them to develop empathy. The authors suggest the promotion of such educational practices in order to raise sensitivity towards cultural diversity.

This volume would not have been possible without the help of academics and good friends who participated in the reviewing process. I would like to express my gratitude to the following colleagues who served as reviewers and helped this volume with their insightful comments:

James Milton, Professor, Swansea University, Wales, UK
Christina Gitsaki, Professor, Zayed University, Dubai, UAE
George K. Mikros, Professor, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar
Bessie Mitsikopoulou, Professor, Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
Danijela Prošić-Santovac, Associate Professor, Novisad University, Serbia
Julie Spinthourakis, Professor, University of Patras, Greece

I warmly acknowledge the help of Prof. Nicos Sifakis, Chief Editor of the Journal whose help was vital in this process and I thank him for his valuable support throughout this effort.

I am also indebted to my colleague, Dr. Vasilis Zorbas who acted as a copyeditor in this volume and he offered very constructive comments.

Aristotle in his work mentioned that it is not clear what the character of education is. He said that 'We need to ask ourselves what virtues are we aiming for in education. Does our education aim to teach a man the useful things in life, the ones leading to virtue or the unnecessary ones?' Languages are far from unnecessary and they are useful indeed. We hope in this volume we will find elements towards cultivating the children's virtues as well.

Thomaï Alexiou (thalexiou@enl.auth.gr) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Her expertise is in early foreign language learning and teaching and material development for young and very young learners. She has published widely in the area of SLA pedagogy while she has authored/coauthored books and online resources in the areas of CLIL (CLIL-Prime Erasmus+ programme), dyslexia (DysTEFL2-Erasmus+ programme) and EFL for young learners (PEAP Project). She has recently developed Pic-Lex (2020), a receptive vocabulary size test for young learners.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 11-29

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

The Pre-A1 Level in the Companion Volume of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Thomaï ALEXIOU & Maria STATHOPOULOU

Given the gap in the literature regarding the integration of the CEFR in the Early Language Learning (ELL) classroom, this paper aims at presenting the philosophy and characteristics of the new CEFR Pre-A1 level descriptors included in the new Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2018/2020),¹ discussing their theoretical underpinnings and examining the extent to which they reflect any teaching methodologies. To this end, this paper (a) analyses and evaluates the new Pre-A1 descriptors, (b) discusses the scales in which they appear and why—as not all scales include the Pre-A1 level, and (c) explores ways that these descriptors can be translated into practice. The paper ends by concluding that the new Pre-A1 level can-do statements can be employed for the creation of language programmes, curricula, syllabi and materials for early language learning. However, more concrete instructions accompanied by linguistic descriptions are needed so as to help practitioners and material developers.

Key words: Pre-A1, young learners, pedagogy, CEFR, vocabulary, assessment, preschool, pre-primary

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on a rather neglected proficiency level, that of Pre-A1 as only recently it has appeared in the updated content of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment*, henceforth CEFR (Council of Europe 2001). In 2018², the Council of Europe published the new *CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors*, which suggests new illustrative descriptors encompassing a number of more recently appreciated communication needs (for example, mediation and translanguaging, online interaction, plurilingual and pluricultural competence). An important inclusion, with which this present paper is concerned, are the Pre-A1 level descriptors; this inclusion finally recognizes the need for solid and concrete descriptors for young and very young learners and highlights the importance of Early Language Learning in Europe. In the CEFR Companion Volume, Pre-A1 “represents a ‘milestone’ half way towards Level A1, a band

¹Note that the new CEFR Companion Volume was initially published in 2018 but in 2020, its final version was uploaded to the webpage of the Council of Europe. It is the one which is now being translated in different European Languages.

²Find the latest version of the CEFR Companion Volume: <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>

of proficiency at which the learner has not yet acquired a generative capacity, but relies upon a repertoire of words and formulaic expressions” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 243). Although limited in the range of communicative ability, this level is an important stepping-stone to later language proficiency.

For the purposes of this paper, 84 new scales – as included in the Companion Volume - were studied (see Appendix) with the intention to explore in which scales the Pre-A1 level appears and what the characteristics of these scales and thus of the descriptors included in each scale- are. The descriptors are presented through six main categories: 1. Reception activities and strategies, 2. Production activities and strategies, 3. Interaction activities and strategies, 4. Mediation activities and strategies, 5. Communicative language activities, and 6. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Ultimately this paper explores ways that these descriptors can be translated into practice.

2. Teaching languages to very young learners as a European priority

2.1. Developing young learners’ plurilingual competence: why learn at an early age?

Early foreign language instruction has been a hot issue for a number of years now. Although a series of research studies and projects have been carried out, there is no consensus regarding the ideal onset age. And rightly so, as data show that an array of other parameters (amount and quality of input, continuity in syllabus, systematic exposure, etc.) decisively affect eventual success and not only the onset age (Enever, 2011, 2015; Murphy et al, 2016).

However, Europe has acknowledged the multidimensional benefits of introducing languages at an early age, even at the pre-primary level. These benefits cover a broad spectrum of gains that are not just linguistic. Cognitive gains have been demonstrated such as greater mental flexibility, divergent thinking as well as development of memory, inductive learning, reasoning skills (Rosenbusch, 1995; Alexiou, 2009). Moreover, socio-cultural benefits are also reported (i.e. respect for cultural diversity (Kearney & Ahn, 2013), socio-cultural and language awareness (Brumen, Berro & Cagran, 2017; Lourenço & Andrade, 2015) to name just a few). Last but not least, motivation increase and positive predispositions and attitudes towards other languages (Andúgar & Cortina-Peréz, 2018; Chen et al, 2020) complete the picture making early language learning even at a preschool level a ‘pedagogically solid step’ (Alexiou, 2020, p.68) that contributes to the holistic development of children’s learning.

Taking all the above into consideration, early language learning has become a priority in most European countries which see plurilingual competence as a significant goal to be achieved by learners. Global policies and practices involved in foreign language instruction are affected by research evidence while this year (2020) the introduction of English in 58 Greek state preschools is being piloted for the very first time. Although it is early to present any data, the preliminary indications of this project appear indeed positive.

Since there are educational policies interested in introducing languages and developing plurilingualism from an early age, it is vital to have a set of descriptors for these ages where the model of learning is still under scrutiny. A set of descriptors would provide the foundations for realistic expectations at that particular level bearing in mind the particular age groups and their advantages and limitations. It would also be a good guide for the teacher to monitor learners’ progress. One could only hope that with the new level some level of continuity, consistency and smooth transition can be guaranteed. Before any discussion on the aforementioned aspects, let us review how very young learners approach language learning.

2.2. Characteristics of young learners: how they learn languages

Teaching languages to very young learners is a highly demanding process and specific actions and steps are required (Nikolov & Djigunović, 2006). Spontaneity and limited control of feelings surely characterise young learners. Moreover, young learners do not feel comfortable with the sense of being controlled and they wish to be autonomous deciding for themselves (Donaldson, 1978).

Children are playful and curious by nature and they do not need to be convinced to learn as they are motivated innately for anything new. They experiment, they discover and when it comes to a foreign language they get enthused by the idea of deciphering this new code. However, they have short attention spans, they possess very little conceptual and language knowledge and these learners are still developing cognitively (Alexiou, 2015). Any descriptors for this age group need to consider these very specific characteristics. This, in turn, means that any teaching method must fit within the range of their conceptual understanding and language ability.

Thematic and cross-curricular approaches are proposed for the specific age group as these frameworks help provide context and “facilitate memory associations and recall” (Alexiou, Roghani & Milton, 2019, p.212). Oracy skills are emphasized over literacy skills at this level so oral exposure to and interaction with the new language present valuable learning opportunities. Mealtime conversations (Beals et al., 1994), school routines, free play, daily activities and tasks around school and immediate environment socialization provide ideal contexts for learning. A mascot, a soft toy or a puppet creates the communicative conditions and contexts for exposing and enriching children’s language. Common frameworks for teaching vocabulary to preschool and primary learners include but are not limited to songs, rhymes, drama, arts and crafts, projects and IT. Story reading, cartoon series (Alexiou, 2015; Alexiou et al., 2019; see also Kokla in this volume) are suggested for implicit vocabulary and formulaic uptake. Generally, a holistic approach is recommended so that children develop cognitively, linguistically, emotionally, socio-culturally.

Materials include realia (authentic items) picture books, flash and story cards puppets, board games and projects. Incidental word building is paramount (Sivanova-Chanturia & Webb, 2016) and the focus is on the development of oracy. Literacy usually comes later at a steady pace. Playful practices and tasks such as inductive learning tasks that facilitate mapping thematic concepts of words, visual perception tasks, such as ‘spot the differences’ games, and reasoning tasks, story sequencing are all part of the techniques teachers at preschool should use for further cognitive practice since research showed that they facilitate FL learning (Alexiou, 2005). Explicit grammar instruction should not be applied as children at that early age do not possess metalinguistic skills (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010; Shin & Crandall, 2014) and they have not matured cognitively to deal with grammar and metalanguage.

Even assessment is practiced and implemented implicitly and alternatively at this age through games, projects, portfolios (Alexiou, Roghani & Milton, 2019). Any tool of assessment must “target the things they do know rather than the things they do not” (Alexiou & Milton, 2020, p.111).

3. The CEFR: from past to present

3.1. An overview of the CEFR (2001)

Within the context of promoting languages at a very young age in Europe as presented in Section 2, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001) has always been a tool, which emphasized the importance of learning languages. It helps decision makers, curriculum planners, syllabus designers, course developers and testers by suggesting a

comprehensive (but not exhaustive) list of can-do statements (or descriptors) which specify what language learners are able to use at different proficiency levels. It has been employed in Europe as a policy document and as a tool to provide a common basis for curriculum planning and assessment purposes thus providing transparency (Council of Europe, 2020).

The CEFR actually adopts a plurilingual vision giving value to cultural and linguistic diversity and is based on the principles of the Council of Europe such as learner autonomy, equal rights, social justice among others. As stated,

it promotes the need for learners as ‘social agents’ to draw upon all of their linguistic and cultural resources and experiences in order to fully participate in social and educational contexts, achieving mutual understanding, gaining access to knowledge and in turn further developing their linguistic and cultural repertoire (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 123)

This influential document has become available in 40 languages. It has been the focus of the Recommendations provided by Europe’s Committee of Ministers and Parliamentary Assembly³ and has been exploited by the European Commission (see for instance the EUROPASS project⁴ and the project which led to a European Indicator of Language Competence). Some of its principles that the Committee of Ministers recommends to be implemented by stakeholders and authorities responsible for the development of language education programmes are the following (Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)7):

- provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of foreign/second language qualifications;
- provide guidance for the diversification of language learning within educational systems in order to maintain and develop plurilingualism among citizens of Europe as a means of knowledge building and skills development, with a view to enhancing social cohesion and intercultural understanding;
- encourage learners, teachers, teacher trainers, course designers, textbook authors, curriculum developers, examining bodies and education administrators to adopt a learner-focused, competence-based approach; take into consideration the social and cultural dimensions of language learning; consider and treat each language in the curriculum not in isolation but as part of a coherent plurilingual education; take into consideration, in their analysis, the specific needs of the different groups of learners and of the general needs of modern European societies;

It is thus an important tool in the direction of enhancing plurilingualism while its update was more than necessary given today’s multilingual societies. The new Companion Volume, which is the outcome of a Council of Europe project launched in 2018 and constitutes the extension of the CEFR, updates existing scales and includes new components for the parallel use of languages thus becoming an important tool which softens linguistic barriers. For the first time, it includes mediation descriptors and descriptors for plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Descriptors were also developed for aspects of online interaction and reactions to creative text/literature. Although this paper focuses on the introduction of the Pre-A1 level descriptors as a new component of the CEFR, in the section that follows there is a short overview of the main changes that took place in the updated document and how these are linked to the new –Pre-A1– level introduced.

³https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805d2fb1

⁴<https://europa.eu/europass/en>

3.2. The updated CEFR (2018/2020): what the Companion Volume includes

From 2014 to 2017 more than 1500 experts, and 300 institutions were involved in updating the CEFR. Hundreds of validation workshops and 60 pilot projects took place before its launch through the website of the Council of Europe. The updating of the CEFR involved three different phases. It began with the intuitive development of new descriptors on the basis of experts' knowledge, readings and experience, Phase 2 involved the qualitative aspects of the descriptors while Phase 3 the quantitative analyses. This final phase concerned the calibration of the best descriptors using a Rasch model analysis for scaling with the intention to assess the degree to which the new descriptors are appropriate for the proficiency level for which they are developed (North & Piccardo, 2016). Mediation, which was an area not touched in 2001, is a central component in the CEFR Companion Volume. Scales and can-do statements are provided for mediating a text, for mediating concepts, for mediating communication, as well as for mediation strategies and plurilingual/pluricultural competences. Ultimately, the Companion Volume completes the CEFR descriptive scheme by including/ updating the following:

1. Changes to existing A1-C2 descriptors (with the majority of changes focusing on C2)
2. New scales for *Reading as a leisure activity* (under Written Reception), for *Using telecommunications* (under Spoken Interaction), and for *Sustained monologue: Giving information* (under Spoken Production)
3. New scales for *Online conversation and discussion* and *Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration*;
4. A new scale for *Phonological control*
5. Introduction of scales relevant to creative text and literature.
6. Introduction of scales for *Building on pluricultural repertoire* and *Building on plurilingual repertoire*
7. The introduction of Pre-A1 as a new proficiency level which finally appeared in many scales

The following section focuses on this final innovative aspect of the CEFR Companion Volume by discussing what is new as far as this level is concerned and how it could be exploited for the purposes of teaching and assessing young learners.

4. The Companion Volume and the teaching of languages to very young learners: The new descriptors for Pre-A1 as a major advancement

4.1. The Pre-A1 descriptors in the Companion Volume: an overview

In the CEFR document in 2001, there were certain descriptors relevant to tasks with limited linguistic and cognitive demands and that's why they were considered as belonging below A1 level. These simple tasks, which were then foreseen, were related to the following objectives:

- can use some basic greetings;
- can say yes, no, excuse me, please, thank you, sorry;
- can make simple purchases where pointing or other gesture can support the verbal reference;
- can ask and tell day, time of day and date;
- can fill in uncomplicated forms with personal details, name, address, nationality, marital status;
- can write a short, simple postcard (CEFR Section 3.5)

In the 2018/2020 publication, on the contrary, the new label of Pre-A1 was introduced and the aforementioned objectives were exploited and expanded. This was actually an innovative aspect of

the CEFR, which seems to help educators, materials developers and syllabus designers dealing with the teaching of very young learners.

4.2. Features of the Pre-A1 level descriptors: judging their language and content

What the analysis has shown is that in the 84 scales studied (see Appendix), the total number of Pre-A1 level descriptors is 46 while the scales *not* including pre-A1 level descriptors are 54 (out of 84). This latter point indicates that the Pre-A1 level is not represented in the 65% of the scales. Of course, this is natural if we consider that the Pre-A1 is defined as the half road towards A1 and also the fact that this is usually the level young or very young learners will probably be at. In addition to this finding, the vast majority of Pre-A1 level descriptors appear in the scales relevant to reception, either reading or listening. Reception of a word is expected with the aid of visual stimuli, gestures and/or body language, which assist understanding, which is in line with the teaching and learning theories at an early age.

Descriptors-Reception	Descriptors-Production
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can understand short, simple instructions for actions such as 'Stop,' 'Close the door,' etc., provided they are delivered slowly face-to-face, accompanied by pictures or manual gestures and repeated if necessary (see Appendix, Scale 4) 2. Can understand <i>short</i>, very <i>simple</i> questions and statements provided that they are delivered slowly and clearly and accompanied by visuals or manual gestures to support understanding and <i>repeated</i> if necessary. (Appendix, Scale 1) 3. Can understand the simplest informational material that consists of familiar words and pictures, such as a fast-food restaurant menu illustrated with photos or an illustrated story formulated in very simple, everyday words (see Appendix, Scale 8) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Can give basic personal information in writing (e.g. name, address, nationality), perhaps with the use of a dictionary (Appendix, Scale 20) 7. Can describe him/herself (e.g. name, age, family), using simple words and formulaic expressions, provided he/she can prepare in advance. (Appendix, Scale 15) 8. Can say how he/she is feeling using simple words like 'happy', 'tired', accompanied by body language (Appendix, Scale 15)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Can recognise everyday, familiar words, provided they are delivered clearly and slowly in a clearly defined, <i>familiar</i>, everyday context (Appendix, Scale 1) 5. Can recognise familiar words accompanied by pictures, such as a fast-food restaurant menu illustrated with photos or a picture book using <i>familiar</i> vocabulary (Appendix, Scale 6) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Can ask and answer questions about him/herself and daily routines, using short, <i>formulaic</i> expressions and relying on <i>gestures</i> to reinforce the information (Appendix, Scale 26) 10. Can understand and use some basic, formulaic expressions such as 'Yes,' 'No,' 'Excuse me,' 'Please,' 'Thank you,' 'No thank you,' 'Sorry' (Appendix, Scale 28)

Table 1: Examples of descriptors for receptive and productive language use at the Pre-A1 level

Certain observations which concern the reception scales are also necessary to be mentioned in order to better understand the rationale lying behind the particular descriptors. First of all, familiarity is a key concept in almost all the pre-A1 descriptors. As indicated in the descriptors 4 and 5 (see Table 1), learners need to be familiar with a situation, a topic or a domain in order to understand language

and communicate. Also, in oral reception, it is characteristic the fact that the messages should be short and be delivered slowly and clearly. Repetition also aids understanding and this is the reason why it also appears in many reception descriptors (see descriptors 1&2 in the table).

The role of photographs, illustrations, signs, body language and gesture is evident since their use help understanding. This is in line with the literature in early language education as in L1 or L2 or L3 children actively try to understand and elicit meaning based on limited resources or previous schemata and knowledge (Moon, 2000). They are able to get the gist and do not mind if they understand individual words later. They are armed with the ability to decode external clues like intonation, gesture, facial expressions etc. (see Halliwell, 1992). The descriptors 1,2,3 and 5 in Table 1 combine all the aforementioned elements thus being indicative of these features.

At Pre-A1 level, production occurs only at the level of uttering/using individual words (telegraphic speech) or using simple formulaic expressions (e.g. ‘Excuse me,’ ‘Sorry,’ ‘Please,’ ‘Thanks,’ ‘No thank you’ etc). Learners may get the help of a dictionary (although perhaps a picture dictionary would be more appropriate), use body language in order to be understood-very common technique, recall the popularity of Total Physical Response in young learners (Alexiou & Chondrogianni, 2017) -or have some time to prepare in advance. As far as interaction is concerned, communication is achieved through gestures and formulaic expressions.

Regarding mediation, which is a rather complex and demanding activity which requires the selective relaying of information from one text to another or from one language to another for a given communicative purpose (Stathopoulou, 2015), the Pre-A1 level is almost absent. From the 24 mediation scales, only in 2 scales there are descriptors for the particular level and these scales are: ‘Relaying specific information in speech’ (Scale 44) and ‘Relaying specific information in writing’ (Scale 45) (see Appendix). The descriptors concern the relaying of simple information provided there is repetition, slow rate of speech and simple language accompanied with visual material (see Table 2 below).

Can relay (in Language B) simple instructions about places and times (given in Language A), provided these are repeated very slowly and clearly.
Can relay (in Language B) very basic information (e.g. numbers and prices) from short, simple, illustrated texts (written in Language A).
Can list (in Language B) names, numbers, prices and very simple information from texts (written Language A) that are of immediate interest, that are written in very simple language and contain illustrations

Table 2: Mediation descriptors at the Pre-A1 level

Also in the plurilingual scales (Scales 82-84) (i.e., ‘Building on pluricultural repertoire’, ‘Plurilingual comprehension’ and ‘Building on plurilingual repertoire’) (see Appendix), which involve the parallel use of languages, the Pre-A1 level is not represented with descriptors. This is strange as the issue of developing intercultural competence is vital (see Karras, in this volume) and certain intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills should be cultivated both for teachers and learners from an early age (Kiose, Alexiou & Iliopoulou, 2019).

It is also remarkable the fact that the Pre-A1 level descriptors are absent from the scales related to (reception, production, interaction and mediation) *strategies*. Only one descriptor appears in Scale 13 which concerns reception and is related to deducing through the use of a picture: ‘Can deduce the

meaning of a word from an accompanying picture or icon (see Appendix, Scale 13)' and also the ones referring to gestures and physical actions as these can be considered as strategies as well (Psaltou-Joycey, 2010). Developing strategies and teaching them explicitly or integrating them in teaching has been recommended (Chamot, 2008; Psaltou-Joycey et al, 2014). In fact, language aspects should not be taught in isolation from strategies, but the one could complement the other (Stathopoulou, 2016) thus following a holistic approach to the teaching and learning of the new linguistic knowledge.

A general comment before shifting emphasis to the actual use of these descriptors for teaching purposes is related to the importance of context and real-life tasks. According to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 29), "language learning should be directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures." This principle is actually reflected in the Pre-A1 level descriptors, which imply "purposeful, collaborative tasks in the classroom, whose primary focus is not language" (ibid). The descriptors in Table 3 below are indicative.

Can make simple purchases and/or order food or drink when pointing or other gesture can support the verbal reference (see Appendix, Scale 31)
Can list (in Language B) names, numbers, prices and very simple information from texts (written Language A) that are of immediate interest, that are written in very simple language and contain illustrations (see Appendix, Scale 45).

Table 3: Indicative descriptors of real-life tasks and purposeful communication at the Pre-A1 level

Summing up at the Pre-A1 level emphasis is given on oracy skills' development while reception is paramount for language exposure. We could actually say that based on these expectations, Pre-A1 level relates to preschool or pre-primary level. This is important, as this was a much needed at this age.

5. Using the new Pre-A1 descriptors: Suggestions for teaching languages to very young learners

Following North and Piccardo's words (2019, p. 142) who suggest "using the Companion Volume as a guide for the development of context-appropriate educational objectives", this section suggests ways by which the teaching of very young learners can be assisted through the use of the Pre-A1 level descriptors. The illustrative descriptors as seen here can function as a starting point and a common basis appropriate to the teaching of very young learners. Note, however, that the CEFR itself makes it clear that the descriptors which are presented as suggestions and are not in any way exhaustive but illustrative, can be seen as a basis for reflection and further implementation. As stated therein, "the aim of the examples is to open new possibilities, not to pre-empt decisions" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 41).

From the above, it becomes clear that the criterion of relevance is crucial. The teacher is the one who ensures relevance. In fact, taking into account the student population, their specific needs along with the situational context, s/he has to:

- decide what descriptor scales can be useful for his/her students and context

- decide what sort of (purposeful) mediation tasks to include, at which stage of the lesson, with what objectives
- select authentic texts which will inform the design of the activities, decide on the genres, and discourse environments

In addition to the employment of the Companion Volume descriptors, the Council of Europe suggests the use of another accompanying document which has been published in their website⁵ with the title 'Collated Representative Samples of Descriptors of Language Competences Developed for Young Learners: Resource for Educators' (see Goodier, 2018a, 2018b). As the authors state, the document includes can-do statements for young learners, which have been collected from different sources and have been further subdivided according to age (7-10 years and 11-15 years old). These descriptors are varied and useful and they are complementary to the A1 and A2 level but their discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on Pre-A1 (Council of Europe, 2020).

Obviously, any language-related outcomes will depend on the model of the education curriculum, that will be adopted but setting realistic objectives will support any early start benefits (García Mayo, 2017) so Pre-A1 serves as a general roadmap for achievement and expectations at large.

The Pre-A1 descriptors sketch the profile for a very young learner and thus can provide a much needed model of learning at these ages as well as more information of what a Pre-A1 learner is expected to know (Alexiou & Milton, 2020). However, still more information on the amount of vocabulary and the thematic areas would make it more focused and consistent. The process of needs analysis involves creating an understanding of what exactly learners need to achieve for their learning goals. It serves also as a means of monitoring the knowledge of learners so the teacher can understand where the learners are and how much effort is needed to achieve these goals (Milton & Alexiou, 2020). Moreover, it helps the teacher to plan interventions that meet the learners' needs best. To this end, Pic-lex (see Alexiou, this volume) could be a first start laying the foundations for more assessing tools to be developed for Pre-A1 specifications. These specifications can lead practitioners to a more principled and systematic way of teaching, which can also impact on eventual educational attainment.

More importantly, though, the development of an indicative common syllabus with realistic criteria at this CEFR level may prove to be useful and practical. Vocabulary and formulaic language are at the heart of the learning process at this age and stage so more explicit specifications would be very helpful. In such a case, materials and syllabus would be properly sequenced and they would build on learners' varied knowledge thus infusing motivation to learners. It would also be much easier for the teacher to monitor learners' progress. Consequently, continuity, consistency and coordination of syllabi could be attained and lead to a model of language development. This would be very important especially at a Pre-A1 level where it all starts. According to Cameron (2001), teachers are advised to start from where the learners are while socio-culturalism shows that after that scaffolding is vital (Bruner, 1977). This way, teachers will build on what children know or revisit concepts that they have not mastered yet entirely. Sterile repetition is dull and futile and has a negative impact on motivation. Therefore, just repeating information would not take us anywhere. Moreover, any additional language is not viewed as a separate subject especially in preschool curriculum but it is integrated in the curriculum so some specific guidelines and common ground on thematic areas would be essential in the hands of the teachers who face this challenge for the very first time.

⁵<https://rm.coe.int/collated-representative-samples-descriptors-young-learners-volume-1-ag/16808b1688>

6. Concluding remarks

In this paper, we presented the rationale behind the descriptors in the newly added CEFR level, Pre-A1. The descriptors focus on receptive skills and oracy and flexibility is provided for stakeholders since most of the descriptors are largely general. Although some of them may potentially be exploited by curriculum planners and syllabus designers whose target groups are early language learners, there is still room for additions and/or clarification. A more concrete guide with common thematic areas and perhaps a threshold of lexis that will enhance communication should be useful. Specifying the 'what' but also the 'how' and 'why' is equally vital if we are to guide, support but also facilitate teachers' demanding task which at this sensitive age is primarily a pedagogical task. Plurilingual competence, integration of strategies and the development intercultural skills could also be emphasized there. As far as strategies are concerned, their teaching could be explicit making students aware of the range of strategies that can be used in different sorts of language tasks (Stathopoulou, 2016, p. 767). Regarding plurilingual competence and the development of intercultural skills, the 'Civil Society Platform to promote multilingualism' (Action Plan for 2014-20) has stressed the importance of supporting successful programmes of plurilingual education which aim at the development of learners' plurilingual competences (see Stathopoulou, 2016, p. 764). In fact, the integration of language in the curriculum rather than the consideration of it as a separate subject is an aspect that needs to be addressed in the future while certain aspects of methodology need also be further discussed including but not limited to the use of L1 (how much if needed and where).

References

- Alexiou, T. (2005). *Cognitive development, aptitude and language learning in Greek young learners*. PhD Thesis, University of Wales at Swansea, UK.
- Alexiou, T. (2009). Young learners' cognitive skills and their role in foreign language vocabulary learning. In M. Nikolov (Ed.) *Second Language Acquisition: Early learning of Modern Foreign Languages. Processes and Outcomes* (pp. 46-61). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Alexiou, T. (2015). Vocabulary uptake from Peppa pig: a case study of preschool EFL learners in Greece. In C. Gitsaki, & T. Alexiou (Eds.) *Current Issues in Second/foreign Language Teaching and Teacher Development: Research and Practice* (pp. 285-301). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Alexiou, T. (2020). *Introducing EFL in preschools: Facts and Fictions*. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing English Language Education*. Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications, p.61-74, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2020/AELE_Book_ALLT_ZU_Web_V02.pdf
- Alexiou, T. & Chondrogianni, M. (2017). Bringing innovation to the primary EFL classroom: Total Physical Response with Twister and Wii-fit. In Tsihouridis, Ch. et al (eds), *Conference Proceedings from the 3rd International Conference for the Promotion of Educational Innovation*, (pp.425-432), Larisa, University of Thessaly.
- Alexiou, T. & Milton, J. (2020). Pic-Lex: A new tool of measuring receptive vocabulary for very young learners. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing ELT Education* (pp.103-113). Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications.
- Alexiou, T., Roghani, S. & Milton, J. (2019). Assessing the Vocabulary Knowledge of Preschool Language Learners. In Prosic-Sandovac, D. & Rixon, S. *Integrating Assessment into Early Language Learning and Teaching Practice* (pp.207-220), Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Andúgar, A., & Cortina-Peréz, B. (2018). EFL teachers' reflections on their teaching practice in Spanish preschools: A focus on motivation. In M. Schwartz (Ed.), *Preschool bilingual education: Agency in interactions between children, teachers, and parents* (pp. 218-245). Springer.

- Beals, D.E., DeTemple, J.M. and Dickinson, D.K. (1994). Talking and listening that support early literacy development of children from low-income families. In D.K. Dickinson (ed.) *Bridges to Literacy: Children, Families, and Schools* (pp. 19–40). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Brumen, M., Berro, F. F., Cagran, B. (2017). Pre-school foreign language teaching and learning – A network innovation project in Slovenia. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 25(6), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293x.2017.1380886>
- Bruner, J. S. (1977). Early social interaction and language acquisition. In H.R. Schaffer (Ed.), *Studies in Mother-infant Interaction* (pp. 271–289). London: Academic Press.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chamot, A. U. (2008). 'Strategy instruction and good language learners.' In Carol Griffiths (ed.), *Lessons from Good Language Learners*, 266-281. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, S., Zhao, J., De Ruiter, L., Zhou, J., & Jinzhen, J. (2020). A burden or a boost: The impact of early childhood English learning experience on lower elementary English and Chinese achievement. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*.
- Committee of Ministers (2008) Recommendation CM/Rec. (2008). 7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d2fb1
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Council of Europe. (2018/2020). *The CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors*. <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>
- Curtain, H., & Dahlberg, C. A. (2010). *Language and children: Making the match, new languages for young learners, grades K-8* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- Donaldson, M. (1978). *Children's Minds*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Enever, J. (2011). ELLiE. Early language learning in Europe. London: British Council.
- Enever, J. (2015). 'The advantages and disadvantages of English as a foreign language with young learners'. In J. Bland (Ed.), *Teaching English to young learners. Critical issues in language teaching with 3-12 year olds*. London: Bloomsbury, 13-30.
- European Commission. (2011). *Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism 2011: Policy Recommendations for the Promotion of Multilingualism in the European Union*, https://elen.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/report-civil-society_en.pdf
- García Mayo, M. P. (2017). *Learning foreign languages in primary school*. Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Goodier, T. (ed.). (2018a). *Collated Representative Samples of Descriptors of Language Competences Developed for Young Learners – resource for educators, Volume 1: Ages 7-10*, Education Policy Division, Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/16808b1688>
- Goodier T. (ed.). (2018b). *Collated Representative Samples of Descriptors of Language Competences Developed for Young Learners– resource for educators, Volume 2: Ages 11-15*, Education Policy Division, Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/16808b1689>
- Halliwell, S. (1992). *Teaching English in the primary classroom*. UK: Pearson Educational Ltd.
- Kearney, E., & Ahn, S.-Y. (2013). Awakening to world languages: Intercultural awareness in very young learners. *Learning Languages*, 18(2), 44-48.
- Kiose E., Alexiou, T. & Iliopoulou, K. (2019). Sketching the profile of the intercultural competent teacher: Greek teachers' beliefs and perceptions in intercultural Junior High Schools. In Zoghbor, W., Al Alami, S., Alexiou, T. & Kasem, M. *Teaching in a globalized world. Proceedings of the Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching Conference (ALLT) 2018*, pp. 215-240, Zayed University, Dubai, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2018/ALLT2018Proceedings.pdf

- Lourenço, M., & Andrade, A. I. (2015). Educar para a diversidade e desenvolver a consciência fonológica: Propostas pedagógico-didáticas para o jardim de infância. Universidade de Aveiro.
- Milton, J. & Alexiou, T. (2020) Vocabulary Size Assessment: Assessing the vocabulary needs of learners in relation to their CEFR goals. In M. Dodigovic, M. P. Agustín-Llach (eds.), *Vocabulary in Curriculum Planning*, Palgrave MacMillan: Switzerland, pp.9-27, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48663-1_2
- Moon, J. (2000). *Children learning English*. Oxford: Macmillan. Heinemann.
- Murphy, V. A., Evangelou, M., Goff, J., & Tracz, R. (2016). European perspectives on early childhood and care in English for speakers of other languages. In V. A. Murphy & M. Evangelou (Eds.), *Early childhood education in English for speakers of other languages* (pp. 57-74).
- Nikolov, M. & Djigunović, J. M. (2006). *Recent Research on Age, Second Language Acquisition, and Early Foreign Language Learning, Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 26, 234-260.*
- North, B. & Piccardo, E. (2016). *Developing Illustrative Descriptors of Aspects of Mediation for the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-referencelanguages/documents>
- North, B. & Piccardo, E. (2019). 'Developing new CEFR descriptor scales and expanding the existing ones: constructs, approaches and methodologies. *Zeitschrift für Fremdsprachenforschung* 30, 2, 142-160.
- Psaltou-Joycey, A. (2010) *Language learning strategies in the foreign language classroom*. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press.
- Psaltou-Joycey, A., Sougari, A., Agathopoulou, E. & Alexiou, T. (2014). The role of age, gender and L1 strategies in the L2 strategies of primary school children in Greece. In G. Kotzoglou, K. Nikolou, E. Karantzola, K. Frantzi, I. Galantomos, M. Georgalidou, V. Kourti-Kazoullis, C. Papadopoulou & E. Vlachou (Eds.), *Selection of papers for the 11th International Conference on Greek Linguistics*, University of the Aegean (pp. 1436-1448). Rhodes, Greece.
- Rosenbusch, M. (1995). Language learners in the elementary school: investing in the future. In R. Donato & R. Terry (Eds). *Foreign language learning: the journey of a lifetime* (Lincolnwood, IL, National Textbook).
- Shin, J. K., & Crandall, J. A. (2014). *Teaching young learners English: From theory to practice*. National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning.
- Sivanova-Chanturia, A. & Webb, S. (2016) 'Teaching vocabulary in the EFL context'. In W. A. Renandya & H. P. Widodo (Eds.), *English Language Teaching today: Linking Theory and Practice*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 227-240.
- Stathopoulou, M (2015) *Cross-Language Mediation in Foreign Language Teaching and Testing*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Stathopoulou, M. (2016). From 'languaging' to 'translanguaging': Reconsidering foreign language teaching and testing through a multilingual lens. In M. Mattheoudakis and K. Nicolaidis (Eds.) *Selected Papers on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, 21: 759-774*. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Available at: <https://ejournals.lib.auth.gr/thal/article/view/5267>
-

Appendix

Pre-A1 descriptors

1a. Reception activities

Listening comprehension

SPOKEN RECEPTION

1.OVERALL LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Can understand short, very simple questions and statements provided that they are delivered slowly and clearly and accompanied by visuals or manual gestures to support understanding and repeated if necessary.

Can recognise everyday, familiar words, provided they are delivered clearly and slowly in a clearly defined, familiar, everyday context.

Can recognise numbers, prices, dates and days of the week, provided they are delivered slowly and clearly in a defined, familiar, everyday context.

2. UNDERSTANDING CONVERSATION BETWEEN OTHER SPEAKERS

No descriptors available

3. LISTENING AS A MEMBER OF A LIVE AUDIENCE

No descriptors available

4. LISTENING TO ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Can understand short, simple instructions for actions such as 'Stop,' 'Close the door,' etc., provided they are delivered slowly face-to-face, accompanied by pictures or manual gestures and repeated if necessary

5. LISTENING TO AUDIO MEDIA AND RECORDINGS

Can recognise words, names and numbers that he/she already knows in simple, short recordings, provided that they are delivered very slowly and clearly

Reading comprehension

WRITTEN RECEPTION

6. OVERALL READING COMPREHENSION

Can recognise familiar words accompanied by pictures, such as a fast-food restaurant menu illustrated with photos or a picture book using familiar vocabulary.

7. READING CORRESPONDENCE

Can understand from a letter, card or email the event to which he/she is being invited and the information given about day, time and location.

Can recognise times and places in very simple notes and text messages from friends or colleagues, for example 'Back at 4o'clock' or 'In the meeting room,' provided there are no abbreviations

8. READING FOR ORIENTATION

Can understand simple everyday signs such as 'Parking,' 'Station,' 'Dining room,' 'No smoking,' etc.

Can find information about places, times and prices on posters, flyers and notices

9.READING FOR INFORMATION AND ARGUMENT

Can understand the simplest informational material that consists of familiar words and pictures, such as a fast-food restaurant menu illustrated with photos or an illustrated story formulated in very simple, everyday words

10.READING INSTRUCTIONS

Can understand very short, simple, instructions used in familiar, everyday contexts such as 'No parking,' 'No food or drink,'etc., especially if there are illustrations

11.READING AS A LEISURE ACTIVITY

No descriptors available

Audio-visual Reception
12. WATCHING TV, FILM AND VIDEO
No descriptors available

1b. Reception Strategies

13. IDENTIFYING CUES AND INFERRING (SPOKEN & WRITTEN)
Can deduce the meaning of a word from an accompanying picture or icon

2a. Production activities

14. OVERALL SPOKEN PRODUCTION

Can produce short phrases about themselves, giving basic personal information (e.g. name, address, family, nationality).

Spoken Production

15. SUSTAINED MONOLOGUE: DESCRIBING EXPERIENCE

Can describe him/herself (e.g. name, age, family), using simple words and formulaic expressions, provided he/she can prepare in advance.

Can say how he/she is feeling using simple words like 'happy', 'tired', accompanied by body language

16. SUSTAINED MONOLOGUE: GIVING INFORMATION

No descriptors available

17. SUSTAINED MONOLOGUE: PUTTING A CASE (E.G. IN A DEBATE)

No descriptors available

18. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

No descriptors available

19. ADDRESSING AUDIENCES

No descriptors available

Written Production

20. OVERALL WRITTEN PRODUCTION

Can give basic personal information in writing (e.g. name, address, nationality), perhaps with the use of a dictionary

21. CREATIVE WRITING

No descriptors available

22. WRITTEN REPORTS AND ESSAYS

No descriptors available

2b. Production Strategies

23. PLANNING

No descriptors available

24. COMPENSATING

Can point to something and ask what it is.

25. MONITORING AND REPAIR

No descriptors available

3a. Interaction activities

SPOKEN INTERACTION

26. OVERALL SPOKEN INTERACTION

Can ask and answer questions about him/herself and daily routines, using short, formulaic expressions and relying on gestures to reinforce the information

27. UNDERSTANDING AN INTERLOCUTOR

Can understand simple questions which directly concern him/her, for example about name, age and address or similar things, if the person is asking slowly and clearly.

Can understand simple personal information (e.g. name, age, place of residence, origin) when other people introduce themselves, provided that they speak slowly and clearly directly to him/her, and can understand questions on this theme addressed to him/her, though the questions may need to be repeated.

Can understand a number of familiar words and greetings and recognise key information such as numbers, prices, dates and days of the week, provided speech is delivered very slowly, with repetition if necessary

28. CONVERSATION

Can understand and use some basic, formulaic expressions such as 'Yes,' 'No,' 'Excuse me,' 'Please,' 'Thank you,' 'No, thank you,' 'Sorry.'

Can recognise simple greetings.

Can greet people, say his/her name and take leave of them

29 INFORMAL DISCUSSION (WITH FRIENDS)

No descriptors available

30. FORMAL DISCUSSION (MEETINGS)

No descriptors available

31 GOAL-ORIENTED CO-OPERATION

(E.G. ASSEMBLING A FURNITURE KIT, DISCUSSING A DOCUMENT, ORGANISING AN EVENT ETC.)

No descriptors available

32 OBTAINING GOODS AND SERVICES

Can make simple purchases and/or order food or drink when pointing or other gesture can support the verbal reference

33. INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Can tell people his/her name and ask other people their name.

Can use and understand simple numbers in everyday conversations.

Can ask and tell day, time of day and date.

Can ask for and give a date of birth.

Can ask for and give a phone number.

Can say and ask people about their age.

Can ask very simple questions for information, such as 'What is this?' and understand 1- or 2-word answers

34. INTERVIEWING AND BEING INTERVIEWED

No descriptors available

35 USING TELECOMMUNICATIONS

No descriptors available

Written Interaction

WRITTEN INTERACTION

36. OVERALL WRITTEN INTERACTION

Can write short phrases to give basic information (e.g. name, address, family) on a form or in a note, with the use of a

Dictionary

37. CORRESPONDENCE

Can write short phrases and sentences giving basic personal information with reference to a dictionary

38. NOTES, MESSAGES AND FORMS

Can fill in very simple registration forms with basic personal details: name, address, nationality, marital status.

Online Interaction

39. ONLINE CONVERSATION AND DISCUSSION

Can post simple online greetings, using basic formulaic expressions and emoticons.

Can post online short simple statements about him/herself (e.g. relationship status, nationality, occupation), provided

he/she can select them from a menu and/or refer to an online translation tool

40. GOAL-ORIENTED ONLINE TRANSACTIONS AND COLLABORATION

Can make selections (e.g. choosing a product, size, colour) in a simple online purchase or application form, provided there

is visual support

3b. Interaction Strategies

41. TAKING THE FLOOR (TURNTAKING)

No descriptors available

42. Cooperating

No descriptors available

43. ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION

No descriptors available

4a. Mediation activities

44. OVERALL MEDIATION

No descriptors available

Mediating a text

45. RELAYING SPECIFIC INFORMATION IN SPEECH

Can relay (in Language B) simple instructions about places and times (given in Language A), provided these are repeated very slowly and clearly.

Can relay (in Language B) very basic information (e.g. numbers and prices) from short, simple, illustrated texts (written in Language A).

46. RELAYING SPECIFIC INFORMATION IN WRITING

Can list (in Language B) names, numbers, prices and very simple information from texts (written Language A) that are of immediate interest, that are written in very simple language and contain illustrations

47. EXPLAINING DATA IN SPEECH (E.G. IN GRAPHS, DIAGRAMS, CHARTS ETC.)

No descriptors available

48. EXPLAINING DATA IN WRITING (E.G. IN GRAPHS, DIAGRAMS, CHARTS ETC.)

No descriptors available

49. PROCESSING TEXT IN SPEECH

No descriptors available

50. PROCESSING TEXT IN WRITING

No descriptors available

51. TRANSLATING A WRITTEN TEXT IN SPEECH

No descriptors available

52. TRANSLATING A WRITTEN TEXT IN WRITING

No descriptors available

53 NOTE-TAKING (LECTURES, SEMINARS, MEETINGS ETC.)

No descriptors available

54 EXPRESSING A PERSONAL RESPONSE TO CREATIVE TEXTS (INCLUDING LITERATURE)

No descriptors available

55 ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM OF CREATIVE TEXTS (INCLUDING LITERATURE)

No descriptors available

Mediating concepts

COLLABORATING IN A GROUP

56 FACILITATING COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION WITH PEERS

No descriptors available

57 COLLABORATING TO CONSTRUCT MEANING

No descriptors available

LEADING GROUP WORK

58 MANAGING INTERACTION

No descriptors available

59 ENCOURAGING CONCEPTUAL TALK

No descriptors available

Mediating communication

60 FACILITATING PLURICULTURAL SPACE

No descriptors available

61 ACTING AS INTERMEDIARY IN INFORMAL SITUATIONS (WITH FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES)

No descriptors available

62 FACILITATING COMMUNICATION IN DELICATE SITUATIONS AND DISAGREEMENTS

No descriptors available

4b. Mediation strategies

STRATEGIES TO EXPLAIN A NEW CONCEPT

63 LINKING TO PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

No descriptors available

64 ADAPTING LANGUAGE

No descriptors available

65 BREAKING DOWN COMPLICATED INFORMATION

No descriptors available

STRATEGIES TO SIMPLIFY A TEXT

66 AMPLIFYING A DENSE TEXT

No descriptors available

67 STREAMLINING A TEXT

No descriptors available

5. Communicative language competences

Linguistic

68. GENERAL LINGUISTIC RANGE

Can use isolated words and basic expressions in order to give simple information about him/herself

69. Vocabulary range

No descriptors available

70 Grammatical accuracy

Can employ very simple principles of word order in short statements

71 Vocabulary control

No descriptors available

PHONOLOGICAL CONTROL

72 OVERALL PHONOLOGICAL CONTROL

No descriptors

73 SOUND ARTICULATION

No descriptors

74 PROSODIC FEATURES

No descriptors

75 ORTHOGRAPHIC CONTROL

No descriptors available

Sociolinguistic

76 SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROPRIATENESS

No descriptors available

Pragmatic

77 Flexibility

No descriptors available

78 Thematic development

No descriptors available

79 COHERENCE AND COHESION

No descriptors available

80 PROPOSITIONAL PRECISION

Can communicate very basic information about personal details in a simple way

81 SPOKEN FLUENCY

Can manage very short, isolated, rehearsed, utterances using gesture and signalled requests for help when necessary.

6. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence

82 BUILDING ON PLURICULTURAL REPERTOIRE

No descriptors available.

83 PLURILINGUAL COMPREHENSION

No descriptors available

84 BUILDING ON PLURILINGUAL REPERTOIRE

No descriptors available

Thomai Alexiou (thalexiou@enl.auth.gr) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Her expertise is in early foreign language learning, SLA pedagogy and material development for young learners. She has been invited as a speaker and trainer in Greece, Europe, Australia, Russia and the UAE. She has also authored a number of textbooks for children learning English as a foreign language. One of these books, *Magic Book 2*, has been shortlisted for the MacMillan Education Award for New Talent in Writing (ELTons 2014).

Maria Stathopoulou (mastathop@enl.uoa.gr) holds PhD from the Faculty of English Language and Literature, University of Athens. Since 2014, she is an Adjunct Lecturer at the Hellenic Open University and the National Technical University of Athens. From 2014-2017, she was a member of the authoring group of experts of the Council of Europe concerning the update of the CEFR. Her book *Cross-Language Mediation in Foreign Language Teaching and Testing* (2015) has been published by Multilingual Matters. Her most recent book concerns the teaching of ESP in academic contexts. Recently, Maria Stathopoulou's project, "Mediation in Teaching, Learning and Assessment" (ME.T.L.A.) was selected to be funded by the European Centre of Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (2020-2023).



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 30-52

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Teaching EFL at Spanish Preschools: A comparative analysis from two different teachers' perspectives

Beatriz CORTINA-PÉREZ & Ana ANDÚGAR

Beginning to learn a foreign language at a very early age (i.e., preschool) is a burgeoning reality across Europe, following the EU recommendations. However, as different European reports state, there is a lack of concrete guidelines on how to address this age group. So, given the necessity to define adequate practices to make this learning successful, we conducted a Delphi project to reach consensus among different types of experts (n=99) on these practices (Andúgar, 2017; Andúgar & Cortina-Pérez, 2018; Andúgar, Cortina-Pérez & Tornel, 2019, 2020). The present paper emerges from the data obtained in this project and comparatively analyses the two most relevant participants' profiles: the EFL specialist teacher (n=29) and the Pre-primary practitioner (n=27) within the Spanish context. We compared their results about the category teaching methodology through the non-parametric inferential Mann-Whitney U test. Results suggest there are no substantial differences among them although there are subtle variations that must be taken into consideration.

Key words: Very Young Language Learners (VYLL), Early Foreign Language Learning (EFLL), teachers' profiles, Pre-primary Education, teaching guidelines, Delphi research

1. Introduction

Since the Barcelona Council in 2002, the European Commission has encouraged the introduction of additional languages (AL) at a very early age with the intention of framing a multilingual Europe, supported by research on early bilingualism and very young language learners (VYLLs) (Dolean, 2015; Fleta, 2014; Mourao & Lourenço, 2015). Different EU projects and researchers have centred on the necessity of establishing adequate teaching and learning conditions so that the learning of the foreign language (FL)¹ is advantageous.

¹ A difference is drawn between the term additional languages and foreign ones; while the former is more inclusive, foreign languages refer to a context in which languages are not naturally developed and used outside the school context. This is the case in which this study is contextualised.

The Commission report "Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable" (European Commission, 2011) is a good example of this, providing member countries with a series of recommendations, and reporting on good practices within the framework of Education and Training Programme (ET2020 Framework). However, the participating experts agreed that, although the teaching of FLs at an early age is an extended practice in most European countries, it is not a practice that is properly structured and planned. More specifically, they noted that:

With some exceptions, language activities at the pre-primary level are not formally structured. There are marked differences in staff competences. Moreover, resources and opportunities are unevenly distributed, both geographically and within different socio-demographic groups (European Commission, 2011, p.9).

There seems to be some agreement on the fact that one of the main problems faced by teachers² in the introduction of FLs at preschools is the lack of specific guidelines, both on a legislative and a methodological level (Andúgar, Cortina-Pérez & Tornel, 2019; Morris & Segura, 2003).

1.1. The case of Spain

In the Spanish scenario, the learning of FLs at early years at preschools, particularly English, has been promoted since the early 90s with the appearance of the first pilot programmes in different Spanish regions. It was not until the Organic Law 2/2006 on Education (LOE³) that it was widely introduced to the entire country, although the responsibility of defining and structuring this first approach was led to the different autonomous regions. A few months later, through the Royal Decree 1630/2006⁴, the FL was included as part of the 'Languages: communication and representation' area in the pre-primary curriculum, although lacking specified minimum contents, such as the lexical structures or language functions that student should develop during this stage. In 2007 some general methodological guidelines supporting a communicative and natural approach were detailed in the Order ECI/3960/2007⁵.

Some years later the current Educational Law, the Organic Law 8/2013 for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE),⁶ did not introduce significant changes at the pre-primary stage, so it was the Department of Education in each autonomous region the responsible institution for organising this early multilingualism. Although the 17 Spanish regions have started this early learning, not all of them are implementing it at the same level as Andúgar, Cortina-Pérez, and Tornel (2019) concluded. The study further explains that there is great heterogeneity regarding the early introduction of FLs in the Spanish education system, detecting significant differences among territories. However, some general practices can be described in most schools across Spain:

- English is the most popular FL option at the pre-primary stage.
- Most schools begin learning a FL from the age of 5, and it is a frequent practice to start even earlier, at the age of 3.
- The amount of time devoted to the FL is usually 90 minutes per week, although there are important differences among regions in this respect.

² The term 'teacher' is used in this paper to refer to any practitioner involved in the early introduction of the foreign language, mainly at the pre-primary stage, but not necessary implying explicit teaching of the language.

³ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2006-7899>

⁴ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2007/BOE-A-2007-185-consolidado.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2008/BOE-A-2008-222-consolidado.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2013/BOE-A-2013-12886-consolidado.pdf>

- The programme implemented is usually based on the communicative approach, through the use of routines, songs, rhymes, games, aiming at increasing children's motivation towards English.
- It is the EFL teacher the one who is most frequently responsible for this teaching, although pre-primary practitioners can also be authorised, provided that they accredit a level of the FL (at least a B2).

Given this context, we conducted a research project aiming at looking for consensus among experts within the Spanish context on the different aspects involved in Early Foreign Language Learning (EFLL), such as the situation, the methodology, and teacher training. The present paper offers a comparative analysis of methodological issues on EFLL⁷ from two different participants' profiles, (i.e., the EFL specialist teacher and the Pre-primary practitioner).

2. Research Methodology

In the light of the need for an agreement on the most effective practices that would lead to successful learning of FLs with VYLLs (3-6 years old preschoolers), we conducted a Delphi research project (Andúgar, 2017; Andúgar & Cortina-Pérez, 2018; Andúgar, Cortina-Pérez & Tornel, 2019, 2020) from which this paper has emerged.

The Delphi method is defined as "a systematic and iterative process aimed at obtaining the opinions and, if possible, the consensus, of a group of experts" (Landeta, 2002, p.32). It is usually labelled as a prospective mixed-type method that approaches research from the interpretative paradigm of a group of experts while allowing the analysis of the group's statistical response (Landeta, 2002; Pozo, Suárez & García-Cano, 2012). In this project, 99 experts from different profiles (e.g., EFL teachers, preschool teachers, school advisors, material designers, parents and students) were consulted twice: the first round of qualitative nature and the second one, quantitative.

The present paper comprises the comparative analysis of the results obtained from the two most significant groups of participants (n=56) - the EFL specialist teacher, and the preschool practitioner-, using their responses to the category 'teaching methodology'. The main research question underpinning this paper is '*Does the EFL specialist teachers' view about EFL methodology for Pre-primary Education differ from that of the preschool practitioners?* Since our main goal was to identify similarities and differences among their opinions, we conducted an inferential analysis for independent groups.

2.1. Participants

The number of participants in this study is a total of 56 Spanish teachers distributed in two profiles:

- the EFL teacher (n=29), who has been trained at the University mainly to be an English teacher at the Primary Education level, so his/her teaching skills for the pre-primary stage is due to their experience and/or voluntary in-service training; and
- the pre-primary teacher (n=27), who has at least a bachelor's degree in Early Education and teaches at the non-obligatory stage from 3 to 6 years old. Besides, they can teach English at Preschools, provided that they certify a minimum of a B2 level in the FL.

⁷ As previously explained, in this research the term EFLL refers to children under 6 years old.

2.2. Instruments

For each Delphi round a different questionnaire was designed. The first was made up of open-ended questions to gather all the necessary information about the different research variables. This first round was validated by experts (Cabero & García, 2011). Results from this questionnaire became the basis for the design of the second questionnaire with closed Likert-type questions, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). These questions derived from the first questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was calculated, obtaining a result of .933.

For the present paper, section 2 of the questionnaire (i.e., 'teaching methodology') is the focus of attention, which is divided into 7 subcategories (i.e., teaching guidelines, ELT methods, onset age, family's implication, the language of instruction, classroom resources and transition to Primary Education) and contains a total of 49 items, which are listed in Appendix I.

2.3. Data analysis

Results analysed in this paper stem from the second questionnaire and are quantitative. Consequently, they have been statistically analysed using the SPSS software. The mean for both groups was first calculated. Normality distribution was checked through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, obtaining a significance result of .007. Hence, non-parametric tests for inferential analysis were used, such as the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples. While most relevant results will be commented in the following section, a table with all results can be found in Appendix II. Additionally, qualitative data from the participants' responses in questionnaire 1 have been used to support and explain the quantitative analysis.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Teaching guidelines

Under this category, participants were asked about the most appropriate teaching guidelines for teaching FLs at preschool. The mean for each variable was calculated and grouped according to the two studied profiles (see Figure 1).

EFL teachers' most appreciated teaching guidelines are Q2.21 'reducing class ratio', Q2.2 'introducing FL games', Q2.4 'using songs', Q2.9 'giving positive feedback' and Q2.12 'using visual materials', which they all share a 4.9 mean. On the opposite side, Pre-primary teachers valued more positively the following guidelines: Q2.4 'using songs', Q2.18 'not overusing worksheets', Q2.12 'using visual materials', Q2.7 'using storytelling'.

We have not found large differences between results obtained from both groups except for two items: Q2.9 (positive feedback) and Q2.21 (class ratio). Statistical significance is then corroborated by the Mann-Whitney U test, which obtained a p-value of .013 and .000 for these two variables, respectively. The rest of the results from this category were non-significant (see Appendix I).

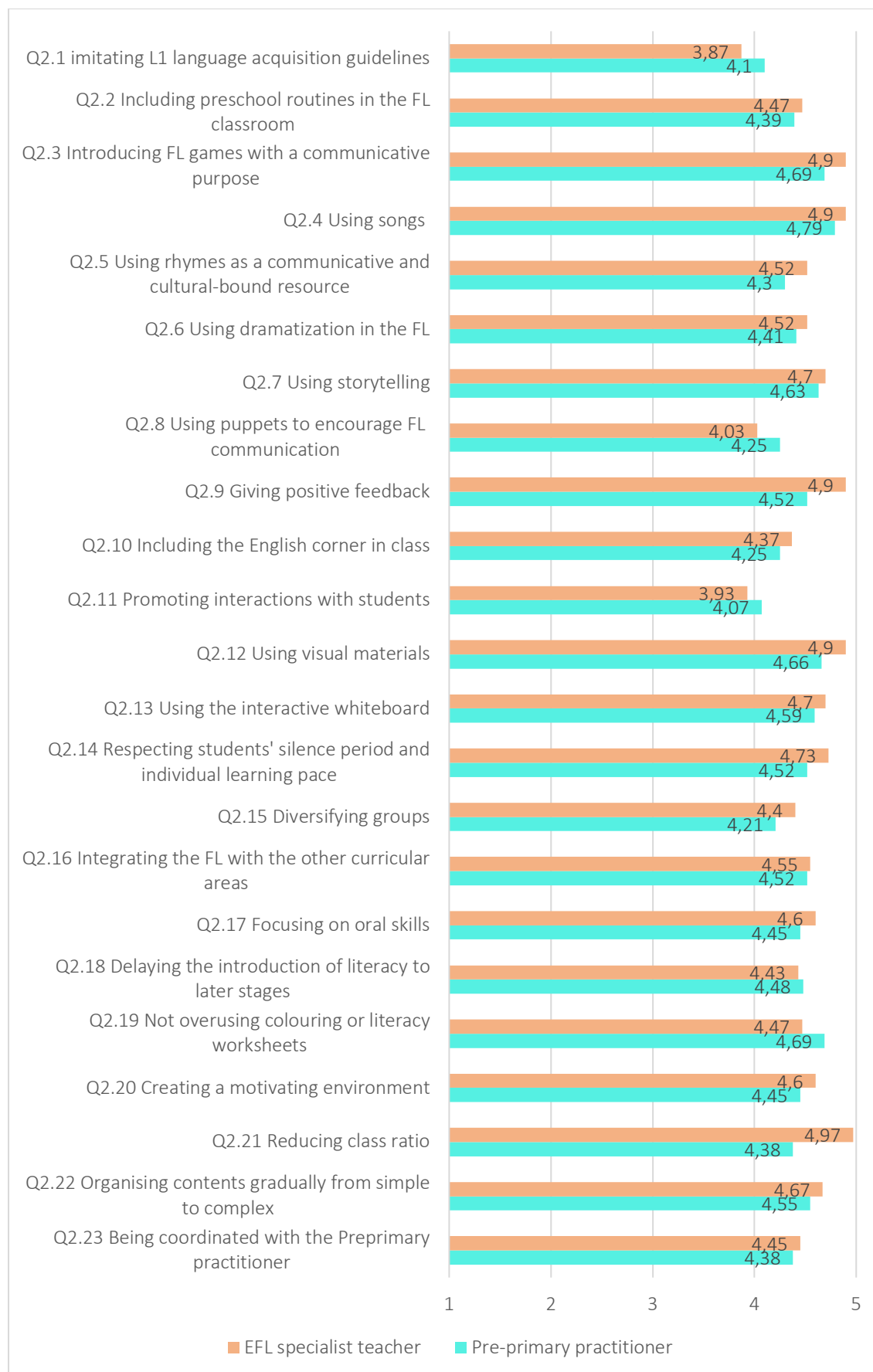


Figure 1. Mean comparison of the category Teaching guidelines

However, as a tendency, the EFL specialist teacher group values the different teaching strategies questioned in this category higher. The highest mean can be found in Q2.21 'Reducing group ratios' to increase the interaction teacher-students, providing children with more learning opportunities, as supported by González-Davies (2007, cited in Celaya 2012), who also suggested having two teachers in a class. Surprisingly, this is one of the items that has a greater mean difference between both studied groups. Although preschool practitioners consider it important with a mean of 4.38, EFL teachers situated it as the most remarkable teaching strategy to provide successful EFL learning opportunities during the early years. Some FL teachers participating in this study pointed out the importance of small groups in order to foster interaction among children:

I believe that, above all, in preschool education, the teaching of a language should always be in small groups of a maximum of 7/8 students, which means, in many cases, having some teachers, which a public school does not usually have. [expert 56, EFLt]⁸

The lowest mean found in this category is Q2.1 'Following L1 acquisition guidelines', yielding an average of 3.87 by the group of EFL teachers, and 4.1 by their counterpart. The FL teacher seems to claim for the necessary specialization of their teaching field, as explained by this participant:

With time and experience, linguists have realized that this understandable input is not enough since it is also necessary to make the students produce in English, so traditional classes where the teacher is merely a transmitter of knowledge and the student is only a receiver are not useful. [expert 32, EFLt]

Apart from question 2.1, there are three more items in this category in which, EFL teachers scored lower than preschool practitioners: Q2.8 'using a puppet', Q2.11 'doing circle time activities in the FL', and Q2.19 'Do not overuse worksheets (literacy activities, painting or drawing)'. All these four items can be considered pure preschool teaching strategies. Consequently, the EFL group does not tend to include those strategies within their teaching repertoire, as they prefer linguistic or communicative-based ones.

However, key methodological strategies that are used at preschool, such as meaningful or holistic learning, learning by discovery, play-based learning and creativity should become the main founding pillars of any FL approach to these early years (Björk-Willén & Cromdal, 2009; Cortina-Pérez & Andúgar, 2018; Linse, Van Vlack & Bladas, 2014; Mourão, 2014; Thió de Pol et al., 2011; Wood, 2010). Linked to this idea of a natural approach following L1 methodologies, Moya and Jiménez (2004) and Fleta (2012) found similarities between the process of acquisition of the L1 by native English children and by Spanish EFL learners. Moreover, studies such as those by Fleta (2004, 2006, 2014), Flores and Corcoll (2008), Pino and Rodríguez (2006, 2010) and Rodríguez (2004) state that there is a close relationship between the learning of the L1 and the FL. So they assume that if it is possible to recreate the learning environment of the L1, children will learn the L2 in the same way.

3.2. ELT methods

There are a number of well-known ELT methods that have become the common practice in any EFL classroom. However, they were mainly created for adults or, at least for not such young learners (Andúgar, 2017; Cortina-Pérez & Andúgar, 2014). In the last decade, with the spread of VEFLL (Very Early Foreign Language Learning) in formal contexts, some of these methods have flourished at preschool settings, such as TPR (Total Physical Response), Phonics or CLIL (Content and Language

⁸ Participants' quotes have been translated from Spanish. EFLt refers to English Foreign Language teacher and PSt to Preschool teacher.

Integrated Learning. Concerning these methods, we find differences in favour of those EFL teachers who generally tend to value methodologies higher than preschool practitioners (Figure 2).

Results suggest that the most valued method for both groups is TPR (see also Alexiou in this volume). This method is widely used in preschools, as Pino and Rodriguez (2006) maintain, mainly because it allows the student not to feel the pressure of answering to the teacher orally, but through physical actions, which reduces this anxiety. Furthermore, it facilitates meaningful and global opportunities for learning, providing the learning process with a playful and creative character. Participant 25 suggests:

I believe that the methodology to be used in children's education must be based on oral work, teacher-student or student-student interaction, the association of words with gestures and images (Total Physical Response - TPR) and the explanation of stories and the viewing of cartoon videos (previously worked vocabulary) [expert 25, PSt]

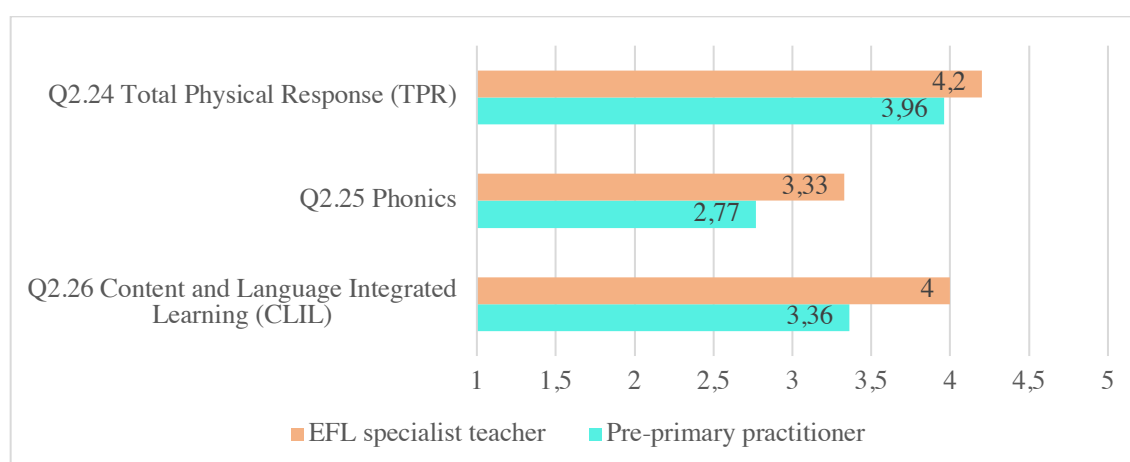


Figure 2. Mean comparison of the category ELT methods

On the contrary, Phonics was the method that scored lower, with an EFL specialist teachers' mean of 3.33 out of 5 and a preschool practitioners' mean of 2.77. The issue of introducing FL literacy at early years is highly controversial, as confirmed by the high standard deviation of 1.167 and 1.307 for each group. This approach originally intended for native speakers and that seems to be the reason for this heterogeneous response, as participant 23 expresses:

The Phonics method is aimed at native English speakers. I do not consider it useful for teaching foreign languages [expert 23, EFLt]

Mourão and Ellis (2020) advocate for a combination of approaches to teach early literacy in EFL contexts as a way of introducing pre-schoolers into literacy skills instead of teaching reading and writing. As they explain:

Without enough opportunity to hear and use English, the children will not be able to read or write it successfully. This is a fact in the L1, and in settings where the children have had little exposure to another language (Mourao & Ellis, 2020, p.129).

To implement a successful early literacy programme in a FL teaching context, phonics methodology needs to be incorporated "as part of a rich, meaning-focused pedagogy towards reading and writing development where comprehension and communication of meaning is the ultimate aim" (Papp, 2020, p.2). Some participants similarly suggested that:

The approach to reading and writing through phonics, from my experience, is very positive and favours not only reading and writing in English but also in Spanish. I am considering an approach (introduction), with the main objective of developing children's phonological awareness and initiating knowledge of the reading-writing code. [expert 7, EFLt]

Additionally, studies such as that of Navarro, Coyle and Roca de Larios (2016), where they investigate the effectiveness of Phonics in teaching sibilant phonemes to four and five-year-olds within the Spanish educational system, support the benefits of phonics with an integrated approach in EFL contexts.

Finally, the CLIL -Content and Language Integrated Learning- item (Q2.26) presents the highest difference in this category between the groups studied. The Mann-Whitney U test corroborated that the difference between groups is significant (p value= .034), thus we claim that EFL specialists consider CLIL methodology more appropriate than preschool teachers. CLIL is a dual-focus bilingual approach which fosters the development of the language and the non-linguistic contents integratedly. We suppose that preschool teachers not being well-acquainted with ELT methods may be a possible justification for these results.

As an ELT method it has been proved to be highly effective (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Madrid & Pérez-Cañado, 2012; Marsh & Frigols-Martín, 2013) and we find numerous examples of experiences that confirm these benefits (European Commission, 2011; García, 2013; Ioannou-Georgiou, 2011, 2015). Spain is a pioneer in the application of the CLIL methodology (Eurydice, 2006) and some of the autonomous communities are introducing CLIL as part of their bilingual programmes from preschool Education. The main advantage that this method presents for the teaching of FL at preschool level is that it is a methodology that integrates both the content and the FL, which helps to carry out the globalised approach distinctive of this educational stage. Furthermore, as Mallol (2012) states, since the native child is able to communicate complex ideas with simple structures and a few words, the FL learners will be able to communicate in the target language with their initiated FL repertoire through the CLIL approach.

3.3. Onset age

The “when to start” question is a recurring issue in EFL research. In this paper the focus is placed on whether there was a significant difference in the teachers’ opinion about this issue concerning the factor we are studying, i.e., teacher profile. Results detected no remarkable differences between the EFL specialist and the preschool practitioner (Figure 3). Additionally, no statistically significant results were found in the Mann-Whitney U test.

The fact that Q2.29 has lower mean results in both groups indicates it is not so relevant for teachers, either specialist or preschool ones, to identify a specific school year to start the learning of a FL. On the contrary, they seem to support that adequate conditions for successful language learning need to be assured (see also Alexiou, 2020).

If the learning conditions are right, a child can be exposed to another language at school as soon as possible. But the conditions are not usually right. [Expert 97, EFLt]

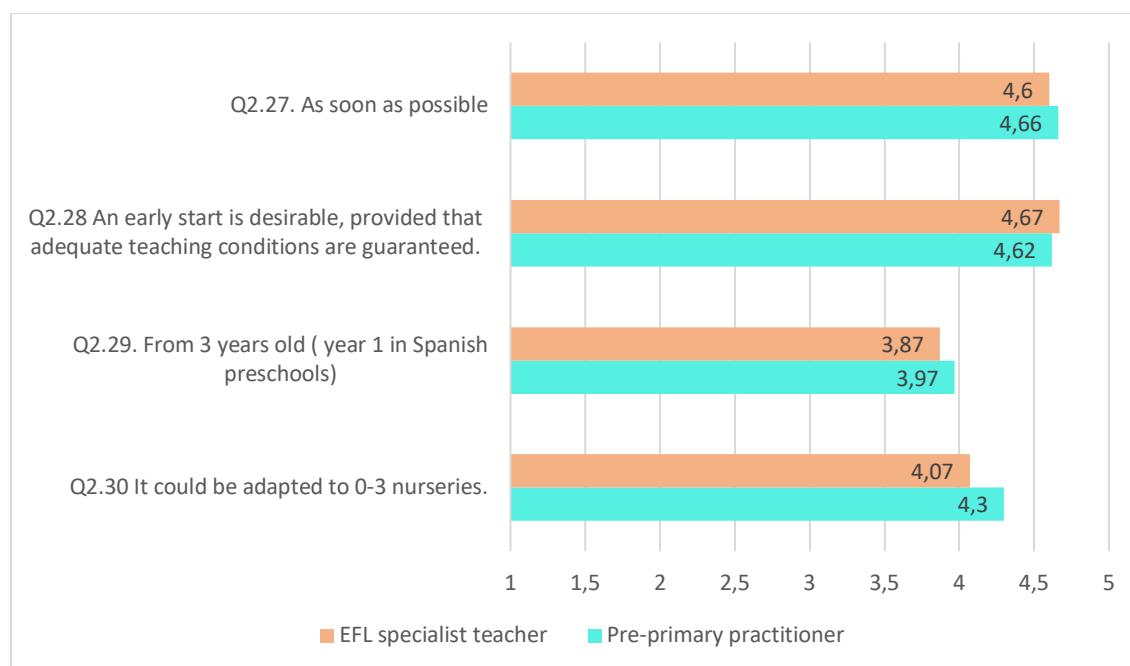


Figure 3. Mean comparison of the category Onset age

Some studies support the benefits of an early start (Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2012; Dolean, 2015; Kuhl, Stevenson, Corrigan, Van den Bosch, Deniz & Richards, 2016; García-Sierra, Ramírez-Esparza & Kuhl, 2016; Ramírez-Esparza, García-Sierra & Kuhl, 2016) if appropriate conditions are provided. Concretely, the research by Ramírez and Kuhl (2017) in the region of Madrid (Spain) suggested that children between 8 and 36 months of age improved their communicative competence, particularly, their lexical repertoire, while in a daily intensive immersion programme with native English teachers. Among the effective teaching techniques that they propose are (1) extensive input (their brains are adjusted according to the vocabulary they hear); (2) parentese speech (higher, slower tempo, overemphasize intonation); (3) high social context with activities that foster interaction (play-based activities); (4) possibility for children to hear different native speakers; and (5) children's stimulation to participate.

3.4. Family's implication

This category is concerned with the involvement of families in the VEFL process (Figure 4). We observe that there are minimal differences among both groups' means. However, all groups value very positively all these variables aiming at increasing the implication of families. Consequently, no statistically significant results were found in the Mann-Whitney U test. Therefore, both teachers' profiles considered important the role of the family in the child's language learning (Cerná, 2015; Choi, Sheo & Kang, 2020; Pirchio, Taschner, Colibaba, Gheorghiu & Jursová, 2015; Sokol & Lasevich, 2015). Families have had a great influence on the expansion of FL programmes at early ages as they have pushed institutions to meet social demands (Enever, 2015; Kersten, Steinlen, Tiefenthal, Wippermann & Flyman, 2010).

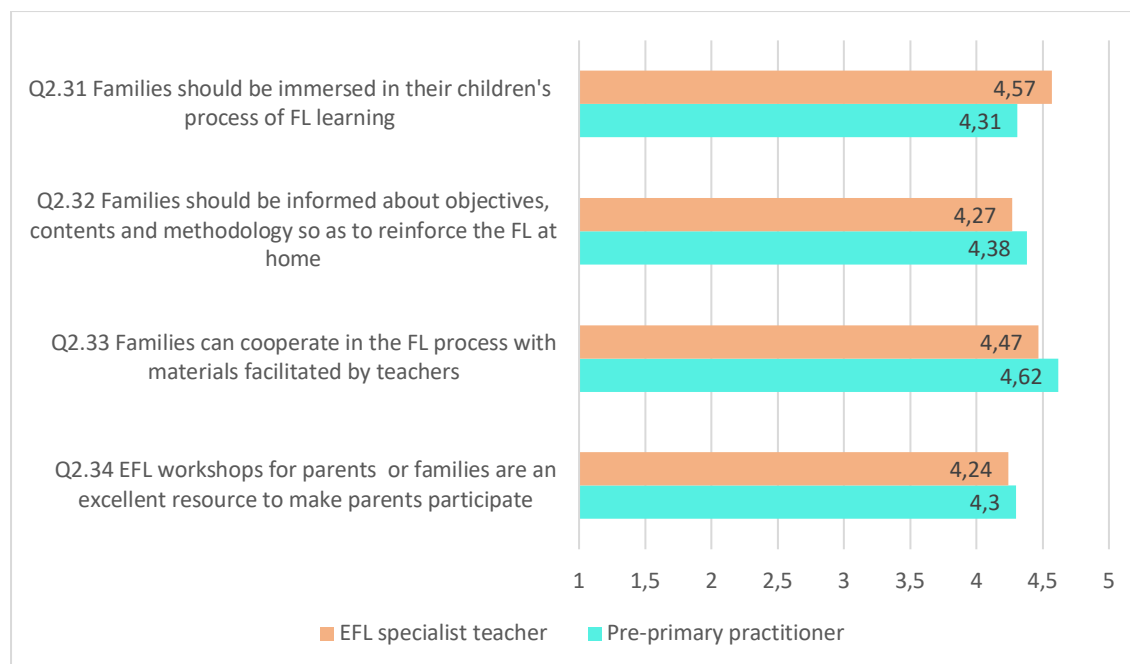


Figure 4. Mean comparison of the category Family's implication

3.5. Language of instruction

Whether the mother tongue should be permitted in a FL classroom is a heated debate, ranging from the target language-only principle and the flexible translanguaging, linked respectively to two different bilingual education models: the immersion and the dynamic bilingualism.

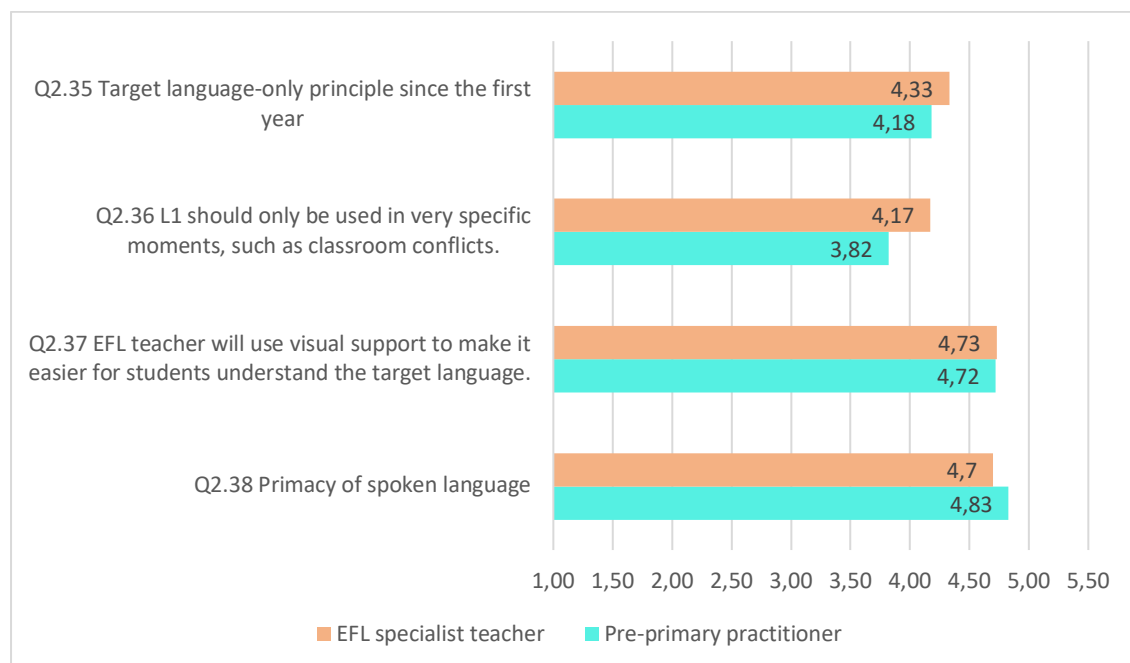


Figure 5. Mean comparison of the category Language of instruction

As observed in Figure 5, both preschool and EFL specialist teachers do agree with the first model, so that the target language is the main, and nearly unique, language of communication in the VEFL

classroom (Morris & Segura, 2003). This is justified mainly due to the fact that English is a FL in Spain, thus students will rarely listen to the target language outside the school, and teachers tend to maximize the quality and quantity of exposure (DeKeyser, 2013; Leonardi, 2012; Muñoz, 2008; Pérez-Esteve & Roig, 2009). Participant number 28 explains:

I consider language immersion to be absolutely necessary for comprehensive training. The student, in full formation and modelling, adapts to what the teacher teaches him except for the students with needs. So yes, I think it should be the whole class in the English language [Expert 28, PSt].

Question 2.36, related to ‘allowing the L1 at very specific moments’, scores slightly lower in the preschool teachers’ group, although no statistical significance has been found. These results agree with the extended monolingual pedagogy in which the target language is the predominant mean of communication in the classroom. However, new tendencies are advocating for a shift in the role of the L1 (García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; Alstad & Tkachenko, 2018). For instance, Inbar-Lourie explains that “language teaching pedagogy has tended to ignore or even suppress bilingual or multilingual options endorsing a predominantly monolingual policy, one which equates ‘good teaching’ with exclusive or nearly exclusive target language use” (2010, p. 351). As justified by the following participant:

I do not agree that the whole session should be in a FL only. I believe that the teacher should be a good role model and should speak in English "as much as possible," but that language should never be a barrier to students' "emotional access. We must not lose sight of the fact that communication is a type of relationship; therefore, communication must come first. Furthermore, I believe that if we want to form multilingual pupils, the first model must be the teacher. The pupils must see that the teacher is capable of using different languages to communicate [...] [expert 33, PSt]

Nevertheless, there is still a lack of scientific evidence about the effect of translanguaging in the VEFLL classroom.

3.6. Classroom resources

Under this category, issues about classroom resources are explored (Figure 6). In the case of textbooks both groups relegate them to a secondary position. However, a closer look at question Q2.39 indicates a mean of 4 out of 5 for the EFL specialist and a mean of 4.38 for the preschool teacher. It seems that EFL teachers are slightly more in favour of using commercial textbooks than preschool ones. This is related to Q 2.42 in which inverted results are found and preschool practitioners are more in favour of producing their resources ($\mu=4.38$, see Appendix II).

As we can observe, there are minimal differences between results by each teacher profile in Q2.41, thus both EFL specialists and preschool practitioners agree on the fact that realia and classroom resources are the most appropriate materials, obtaining the highest mean of this category. As this preschool teacher explains:

The same resources and methodological strategies are used as in preschool: Games, short stories, songs, videos, flashcards, dolls, everyday objects, gestures and mime... generally using the type of grouping in a large group (what at preschool we colloquially call assembly). All these resources and this type of grouping have been to the detriment of the use of books and cards for the individual work of the student at the table, which in general, seemed to me to be very ineffective for the teaching of the language. [Expert 72, PSt]

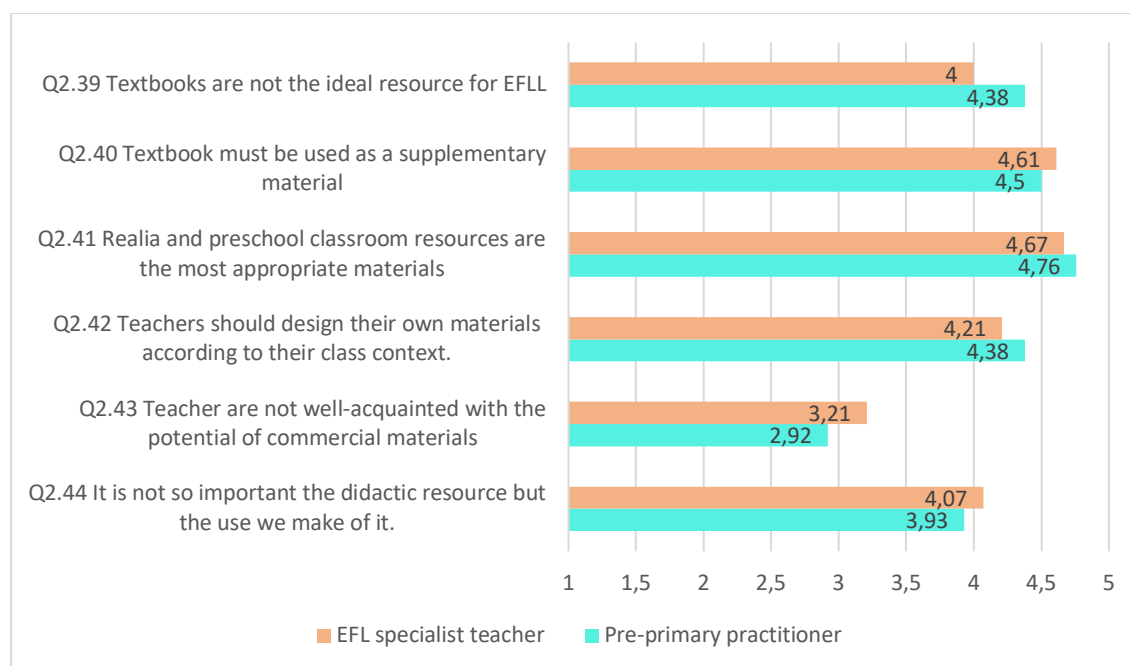


Figure 6. Mean comparison of the category Classroom resources

On the contrary, both groups of teachers do not seem to agree on the idea that they are not well-acquainted with the potential of commercial materials (Q2.43), obtaining means of 3.21 for EFL specialists and 2.92 for preschool ones. This, together with the previous results, builds on the idea that both groups of teachers advocate for relegating commercial textbooks to a secondary position, despite the fact that they feel prepared to use them. As mean differences are so narrow, no significance was found in the Mann Whitney U test.

3.7. The transition from preschool to primary stage

In this final category, attention is placed on the transition from the preschool Education to the Primary stage in terms of the FL. This category shows that preschool teachers valued higher all items than EFL specialists, except for the use of Phonics as a transition methodology, in which they scored lower. These results are in accordance with those from the second category, in which phonics was the least valued methodology. Again, lack of knowledge about this method could partially justify these results.

Both groups of participants agreed on the fact that there is a need for methodological continuity (Q2.48), as supported in Enever (2011); although it is clear the difficulty that this entails, as reflected by Cerná (2015), it is essential. Participant 72 clearly describes this transition:

Respecting the students' own characteristics and trying to ensure that the methodological changes of the new stage are introduced little by little, gradually and adapting to the heterogeneous rhythm of the students. Introducing also some of the methodological elements used in the preschool stage, so that the change is as less abrupt as possible, and always starting from the initial level of knowledge of each student. [Expert 72, PSt]

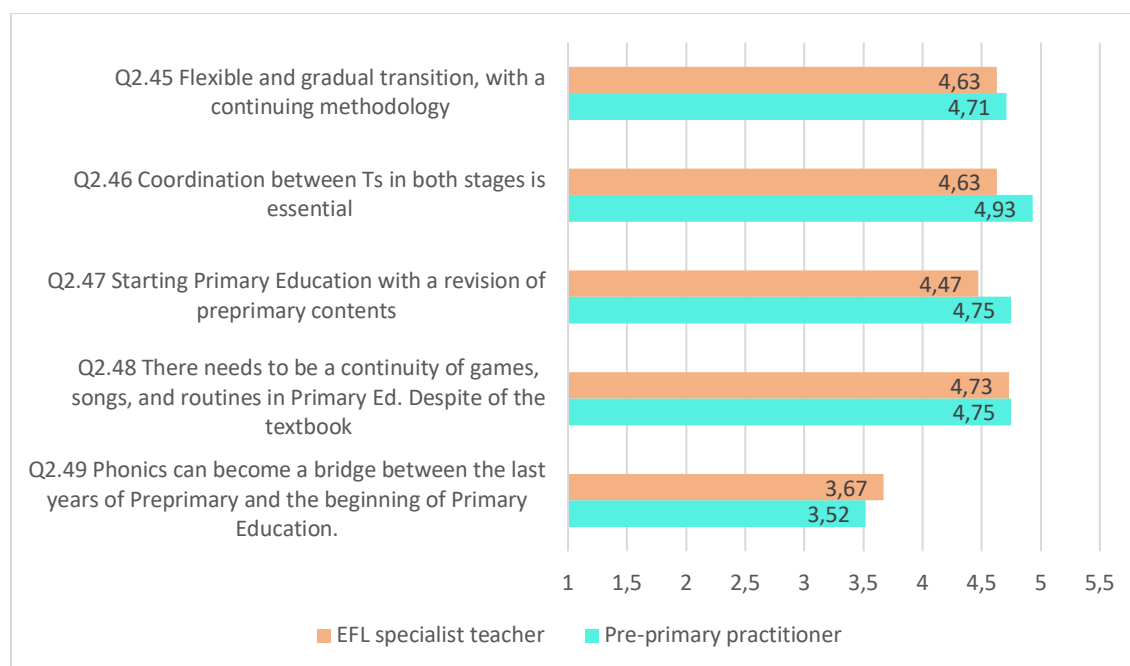


Figure 7. Mean comparison of the category Primary transition

In the other three items of this category, we found some discrepancy. For instance, the preschool practitioner considers essential coordination among teachers from both stages (Q2.46), which obtained a statistical significance of .044. Cooperation is an important factor of success at this very early context (Alexiou, 2020), however this continuity is not a common practice within the Spanish context where the pedagogical approach goes from the globalised one in the preschool stage to the differentiation of areas of study within the Primary schedule. In this sense, EFL becomes a new subject of study rather than a meaningful way of communication and learning. Andúgar, Cortina-Pérez, and Tornel (2019) insisted on the necessity of fostering coordination mechanisms between the PSt and the EFL teacher, and also between the English teacher at preschool and first years of Primary education. As said before, methods such as Phonics could be an interesting methodological bridge between both stages.

4. Conclusions

We conducted a research project aiming at obtaining consensus on some controversial issues on teaching FLs at very early years, which comprises the age range from 0 to 6 in the Spanish context. This paper has undertaken a discussion of the results obtained in the category 'FL methodology' from a comparative perspective in terms of two different teacher profiles, i.e., the EFL specialist and the preschool practitioner.

This paper revolves around the research question: 'Does EFL specialist teachers' view about FL methodology for preschool Education differ from that of the preschool practitioners?' Given the results analysed, we conclude that both teachers' profiles have similar opinions on how we should introduce a FL to children under 6 years old. Nevertheless, we have detected some subtle differences. In terms of teaching guidelines, EFL specialists seem to indicate some preference towards communication-oriented strategies, for example, reducing the class ratio to increase active participation, giving positive feedback to promote interactions, or using FL games, songs as communication boosters; whereas the preschool teacher is more concerned with child-oriented strategies, for example, following L1 acquisition guidelines, or replicating the preschool strategies of using the puppet, the circle time, cartoons (Alexiou, 2015) or not overusing worksheets.

In relation to ELT methods, both groups of participants considered the TPR method the most appropriate for VEFLLs, given its dynamic and game-based approach. Also, the EFL specialist highlights the CLIL method, which contrasts with the promotion of a more natural methodology by the preschool teachers' group. We believe more training is necessary so that preschool practitioners get to know the method better. Finally, preschool practitioners partially disagree with the idea of using Phonics with VEFLLs, consequently, they reject early FL literacy as they consider it should not interfere with the L1 literacy skills. However, recent research shows that early FL phonological awareness can have positive effects on the target group, provided that the method is adapted to the students and their FL level.

Besides, both groups confirm that the most appropriate onset age is 'as soon as possible', but it is necessary to guarantee the optimum teaching conditions in terms of quality of the exposition of the language, adequate methodology and holistic learning. Similar responses are also found in the category Family's implication, both groups agreeing on their valuable contribution to VEFLL. In terms of the language model, both groups of teachers advocate for an 'English-only' teaching context as a way of intensifying the input students receive. Little space is given to the L1 in the FL classroom, despite the new tendencies favouring multilingual spaces through translanguaging strategies. Concerning classroom resources, both groups share the idea that the most convenient materials are realia and preschool classroom resources, relegating the textbook to a secondary position.

Finally, no large differences are found in the transition to Primary Education guidelines category, as they both consider there is a need to continue with the methodology used in the previous stage so as to make a soft transition from preschool to Primary Education. However, results confirmed that the preschool teacher is more concerned with the necessity of establishing mechanisms to coordinate the primary and the preschool teacher.

As a final remark, both groups have a very similar view on how we should teach EFL at preschool Education. However, we discovered some tendencies that illustrate minimal differences. The participating preschool practitioners seem to have a more natural teaching approach, i.e., a child-centred pedagogy aiming at developing the child globally and integrally, while the EFL specialist teacher is more concerned with developing students' communicative competence in the FL, hence, language-centred approach. We conclude that the key to a successful VEFLL programme is in the integration of both profiles. However, to corroborate these results, more research is needed using larger samples.

References

- Alexiou, T. (2020) *Introducing EFL in preschools: Facts and Fictions*. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing English Language Education*. Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications, p.61-74, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2020/AELE_Book_ALLT_ZU_Web_V02.pdf
- Alexiou, T. (2015). Vocabulary uptake from *Peppa Pig*: A case study of preschool EFL learners in Greece. In C. Gitsaki, & T. Alexiou (Eds.) *Current issues in second/foreign language teaching and teacher education: Research and practice* (pp. 285–301). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Alstad, G.T. & Tkachenko, E. (2018). 'Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Creating Multilingual Spaces: The Case of English Teaching in Norwegian'. In M. Schwartz (Ed.), *Preschool Bilingual Education. Agency in Interactions Between Children, Teachers, and Parents*, Switzerland: Springer, 57-98

- Andúgar, A. (2017). 'Enseñanza de la lengua extranjera (inglés) en Educación Infantil (3-6 años). Estudio Delphi para la búsqueda de pautas didácticas consensuadas'. Unpublished thesis. Catholic University of Murcia.
- Andúgar, A. & Cortina-Pérez, B. (2018). 'EFL teachers' reflections on their teaching practice in Spanish preschools: A focus on motivation'. In M. Schwartz (Ed.), *Preschool Bilingual Education. Agency in Interactions between Children, Teachers, and Parents*. Dordrecht: Springer, 219-244.
- Andúgar, A., Cortina-Pérez, B. & Tornel, M. (2019). Heterogeneidad y desigualdad en la introducción de la lengua extranjera en Educación Infantil en España. *Revista de Profesorado*, 3/1: 467-487.
- Andúgar, A., Cortina-Pérez, B. & Tornel, M. (2020). 'Análisis de las pautas para la enseñanza del inglés en Educación Infantil mediante la técnica Delphi.' *RESLA – Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada*, 33/1: 1-26.
- Barcelona European Council (15-16 March 2002), Presidency conclusions, Retrieved from: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/71025.pdf.
- Barcia, M. (2003). 'Educación de la creatividad'. In J.L Gallego & E. Fernández de Haro (Ed.), *Enciclopedia de Educación Infantil*. Spain: Ediciones Aljibe, 255-277.
- Bialystok, E., Craik, F. & Luk, G. (2012). 'Bilingualism: Consequences for Mind and Brain'. *Trends Cognitive Sciences*, 16/4: 240–250. DOI:10.1016/j.tics.2012.03.001
- Björk-Willén, P. & Cromdal, J. (2009). 'When education seeps into free play. How preschool children accomplish multilingual education'. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41: 1493-1518.
- Cabero, J. & García, E. (2011). 'Diseño y validación de un cuestionario dirigido a describir la evaluación en procesos de educación a distancia'. *Revista Electrónica de Tecnología Educativa*, 35: 1-26.
- Caurcel, M.J. (2010). 'Contextos de desarrollo y juego en la edad infantil'. In A. Muñoz, *Psicología del desarrollo en la etapa de educación infantil*. Madrid: Ediciones Pirámide, 165-191.
- Celaya, M.L (2012). 'I wish I were three! Learning EFL at an early age'. In M. González & A. Taronna (Eds.), *New trends in early foreign language learning: the age factor, CLIL and languages in contact. Bridging research and good practices*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2-12.
- Cerná, M. (2015). 'Pre-primary English in the Czech Republic'. In S. Mourão & M. Lourenço (Eds.), *Early years second language education*. Oxon: Routledge, 165-176.
- Cenoz, J. (2003). 'El aprendizaje del inglés desde educación infantil: efectos cognitivos'. *EDULING Revista-Fórum sobre plurilingüismo y educación*, 1: 1-11.
- Choi, N., Sheo, H. & Kang, S. (2020). 'Individual and parental factors associated with preschool children's foreign language anxiety in an EFL setting'. *Elementary Education Online*, 19/3: 1116-1126
- Coll, C. (1987). *Psicología y currículum*. Barcelona: Laia.
- Cortina-Pérez & Andúgar, (2014, 16-17 October). 'Matching ELT methodologies and children development at very early stages, is it possible?' Paper presented at International Conference on Child Foreign Language Acquisition, University of the Basque Country, Vitoria.
- Cortina-Pérez, B. & Andúgar, A. (2018). *Didáctica de la lengua extranjera en Educación Infantil: Inglés*. Madrid: Pirámide.
- Coyle, D., Hood, P. & Marsh, D. (2010). *Content Language Integrated Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DeKeyser, R.M. (2013). 'Age effects in second language learning: stepping stones toward better understanding. Language learning'. *A journal of research in language studies*, 63: 52-67. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00737.x
- Dolean, D. (2015). 'How early can we efficiently start teaching a foreign language?' *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 23/5: 706-719. DOI: 10.1080/1350293X.2015.110404
- Enever, J. (2011). *ELLiE. Early language learning in Europe*. London: British Council.

- Enever, J. (2015). 'The advantages and disadvantages of English as a foreign language with young learners'. In J. Bland (Ed.), *Teaching English to young learners. Critical issues in language teaching with 3-12 year olds*. London: Bloomsbury, 13-30.
- European Commission (2011). 'Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable'. European Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET 2020).
- Eurydice (2006). Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at school in Europe. Brussels: Comisión Europea. Retrieved from <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/content-and-language-integrated-learning-clil-at-school-in-europe-pbNCX106001/>
- Fernández de Haro, E. & Gallego, J.L. (2003). 'La globalización en la enseñanza'. In J.L. Gallego & E. Fernández de Haro (Eds.), *Enciclopedia de Educación Infantil*. Málaga: Aljibe, 842-859.
- Fleta, T. (2004). 'Child L2 learning of English in a bilingual setting'. *Estudios de lingüística inglesa aplicada*, 5: 55-73.
- Fleta, T. (2006). 'Aprendizaje y técnicas de enseñanza del inglés en la escuela'. *Encuentro*, 16: 51-62.
- Fleta, T. (2012). 'Factors concerning early FL learning at school'. *Young Learners and Teenagers SIG C&TS: IATEFL Association. Very Young Learners*, 18-31
- Fleta, T. (2014). 'Enhancing oracy in the pre-primary English classroom'. *Encuentro*, 23: 38-46.
- Flores, C. & Corcoll, C. (2008). 'Learning a foreign language in Infant Education: a challenge for the school'. *CIREL (Centre de Support a la Innovació i Recerca Educativa en Llengües, Departament d'Educació, Generalitat de Catalunya)*. Retrieved from <http://srvcnpbs.xtec.cat/cirel/cirel/docs/pdf/challenge.pdf>
- Franco, C. & Justo, E. (2009). 'Efectos de un programa de intervención basado en la imaginación, la relajación y el cuento infantil, sobre los niveles de creatividad verbal, gráfica y motora en un grupo de niños de último curso de educación infantil'. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, 4/3, 1-11.
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Basil/Blackwell.
- García, S. (2013). 'Three frameworks for developing CLIL materials in infant and primary education'. *Encuentro*, 22: 49-53.
- García, O. & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- García-Sierra, A., Ramírez-Esparza, N. & Kuhl, P.K. (2016). 'Relationships between quantity of language input and brain responses in bilingual and monolingual infants'. *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 110 1-17.
- Inbar-Lourie, O. (2010). 'English only? The linguistic choices of teachers of young EFL learners'. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 14/3: 351-367. DOI:10.1177/1367006910367849
- Ioannou-Georgiou, S. (2011). 'Transition into CLIL: guidelines for the beginning stages of CLIL'. In S. Ioannou-Georgiou & P. Pavlou (Eds.), *Guidelines for CLIL implementation in Primary and Pre-primary Education*. Bruselas: Comisión Europea, 34-54.
- Ioannou-Georgiou, S. (2015). 'Early language learning in Cyprus: voices from the classroom'. In S. Mourão & M. Lourenço (Eds.), *Early years second language education*. Oxon: Routledge, 95-108.
- Kersten, K. (2015). 'Bilingual pre-primary schools: language acquisition, intercultural encounters and environmental learning'. In S. Mourão & M. Lourenço (Eds.), *Early years second language education*. Oxon: Routledge, 29-45.
- Kersten, K., Steinlen, A.K., Tiefenthal, C., Wippermann, I. & Flyman. (2010). Guidelines for Language Use Guidelines for Language Use in Bilingual Preschools in Bilingual Preschools. Early Language and Intercultural Acquisition Studies. In K. Kersten, A. Rohde, C. Schelletter & A.K. Steinlen (Eds.), *Bilingual Preschools. Best Practices*. Trier: WV, 103-116.
- Kuhl, P.K., Stevenson, J., Corrigan, N., Van den Bosch, J., Deniz, D. & Richards. T. (2016). 'Neuroimaging of the bilingual brain: Structural brain correlates of listening and speaking in a second language'. *Brain and Language*, 162: 1-9. DOI: 10.1016/j.bandl.2016.07.004
- Landeta, J. (2002). *El método Delphi. Una técnica de previsión de futuro*. Barcelona: AM Gráfico.

- Leonardi, V. (2012). 'I know you are Italian, but please think in English!: the role of L1 in the EFL classes'. In M. González Davies & A. Taronna (Eds.), *New trends in early foreign language learning*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 110-119.
- Linse, C., Van Vlack, S. & Bladas, O. (2014). *Parents and young learners in English language teaching: global practices and issues in school-home contacts*. London: British Council
- Madrid, D. (2001). 'A conceptual framework for the teaching of foreign languages in infant education'. In Madrid, D., Herrera, F., Mesa M. C. & F. Cruz, M. (Eds.), *European Models of Children Integration*. Granada: Grupo Editorial Universitario, 145-152.
- Madrid, D. & Pérez-Cañado, M.L. (2012). 'CLIL teacher training'. In M. Agudo (Ed.), *Teaching and learning English through bilingual education*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 181-212.
- Mallol, C. (2012). 'Project-based work in the digital era'. In M. González Davies & A. Taronna (Eds.), *New trends in early foreign language learning*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 62-85.
- Marsh, D. & Frigols-Martín, M.J. (2013). 'Content language integrated learning'. In C.A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1-10.
- Martín, E. & Solé, I. (2007). 'El aprendizaje significativo y la teoría de la asimilación'. In C. Coll, J. Palacios & A. Marchesi (Eds.), *Desarrollo psicológico y educación. 2. Psicología de la educación escolar*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 89-113.
- Mezzi, T. (2012). 'Being young, being adult: the age factor issue for vocabulary in foreign language education'. In M. González Davies & A. Taronna (Eds.), *New trends in early foreign language learning*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 12-23.
- Morris, J. & Segura, R. (2003). 'Materiales y recursos para la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera en Educación Infantil'. In C. Huete & V. Morales (Eds.), *Enseñanza-aprendizaje de las lenguas extranjeras en edades tempranas*. Murcia: Consejería de Educación y Cultura de la Región de Murcia, 195-216.
- Mourão, S. (2014). 'Taking play seriously in the pre-primary English classroom'. *ELT Journal*, 68/3: 254-264. DOI:10.1093/elt/ccu018
- Mourão, S. & Ellis, G. (2020). *Teaching English to Pre-Primary Children*. Stuttgart: Delta Publishing
- Mourão, S. & Lourenço, M. (2015). *Early Years Second Language Acquisition*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Moya, A. & Jiménez, M. J. (2004). 'El proceso de interlengua en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera en edades tempranas'. *Glosas Didácticas*, 19: 128-142.
- Muñoz, C. (2008). 'Age-related differences in foreign language learning. Revisiting the empirical evidence'. *International review of applied linguistic in language teaching*, 46/3:197-220.
- Navarro, A., Coyle, Y. & Roca de Larios, J. (2016). 'Pre-school children's production of sibilant phonemes in English: developing phonemic awareness through multi-sensory teaching'. In V. Murphy & M. Evangelou (eds.), *Early Childhood Education in English for Speakers of Other Languages*. London: British Council, 241-252.
- Ortega, R. (2003). 'El juego: la experiencia de aprender jugando'. In J.L Gallego & E. Fernández de Haro, *Enciclopedia de Educación Infantil*. Málaga: Ediciones Aljibe, 765-788.
- Papp, S. (2020). *Phonics and Literacy instruction for young learners in EFL. Part of the Cambridge papers in ELT series*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pérez-Esteve, P. & Roig, V. (2003). 'Factores para la eficacia en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera en Educación Infantil y en el primer ciclo de Educación Primaria'. In C. Huete & V. Morales (Eds.), *Enseñanza-Aprendizaje de las lenguas extranjeras en edades tempranas*. Murcia: Consejería de Educación y Cultura de la Región de Murcia, 49-72.
- Pino, M. & Rodríguez, B. (2006). 'Análisis de los principios metodológicos que fundamentan la enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua en educación infantil'. *Enseñanza*, 24: 131-155.
- Pino, M. & Rodríguez, B. (2010). 'A study on English learning dynamics in pre-primary schools'. *Porta Linguarum*, 14: 29-43.

- Pirchio, S., Taeschner, T., Colibaba, A.C., Gheorghiu & Zacharová, Z.J. (2015). Family involvement in second language learning: the Bilfam project. In S. Mourão & M. Lourenço (Eds.), *Early years second language education*. Oxon: Routledge, 204-217.
- Pozo, M.T., Suárez, M. & García-Cano, M. (2012). 'Logros educativos y diversidad en la escuela: hacia una definición desde el consenso'. *Revista de Educación*, 358: 59-84. DOI: 10-4438/1988-592X-RE-2012-358-183
- Ramírez, N. & Kuhl, P. (2017). Bilingual Baby: Foreign Language Intervention in Madrid's Infant Education Centers. *Mind, Brain and Education*, 11/3: 133-143.
- Ramírez-Esparza, N., García-Sierra, A. & Kuhl, P.K. (2016). 'The Impact of Early Social Interactions on Later Language Development in Spanish-English Bilingual Infants'. *Child Development*. 88/4: 1216-1234. DOI: 10.1111/cdev.12648
- Rodríguez, B. (2004). 'Técnicas metodológicas empleadas en la enseñanza del inglés en la educación infantil. Estudio de caso'. *Didáctica (Lengua y Literatura)*, 16: 145-161.
- Seker, P.T., Girgin, G. & Akamca, G.O. (2012). 'A study on the contributions of second language education to language development in pre-school period'. *Procedia, Social and behavioral sciences*, 47: 230-234. DOI:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.643
- Sokol, A. & Lasevich, E. (2015). 'Supporting parents in building learning activities in another language'. In S. Mourão & M. Lourenço (Eds.), *Early years second language education*. Oxon: Routledge, 218-235.
- Thió de Pol, C., Fusté, S., Martín, L., Palou, S. & Masnou, F. (2011). 'Jugando para vivir, viviendo para jugar: el juego como motor de aprendizaje'. In M. Antón (Eds.), *Planificar la etapa de 0-6. Compromiso de sus agentes y práctica cotidiana*. Barcelona: Graó, 127-161.
- Torrance, P. (1976). 'La enseñanza creativa produce efectos específicos'. In J. Curtis, G. Demos & E. Torrance, *Implicaciones educativas de la creatividad*. Salamanca: Ediciones Anaya, 184-199.
- Yeganeh, M.T. (2013). 'Age constrain on foreign language learning in monolinguals versus bilingual learners'. *Procedia, Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70:1974-1799. DOI:10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.01.255
- Wood, E. (2010). 'Developing integrated pedagogical approaches to play and learning'. In P. Broadhead, J. Howard & E. Wood (Eds.), *Play and learning in the early years*. Sage publications, 9-26.

Appendix I. Items from the questionnaire PART 2

PART 2. TEACHING TECHNIQUES
METHODOLOGY
The methodology for the teaching a foreign language at preschool should:
1. Follow the same guidelines as the learning of the mother tongue
2. Include the usual preprimary class routines but in the foreign language
3. Introduce foreign language games that have a communicative purpose
4. Use songs as a teaching resource for the foreign language class.
5. Employ rhymes that help to improve the communicative competence as well as the cultural knowledge about the target country
6. Perform dramatizations in the foreign language.
7. Use storytelling in the foreign language.
8. Use the pet in the foreign language class as a means of communication with students.
9. Use reinforcements (excellent, well done) that support and motivate the student.
10. Design and “English corner” that allow to perform different kind of activities.
11. Promote interaction among all students in the foreign language
12. Make use of visual materials (flashcards, posters, realia) that serve as teaching support.
13. Use the digital blackboard as a resource for the teaching of a foreign language through online materials.
14. Respect the students’ silence period and individual learning pace.
15. Diversify the different students’ grouping according to the goal of the activity.
16. Introduce the foreign language in a natural way, integrated with the rest of learning areas by creating contexts that be of interest for children in a trusting and playful environment.
17. Focus the attention on oral skills, by mainly working on listening and speaking skills
18. Introduce literacy in the foreign language at a later stage as children at these ages are not prepared for that task at a cognitive level.
19. Do not over use working sheets (literacy activities, painting, drawing) as they do not work relevant skills for the learning of a foreign language at this ages.
20. Create a motivating environment in the classroom and the school that reflect the foreign culture.
21. Reduce the ratio of students per group to provide a good quality student-teacher interaction with greater opportunities for student learning.

22. Organize contents in a gradual way, increasing complexity gradually and reviewing them continuously to progress progressively.

23. Coordinate contents and objectives taught by the primary specialist foreign language teacher and the preprimary teacher to work in parallel.

The most adequate methodology for teaching foreign language at preprimary to develop an adequate communicative competence in students is:

24. TPR (Total Physical Response): teaching method in which the student shows understanding the instructions given by the teacher through physical response.

25. Phonics: literacy method for English native speakers that begins by learning the English phonemes and their corresponding script.

26. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning): method that used the foreign language to

STARTING TIME

27. The teaching of the foreign language should start as soon as possible because children have an enormous potential at this age (imitation, curiosity, motivation, brain plasticity and they are not afraid making mistakes).

28. It is convenient an early start if the adequate conditions can be guaranteed (quality input, appropriate methodology, significant learning).

29. The start of the foreign language is recommended at the age of 3 years old, respecting the period of adaptation to school and self-pace learning of students.

30. The start of the learning of the foreign language could be even introduced earlier (0-3), although these ages do not form part of a compulsory educational stage.

INVOLVEMENT OF FAMILIES IN THE TEACHING OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE

31. Family should be involved in the teaching of foreign language at the pre-primary level in the same way they are involved in the rest of areas of their children's school life.

32. Families should be informed of the objectives, contents and methodology that is used in school in order to reinforce them at home.

33. Families, although they do not have the linguistic knowledge, they can cooperate with their children at home with the resources that teachers provide them (songs, videos, and tales).

34. English workshops for parents or parents/children organized from school are a good tool in order that parents be encouraged to engage in their children learning of English.

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

35. The foreign language class should be taught entirely in the target language from the first year in order that children accept as something natural.

36. The mother tongue should be used only in concrete situations, such as when a problem or conflict arises in the classroom.

37. The EFL teacher will use visual materials that promote a better understanding of the message in the target language by the student.

38. Oral communication should be at the center of the teaching-learning process, showing it to students as a real communication tool.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

39. Textbooks are not a suitable resource for the teaching of a foreign language at preschool, as they are not adapted to the needs and interests of all students, do not fit the law requirements, and do not suit the numbers of sessions aimed to this teaching.

40. The textbook must be used as a supplementary material, never by itself.

41. The most suitable materials for the teaching of a foreign language at preschool level are real materials, tales, songs, flashcards, poetry, etc. existing a wide variety of these materials on the internet.
--

42. Teachers should design their own didactic resources according to their class context.

43. Teachers are not well-acquainted with the possibilities of the teaching materials, their selection and use (both textbooks and online materials).

44. It is not so important the didactic resource but the use we make of it.

TRANSITION BETWEEN PRESSCHOOL TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

45. The transition between preprimary and primary class in relation to the foreign language should be flexible and gradual, holding a methodological continuity to ease students the transition from one stage to another.
--

46. An adequate coordination between teachers (preschool and primary) is essential for this transition to occur properly.

47. The first year of primary education should start by reviewing the contents learnt in preprimary with a similar methodology as well as maintaining the global and integral character of the previous stage.
--

48. Although at primary level the teaching is centered on the textbook, it is necessary that exists certain continuity in terms of activities such as games, songs, tales, routines, etc.

49. A good continuity regarding the teaching of the foreign language would be the beginning with
--

Phonics in the final preprimary year and its continuity in Primary.

Appendix II. Mann Whitney U test (SPSS output)

	Q2.1	Q2.2	Q2.3	Q2.4	Q2.5	Q2.6
U de Mann-Whitney	385,500	412,500	370,500	402,000	322,500	374,500
W de Wilcoxon	850,500	818,500	805,500	837,000	700,500	752,500
Z	-,790	-,132	-1,501	-,843	-1,283	-,328
Sig. asintótica(bilateral)	,430	,895	,133	,399	,199	,743

	Q2.7	Q2.8	Q2.9	Q2.10	Q2.11	Q2.12
U de Mann-Whitney	399,500	362,500	291,000	372,500	417,000	369,000
W de Wilcoxon	777,500	827,500	669,000	778,500	882,000	804,000
Z	-,114	-,958	-2,492	-,826	-,295	-1,534
Sig. asintótica(bilateral)	,909	,338	,013	,409	,768	,125

	Q2.13	Q2.14	Q2.15	Q2.16	Q2.17	Q2.18
U de Mann-Whitney	400,000	377,500	393,000	412,000	390,000	401,500
W de Wilcoxon	835,000	812,500	828,000	847,000	825,000	866,500
Z	-,682	-1,098	-,708	-,165	-,827	-,637
Sig. asintótica(bilateral)	,495	,272	,479	,869	,408	,524

	Q2.19	Q2.20	Q2.21	Q2.22	Q2.23	Q2.24
U de Mann-Whitney	386,500	379,000	253,000	399,000	341,500	290,500
W de Wilcoxon	851,500	814,000	688,000	834,000	776,500	566,500
Z	-,924	-1,014	-3,721	-,675	-1,686	-1,043
Sig. asintótica(bilateral)	,356	,310	,000	,499	,092	,297

	Q2.25	Q2.26	Q2.27	Q2.28	Q2.29	Q2.30
U de Mann-Whitney	198,500	204,500	412,500	399,000	419,000	380,500
W de Wilcoxon	451,500	457,500	877,500	834,000	884,000	845,500
Z	-1,477	-2,125	-,438	-,716	-,254	-,424
Sig. asintótica(bilateral)	,140	,034	,662	,474	,799	,672

	Q2.31	Q2.32	Q2.33	Q2.34	Q2.35	Q2.36
U de Mann-Whitney	356,500	429,000	399,000	385,000	371,000	361,000
W de Wilcoxon	791,500	894,000	864,000	820,000	777,000	767,000
Z	-1,368	-,102	-,653	-,117	-,850	-,973
Sig. asintótica(bilateral)	,171	,919	,514	,907	,395	,330

	Q2.37	Q2.38	Q2.39	Q2.40	Q2.41	Q2.42
U de Mann-Whitney	421,000	391,500	336,000	385,000	407,000	379,500
W de Wilcoxon	856,000	856,500	801,000	850,000	872,000	814,500
Z	-,294	-,917	-1,624	-,680	-,573	-,694
Sig. asintótica(bilateral)	,769	,359	,104	,497	,567	,487

	Q2.43	Q2.44	Q2.45	Q2.46	Q2.47	Q2.48	Q2.49
U de Mann-Whitney	327,000	400,500	396,500	335,000	367,500	412,000	233,500
W de Wilcoxon	678,000	835,500	861,500	800,000	832,500	877,000	464,500
Z	-,876	-,328	-,469	-2,014	-1,065	-,182	-,437
Sig. asintótica(bilateral)	,381	,743	,639	,044	,287	,855	,662

Beatriz Cortina-Pérez (bcortina@ugr.es) is PhD in English Philology and associate professor at the Languages and Literature Education Department at the University of Granada (Spain). Her teaching is focused on foreign language teaching, both at graduate and postgraduate level. Among her main research areas are very young language learners (VYLL), EFL teaching and innovation, teacher training and intercultural education. She has published in different national and international journals, as well as participated in research projects. She is active member of the REYLL network from AILA SIGroups and Multilingual Childhoods networks. Besides she is founding member and governor of the Spanish Association for Early Foreign Language Learning (Red ALEXI). She is editor of the international journal *Porta Linguarum*.

Ana Andúgar (aandugar@ucam.edu) is PhD in Education and senior lecturer at Education Department of the Catholic University of Murcia (Spain). Her main research area is very young language learners (VYLL). She is active member of the REYLL network from AILA SIGroups and Multilingual Childhoods networks. Besides she is founding member and governor of the Spanish Association for Early Foreign Language Learning (Red ALEXI). She has different publications, and has participated in different congresses and innovation projects.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 53-65

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Care and language pedagogy in preschool education from a distance: a teacher-parent synergy

Alexia GIANNAKOPOULOU

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an abrupt transition from traditional face-to-face learning to distance learning worldwide. Schools from nursery to universities have made a considerable effort to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning in a digital space. Many of these efforts have been largely successful and this was a significant starting point that would stand us in good stead for the future. In this paper, I will present the main elements of a 'distance learning strategy' in a preschool setting during the first COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. In my capacity as the director of nursery and primary of the European School Munich, I will provide some anecdotal evidence about how home learning was applied in the kindergarten with special focus on multilingualism and language learning as well as teacher-parent synergies.

Key words: Preschool, distance learning, multilingualism, parents

1. Introduction: The general framework of the Early Education programme of the European Schools

Teaching and learning in preschool education is holistic and supports the children's physical, emotional, social, cognitive and psychological development and well-being. In line with this general principle, the Early Education Curriculum (EEC) of the European Schools provides the general framework within which the European School Munich, just like every other European school, develops its own early education programme and teaching strategies. The EEC (<http://www.schola-europaea.eu/ELC/en/curriculum.html>) concerns children aged 4-6 years old and consists of four main areas:

1. 'Me as a person' which focuses on the personal and emotional development of the child.

2. 'Me and my body' which focuses on the child's physical development in terms of both fine and gross motor skills.
3. 'Me and the others' which promotes the child's social development.
4. 'Me and the world' which is concerned with language development, mathematical and problem solving skills and developing the child's understanding of the world around him/her.

The fundamental base of the EEC is the eight key competences for lifelong learning:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn
- Social and civic competences
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Cultural awareness and expression

Teachers use this curriculum as a basis for planning the children's learning experiences. Their aim is to provide a stimulating, interactive and secure learning environment that promotes discovery, exploration and creativity. This environment should be flexible and reflect the diverse identities, abilities and needs of the children.

Learning in the preschool is situational (that is, it takes place as active, purposeful involvement in a variety of situations). Learning by playing is an important part of a school's daily life and teachers create plenty of opportunities for both independent and cooperative play. The children learn to appreciate the significance of peer group learning by actively engaging in meaningful interactions with their peers. These interactions enable them to develop a positive self-esteem and 'learning to learn' skills by processing and interpreting new situations based on their knowledge and by solving problems both independently and collectively. Sustained shared thinking and high-quality interactions with their teacher and other children are vital in stimulating early learning (Wall, Litjens & Taguma, 2015).

In order to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning and to optimise teacher-child interactions during the first COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, within this general framework, the nursery cycle of the European School Munich (ESM) devised a strategy of home learning, ascribing special importance to communication in languages, mathematical competence and basic competence in science as well as cultural awareness and expression. In the ESM, just as in so many other schools around the world, the teachers transferred their every day practices of the face-to-face classroom to a digital space. Children between 4 and 6 years of age were consistently supported by their teachers in self-regulated learning in kindergarten but home learning required the ability and availability of parents to encourage the development of these abilities. The teachers focused on core curriculum content and assigned home learning activities, which parents could access and carry out with their children. Soon it became clear that this sudden transition from a pedagogy of speech in the physical classroom to a digitally mediated pedagogy of speech in remote education required different thinking about planning and it was necessary to create new pedagogical designs for learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2020).

2. The EEC from a distance: a new pedagogical design

2.1 *Language pedagogy: a teacher-parent synergy*

As Alexiou (2015) aptly puts it, trying to teach anything at a preschool age is primarily a pedagogical task. Therefore, teachers need to “find the best ways to ‘talk’ to the children’s minds and ‘touch’ their hearts” (p. 286). Informed by this axiomatic principle and the expectations of the EEC, kindergarten teachers faced a big challenge: how to talk to children’s minds and touch their hearts from a distance, how to maintain strong connections and relationships from a distance and how to provide hands-on learning experiences through online tools. They began distance teaching with email and a weekly menu of children’s learning engagements with home life and nature. They proposed activities of an exploratory nature in order to help the children discover and explore the outdoor environment (e.g., landscape and climate), features of plant and animal life (e.g., movement, growth, nutrition, reproduction) and daily life at home. The home learning programme included language and literacy development, music, creative arts, math games, story reading or story-telling and dramatisation.

A further challenge encountered was the children’s inability to be self-regulated learners – one of the most important barriers to distance learning (Acquaro, 2020). This challenge highlighted the need for a teacher-parent synergy that would support all areas of children’s development. Many studies highlight the role of parents and their engagement in schooling and learning, which benefits children’s health and development (ARACY, 2015; NCB, 2019; Smees & Sammons, 2018). The role of parents in preschool education became even more important and crucial during the pandemic lockdown and the time that followed. Parents were not teachers and did not have the pedagogical knowledge to ‘teach’ their children at home. Teachers, therefore, had to ‘show and tell’ them how to do the activities at home.

First of all, they encouraged them to do the activities they wanted with their children. They stressed the fact that this was work that the children should do with joy and enthusiasm. Then they tried to ‘teach’ them ways through which they could make home learning as meaningful and effective as possible. Interestingly, the EEC, currently in the process of thorough revision, has developed a list of descriptors for competences and skills that the children need to develop not only at school but also at home. Parents are viewed as children’s prime educators and therefore their engagement in learning and schooling is also determined by clear descriptors. For example, in the area “Me and my world” where one of the main objectives is to become a confident and competent communicator, parents are encouraged to help their children develop linguistic competences and skills in listening and understanding, speaking, reading and writing.

At school, children build their vocabulary daily and are offered plenty of opportunities to develop understanding by being read to and told stories and fairy tales. Apart from ‘hearing written language’, they develop emergent literacy through the presence of writing in the class and on the walls, e.g. books, posters, alphabet, texts created by other children, etc. They also develop strategies for understanding language through games, role-play, drama and by repeating rhymes, songs, re-telling stories and playing with words. For children who are learning their dominant language or for children who are learning second or third languages, opportunities to build language and literacy skills are especially important to their growth and development (see also Alexiou in this volume). For distance learning the teachers designed a diverse range of activities for extending and enriching vocabulary through media like videos or TV.

Along with these familiar routines in the classroom, the teachers encouraged parents to talk with their children during daily activities, (e.g. when bathing, when preparing a meal, when shopping, during outings etc., to read stories to them and then talk about them, to talk about family events, etc.) in order to provide more stimuli for language use and reinforce their understanding and communication skills. They guided the parents in creating an environment that helped children develop their sensory perception by doing activities within the family, (e.g. cooking, singing, dancing and playing games). They also encouraged them to take advantage of everyday life situations to help their children acquire a sense of number (e.g. by counting sweets or marbles).

Teachers also sent links to websites with gym ideas and sports, asking parents to help the children develop basic motor skills (running, walking, skipping, jumping, climbing, crawling under and over obstacles etc.). Children were encouraged to use a wide range of small and large equipment at home such as pencils, crayons, scissors, balls, ropes, blocks, etc. These activities were carried out in a variety of circumstances both indoors and outdoors. As for fine motor skills, teachers sent a wealth of worksheets and materials for cutting practice, pencil control and letter writing. More examples of home-learning experiences follow below.

2.2. Care: personal teacher-to-child contact

The quality of such learning experiences is mostly associated with how deeply the child is connecting to the experience (Helm & Snider, 2020). Maintaining personal contact with the children was considered important for their social and emotional well-being and their cognitive development. Literature in preschool education points out that a positive bond with the adults around them is the basis of the good emotional, social and cognitive development of children (Sluss, 2018). Establishing close relationships with adults is related to their emotional security, sense of self and understanding of the world around them. Moreover concepts from the literature on 'attachment' emphasise the role that teachers can play in providing support during stressful times (Honig, 2002).

To provide social and emotional support, the teachers explored a variety of modalities. In the beginning they encouraged children to send an audio message, a photo, an impression, a wish or just 'hello' or even call. As time went by, they invited children and parents to weekly optional interactive meetings via "Microsoft Teams" (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>). Teachers tried to make the most of this online time to maintain personal contact and relationship with the children. They met them online via Teams as a whole class, in groups or individually. According to the teachers, the small group was the most successful mode because the children had the chance to see other children and improve their turn taking skills.

Through these online meetings that initially took place once a week, children had the opportunity to participate in a conversation with their teacher and sometimes with the other children. The teachers often asked children to identify their feelings and asked follow-up questions for the children to reply to. All occasions of daily life at home could be shared and these online meetings were used to report what the children have observed or experienced. The children shared photos from their life, e.g. home cooking, science projects, listening to the audio stories in bedtime or storytelling.

The meetings were carefully structured and parents, as facilitators of the process, were made aware of the 'rules'. For example they were advised to find somewhere comfortable and quiet to sit and ask their child to bring a favourite item, e.g. toy, book, possession that they would like to share with their teacher or the group (basically a virtual 'show and tell'). Children were encouraged to think about what they

would like to tell about their item. Parents were asked to be in the room with their child during the online meeting to support the children if necessary. Video calling seemed to be new for some children and it would take a little time to warm up to it. If the children were reticent to stay in front of the screen and speak, teachers would not force them to talk and happily chatted away with the parents until the children were ready to join in. These video meetings did not last more than 15-20 minutes. According to the parents, the children enjoyed these digital social interactions with the teacher and their peers.

2.3. A glimpse into the distance and online EEC learning programme

During the school closure, the goals of EEC teaching and learning were affective (emotional security, motivation), social and cultural (social competences, multicultural awareness), cognitive (memory, reasoning, problem solving), linguistic (language awareness, vocabulary). Teachers sought ways to ensure the development in all these areas. Initially, they sent weekly or daily learning plans with activities for children to complete at home with the help of parents. These activities covered the main areas of the EEC including literacy, numeracy, creative arts, fine and gross motor skills. Later they set up video meetings for interaction and socialisation. These meetings soon became more structured and focused on the curriculum. To give you a glimpse into what actually happened during this time, I will present some concrete examples of the evolution of the distance learning strategy.

One of the fundamental principles underlying that strategy was that activities “build on what children already know or what children ‘revisit’ and reconstruct as they are still in the process of acquiring concepts”. (Alexiou 2020, p. 68). The teachers devised a weekly home learning timetable. As home learning for pre-schoolers should be relaxed, teachers designed activities that encouraged a routine for both parents and children alike. Each activity should not take longer than 15 minutes and should be no more than 1.5 hours in total per day. Activities could be spread throughout the day. The weekly activities were similar on each day of the week so that the parents and the children would know what to expect throughout the week and this might eventually lead to a little more independence for the children. For example:

Monday	story connected to a letter/topic (e.g. the very helpful hedgehog – letter h)
Tuesday	cutting/fine motor activity
Wednesday	visual discrimination activity (look for the letter/shape/number)
Thursday	maths game
Friday	creative activity connected to the story on Monday

Table 1: Weekly home learning timetable

Below is an example of a weekly learning plan based on the story “The tiger who came to tea” (Kerr, 1968) as well as the online meetings where children are encouraged to speak in front of a small group about their favourite snack, to show how their stuffed animal moves or to present a house they have built from lego or made of recycled materials.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
T reads aloud the book “The Tiger Who Came to Tea”. The book is about a hungry tiger that visits Sophie and her mother for tea and cake and ... eats everything!	T offers drop-in online meeting where children can talk about their favourite snack: <i>“Show us what you like to eat at snack time and talk about your favourite food and drinks”.</i>	Children are invited to join their designated group in online meeting. They can draw an animal or bring along a stuffed animal and explain how it moves, e.g. <i>A tiger can run but it can't fly.</i>	Children are invited to join their designated group in online meeting. They can draw an animal or bring along a stuffed animal and explain how it moves, e.g. <i>A tiger can run but it can't fly.</i>	“Show and Tell” Children are invited to join in a virtual ‘show and tell’ in order to show and talk about a house they have drawn, built from lego or made of recycled materials.

Table 2: Weekly home learning plan based on storybook

I will now refer to different areas of the home learning programme and specifically language and literacy development, discovery of the world, music and creative arts.

- **Language and literacy development**

In the beginning teachers sent parents e-books for rhyming words or working with phonemes. They encouraged parents to read through the books with the children, to play with rhyming words and syllables and ask them questions for story comprehension. For example, a teacher asked parents to read “Stop Telling Fibs” and “the Messy Magpie” (e-books from Twinkl Originals):

“We have been working a lot on rhyming words. I have attached two of the e-books that we have read together on the smart board. It would be wonderful to read through the books and see if the children can hear the rhyming pairs. It goes without saying that reading any books with your child would be great”.

Another teacher wrote: “Every Thursday I read a story and we all work on reading comprehension. It is a story that works on a specific phoneme each time. This week I propose you the story of the “La casa de la mosca fosca” (Mejuto, 2004). Discuss this with your children and help them memorize the complicated names of the characters. It’s a story with a line where some parts are repeated. Encourage them to participate as the story progresses”.

Later the teachers asked children to watch YouTube videos of ‘read aloud’ stories or recorded themselves reading a book, modelling their thinking about the story as they read and asking the children questions (see Fig. 1 below).



Figure 1: Video of teacher reading a story aloud on Microsoft Teams

The teachers also encouraged children to create short texts, e.g. messages, invitations, birthday cards, simple sentences about an event and dictate them to the parents.

- **Discovery of the world**

Before the school closure, preschool children had started to work on the topic of 'spring' and the calendar. As the approach used in preschool is experiential and exploratory, the teachers encouraged the parents to continue the calendar and the daily weather observation at home. Here is what a teacher wrote to the parents:

“During this month we write in our calendar the day of the week, what day goes before (yesterday) and after (tomorrow) and the month. We also make notes on the season of the year in which we are. The month of March is changing and some days it seems like winter because it is cold, windy and even snowy and others it seems like spring with blue sky and sunshine. That is why every day of the past week we observed the sky, if it was visible, if there were clouds and what color they were, if the clouds moved or stayed still (wind) and we drew what we observed on a calendar sheet. We also measured the temperature with a thermometer and wrote it down on the calendar. Looking at this data, at the end of the month, we would like to do a statistic. It will be very easy for you to follow this at home. I have prepared a paper version for the children to complete each day. I have added the days of the week but not the date. Please help the children to add the date and then note the weather/temperature outside for that day”.

In connection to the same theme the teachers compiled a pack of activities with poems, stories, songs, arts and videos on spring and growing plants. One teacher told the parents:

“You can also plant seeds and observe the spring bulbs that are coming out or watch videos showing a bean sprouting or spinach growing”.

As mentioned earlier, parents were no teachers and needed specific guidance. One teacher provided the parents of her class with specific scaffolding questions:

“Give your child opportunities to observe and report what your child has seen. Preschool children can also give reasons for what they have seen. For example you can ask your child to describe: How does nature change? What has changed when I look out of the window or am on the playground? Take special care of the tulips with your child. Maybe you can buy a bunch of tulips. What does a tulip look like? Does it change in the vase? Pre-schoolers can paint a still life with crayons or watercolours: tulips in the vase”.

- **Music and creative arts**

Music and art played an important role in home learning. The music teacher created a digital space where she uploaded her self-created videos, sourced videos from you tube and a variety of resources. This helped develop the children’s awareness not only of music but also multilingual and multicultural awareness. There were songs in different languages or the same song sung in different languages such as the birthday song. There were also fairy tales in different languages such as “Peter and the wolf”.

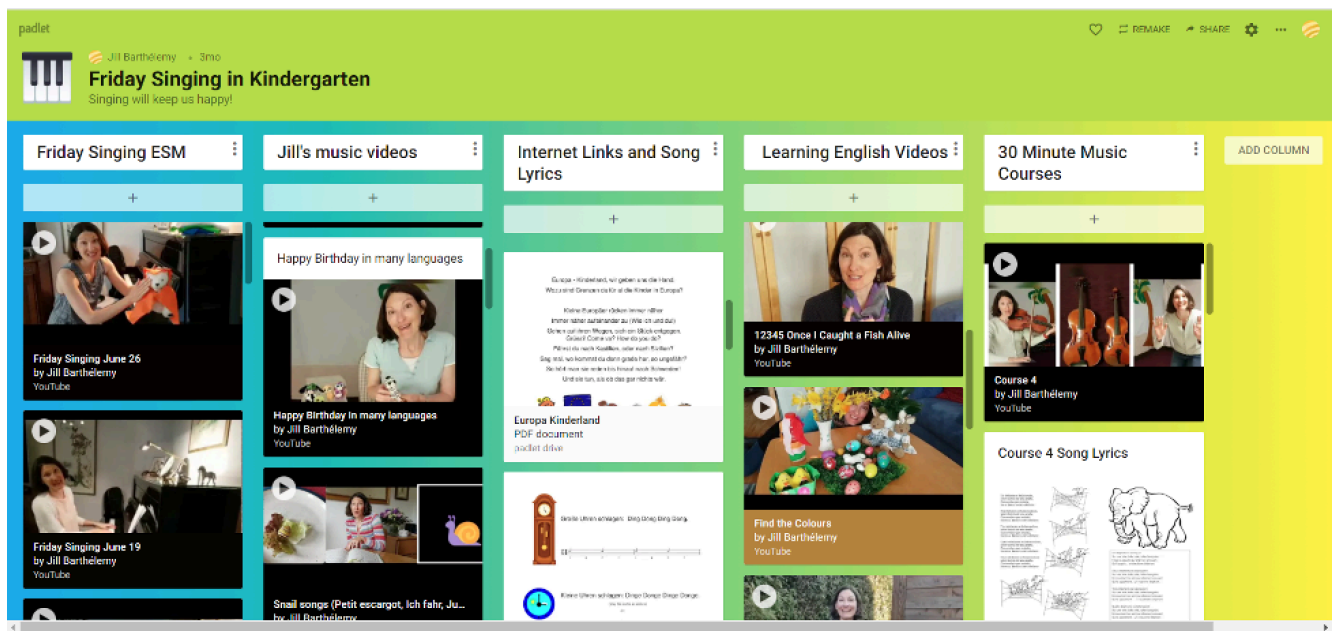


Figure 2: Music teacher’s channel for learning to sing online

In the creative arts, teachers used presentations to demonstrate to both parents and children how to use techniques, materials and resources to mix, shape, arrange and combine materials and to create

their own images and objects. Here are some screenshots from the sway clip presentations made by one teacher:

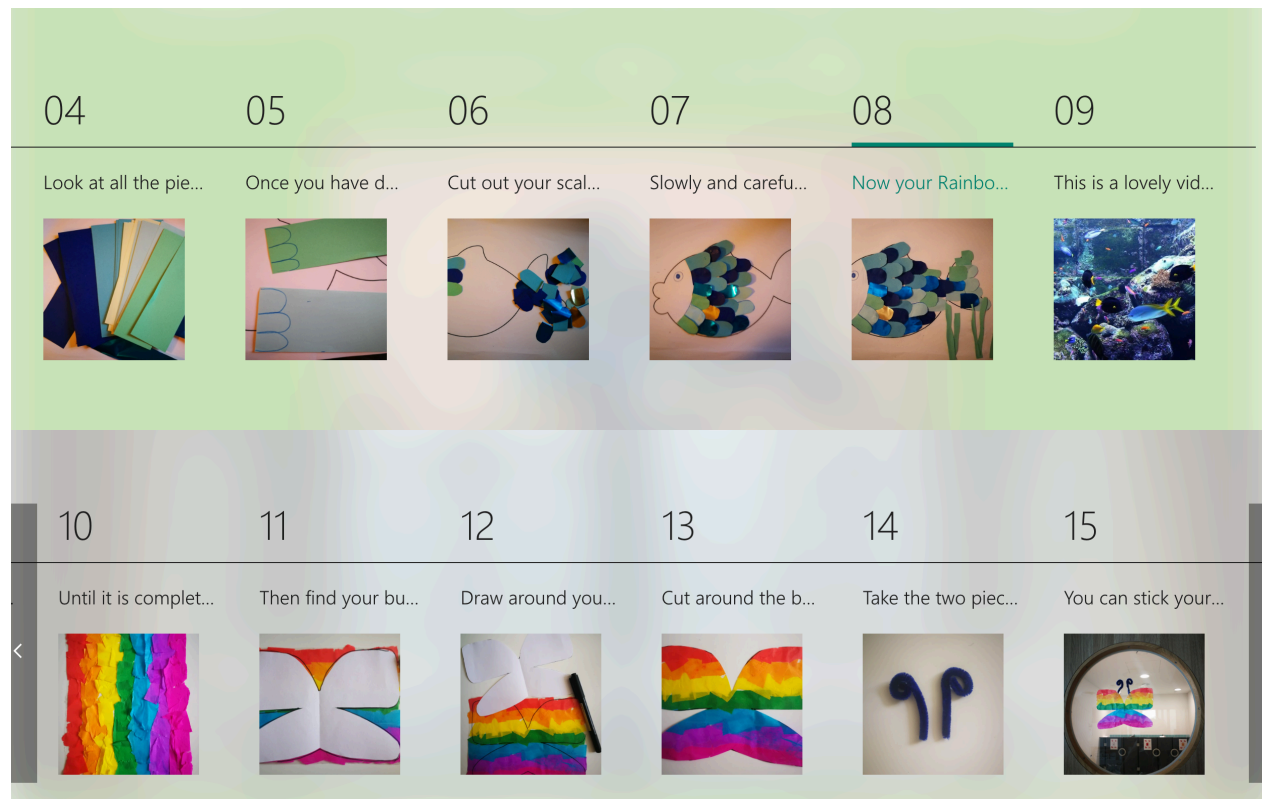


Figure 3: Screenshots from the teacher's presentations for doing art and craft

3. The challenges and opportunities of home learning in preschool education

A lot has been said and written during the COVID-19 pandemic about quality distance learning. The evidence from research in distance education indicates that it operates best as a system of dynamic, interrelated components, which may vary in terms of implementation by context (Holmberg, 2005; Picciano (2017). According to Picciano (2017) these components are:

- Content
- Collaboration
- Self-paced independent study
- Dialectic, questioning
- Evaluation, assessment
- Social, emotional
- Reflection

All the above elements have to function together for a distance learning programme to work. Many studies for online/distance education describe the importance of on-going and meaningful teacher presence and support for students, and corroborate that student participation is determined by the

teachers' presence, their interactions with the students and the quality of the videos presented in a course (Gregori et al, 2018). Although this evidence comes from tertiary education, it can apply with flexibility to primary and secondary school contexts as well. However, the situation varies significantly in the preschool cycle.

Each one of the abovementioned components can highlight a number of challenges in a range of key areas. With regard to the content (input, activities), each teacher provided clear learning objectives and created a clear framework for interaction with the materials. One of the challenges faced during home learning was that the children whose home language was not the language of their language section were not immersed enough in this language in their daily life and lacked in opportunities to develop and refine their communication skills. Therefore, it was important to provide linguistic and cultural experiences especially for the children whose home language was not the language spoken at school. Edelenbos et al (2006) stress the significance of these experiences for very young children and the role good teaching, a supportive environment and continuity plays for language acquisition (see also Alexiou, 2020). Using a variety of stories, rhymes and songs potentially benefitted these children. However, this assumption is for the most part speculative.

Collaboration with peers, team games, circle time, drama and role-play presented another significant challenge. Given the social nature of learning, community building is considered absolutely essential for children to thrive online (Tucker, 2020). Especially for the preschool children, creating a community through online meetings and maintaining personal teacher-pupil contact was a way to offer more than pedagogical support, to ensure social caring and address possible psychosocial challenges because of the isolation. However, these online interactions were not as frequent and regular as in situ teaching and learning, therefore one can hardly expect they could replace the physical presence of teachers and peers.

Teachers provided engaging learning objectives but in the case of the preschool it was not possible to provide independent learning that did not require a lot of support from adults. Teachers tried to create materials based on the specific needs of the children without overwhelming parents who had to cope simultaneously with home schooling and home office (the accumulated fatigue of the parents during the school closure is beyond the scope of this paper). The online interactions with the children and their parents were critical for providing social and emotional support. However, it was observed that it was often difficult to sustain and motivate pupil engagement. The teachers reported that the children could not stay focused for a long time and got tired as they waited for their turn. Literature reports that forced interaction or overuse of interaction in an online/distance format can be perceived negatively by students and therefore, interactive activities should be well integrated into the delivery of learning content (Simonson et al., 2011). The teachers clearly used these online interactions primarily to strengthen the children's social and emotional skills and less to provide educational support and monitor progress.

What is more, the teachers provided both online and offline learning activities in order to avoid excessive time in front of the screen. A lot has been written about the harm caused by spending a lot of time in front of the screen (Alexiou, 2015). Recently the debate is focused more on the quality of screen time rather than the quantity. According to Blum-Ross & Livingstone (2016) and Livingstone & Blum-Ross (2017), it is important to think what we are doing in an online environment, if the context is appropriate and if this online experience facilitates positive social connections. In our context, the challenge was to spend time in front of the screen that fulfilled the children's social and emotional needs and actively engaged them with the curriculum. Engaging in a twenty-minute conversation with

the teacher online or watching a story read aloud can be considered quality time, albeit not enough to replicate the classroom experience.

4. Concluding remarks

In this paper, I tried to describe the development of a distance learning strategy in a preschool setting during the first COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. This was a transformative process that enabled the preschool teachers of the European school Munich to develop a home learning programme based on the EEC methodology, with the view to encourage children in developing a love for learning, which is the core business of kindergarten (Alexiou, 2020). Teachers and parents developed synergies to engage children in learning experiences that expanded the opportunities for new learning and secured their social and emotional well-being.

The data in this paper comes from my active participation in the development of the distance learning strategy as director. This anecdotal experience presents a valuable roadmap for preschool teachers who actively participate in the design of activities and engagements that target the minds and the hearts of the children. It would be worth investigating the teachers' perspective as well as the perceptions and opinions of parents in order to draw solid conclusions about the practices that benefitted the children and reflect on what can be done to make the most of the situation in the future.

One thing is for sure, even when the time in front of the screen is quality time, it is hard to imagine preschool education from a distance. However, if need be, we can establish play- and inquiry-based learning from a distance, with the child at the heart of learning. Indeed no one can deny that there were positive results from this first home learning experience and some goals were accomplished. The children remained active learners, they bonded with their families, the parents became partners and supporters in extending learning at home, the relationships with teachers and peers were sustained. As one teacher put it,

“It was loads of work but it went very well. The children gained knowledge and motivation. Sometimes it was the children who sent ideas about what to do. It was an open approach, there was enthusiasm, creativity, tiredness but we made it and it went well, it was a different situation from what we knew ... I very much appreciated the online meetings, they were good for the soul of the children”.

Acknowledgments

My special thanks and acknowledgements go to the following teachers: Lisa Melessaccio, Kindergarten Coordinator in European School Munich; Jill Barthelemy, Iris Filus, Rosa Maria de Usera Rodriguez, Claire Bargna, Kindergarten Teachers in European School Munich; Georgia Gkolfinopoulou, Kindergarten Coordinator in European School Brussels 3; Helen-Yvonne Young, Kindergarten Teacher in European School Varese.

References

- Acquaro, P. (2020). Structuring and Scaffolding the Online Course. *International Journal of Online Graduate Education*, 3(1), 1–16.
- Alexiou, T. (2015). Vocabulary uptake from *Peppa Pig*: A case study of preschool EFL learners in Greece'. In: Gitsaki, C.& T. Alexiou, (Eds.), *Current issues in second/foreign language teaching and teacher education: Research and practice* (pp. 285–301). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Alexiou, T. (2020). Introducing EFL in preschools: Facts and Fictions. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing English Language Education*. Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications, p.61-74, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2020/AELE_Book_ALLT_ZU_Web_V02.pdf
- ARACY (2015a). Education capital: Progressing parental engagement. Retrieved from: http://www.det.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/686548/52741-DET-Parental-Engagement-A4-Booklet_FA3_ACC.pdf
- AIFS (2015). How does the home environment influence children's learning? Retrieved from: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2015/09/23/how-does-home-environment-influence-children-s-learning>
- Blum-Ross, A. & Livingstone, S. (2016). Families and screen time: Current advice and emerging research. *Media Policy Brief 17*. London: Media Policy Project, London School
- Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (2020). A virtual plenary session at the e-Learning and Innovative Pedagogies Conference. *CG Scholar*. https://cgscholar.com/community/community_profiles/new-learning/community_updates/118211
- Early Education Curriculum. Retrieved from: <https://www.eursec.eu/Syllabuses/2011-01-D-15-en-4.pdf>
- Edelenbos, P., Johnstone, R. & Kubanek, A. (2006). The Main Pedagogical Principles Underlying the Teaching of Languages to Very Young Learners. Final Report of the EAC 89/04, Lot 1 Study. Brussels: European Commission. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/young_en.pdf
- Gregori, E. B., Zhang, J., Galván-Fernández, C., & De Asís Fernández-Navarro, F. (2018). Learner support in MOOCs: Identifying variables linked to completion. *Computers & Education*, 122, 153–168.
- Helm, J. H. & Snider, K. A. (2020) *Growing child intellect: the Manifesto for engaged learning in the early years*. Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Holmberg, B. (2005). *Theory and practice of distance education*. London & New York: Routledge
- Honig, A. S.(2002). Everything you want to know about attachment. Paper presented at the 2002 National Association for the education of young children. (NEAYC) Annual conference NY, Nov. 20-23, 2002.
- Kerr, J. (1968). *The Tiger who came to tea*. Harpercollins Publishers.
- Livingstone, S., & Blum-Ross, A. (2017). Quality is key. Digital Parenting, 26. <https://parentzone.org.uk/system/files/attachments/Digital Parenting 6 NEW.pdf>
- Mehuto, E. (2004). *La casa de la mosca fosca*. Kalandraka.
- National Children's Bureau (2019). Home matters: making the most of the home learning environment. Guidance for schools, nurseries, local authorities and public health partners. Retrieved from: https://www.peeple.org.uk/sites/www.peeple.org.uk/files/HLE_mattersdoc_1.pdf
- Picciano, A. G. (2017). Theories and frameworks for online education: Seeking an integrated model. *Online Learning Journal*, 21(3), 166–190.
- Sluss, D. J. (2018) *Supporting play in early childhood: environment, curriculum, assessment*. Gengage.
- Smees, R. & Sammons, P. (2018). How Action for Children works: what role does the home learning environment play in supporting good child development in the early years and positive outcomes later in life?
<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/9370/hle-think-piece.pdf>

- Simonson, M., Schlosser, C., & Orellana, A. (2011). Distance education research: A review of the literature. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 23(2–3), 124–142.
- Tucker, C. (2020). Successfully taking offline classes online. *Educational Leadership (EL) special report*. ASCD.15.04.2020
- Wall, S., Litjens, I & Taguma, M. (2015). *Early childhood education and care pedagogy review: England*. Paris: OECD.

Alexia Giannakopoulou (giannaal@eursc.eu) holds a B.A. in English Language and Literature, two MA's, in TEFL and in Education Management, and a Ph.D in Language Pedagogy. She has worked as an EFL teacher in a variety of school settings in Greece and co-authored EFL coursebooks and teaching materials for both primary and secondary school. She was member of the scientific committee for the introduction of early foreign language learning and the new EFL curricula. She has taught courses at tertiary education for many years. She served as school advisor and teacher trainer for EFL teachers from 2013 to 2018 and since then she has been director of the nursery and primary cycle in the European School Munich.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 66-75

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Measuring receptive vocabulary at early ages: Introducing Pic-lex

Thomaï ALEXIOU

A series of recent research studies highlight the significance of vocabulary and suggest that vocabulary development is paramount in the successful development of a foreign/second language even by very young learners (Biemiller, 2003; Alexiou, Roghani & Milton, 2019). The number of words a learner knows is considered a decisive factor on the performance in all aspects of language (Webb & Nation, 2017). For this reason, modern curricula now seek to be more precise over the volumes of vocabulary that learners are expected to acquire at all levels. Therefore, measuring vocabulary size systematically is vital both in monolingual and multilingual settings while it can lead us to a much needed model of vocabulary acquisition at an early age. The particular paper presents an updated version of Pic-lex (Alexiou, 2020), an easy to administer, dyslexia-friendly, theoretically well-founded online testing tool, which is intended for very young learners up to primary age. This game-like test makes assessment of receptive vocabulary size from picture cues. The vocabulary word items are not randomly selected; words are based on updated frequency wordlists while the scores provide an estimate of receptive vocabulary knowledge that can be matched to CEFR levels.

Key words: vocabulary, assessment, young learners, preschoolers, frequency, vocabulary size, CEFR, Pre-A1

1. Introduction

The importance of vocabulary development and its influential ramifications in early language learning context, has provided the impetus for this paper which describes the development of an easy to administer, theoretically sound testing tool to quantify the vocabulary knowledge of very young learners.

Webb and Nation (2017, p. 19) argue that ‘developing lexical knowledge – that is, the number of different words that we know and how well we know these words – provides the necessary foundation for learning other aspects of language.’ An abundance of research evidence confirms that early vocabulary knowledge predicts later reading achievement (Sénéchal, Ouellette & Rodney, 2006) and is also related to future academic success (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Milton & Treffers-Daller, 2013). Teachers are now eagerly trying to develop lexis and vocabulary at an early age and they

are more concerned and selective regarding the kind and volume of vocabulary they introduce. This, in turn, makes evaluating and measuring vocabulary at the early stages both a vital and a challenging process.

2. Measuring vocabulary size

More than a hundred years of research in vocabulary size among native speakers of English has produced estimates that vary enormously. There is common belief that the vocabularies of English native speakers are particularly large and estimates of 200,000 words and more (e.g. Hartmann, 1946) are cited in support of this. A difficulty emerging from this is that it is not clear how so many words can be learned. More recent studies suggest word knowledge is smaller, perhaps fewer than 10,000 in some speakers. Milton (2009) suggests that UK undergraduates may have a defining vocabulary of about 9,000 words. This variation results from differences in the unit of count, a decision of exactly what to count as a single word, and the method of designing a test to understand how many words speakers know.

Early estimates of vocabulary size were based on spaced sampling from dictionaries and there were obvious problems with this. If the dictionary used was small, then the research produced a small estimate. If a larger dictionary was used with more words in it, then a larger estimate resulted. There were also less obvious problems with this method. A dictionary sampling method where, say, the first word on every tenth page was sampled for testing, resulted in an over-sampling of more frequent words; frequent words in English tend to be polysemous and have multiple entries in dictionaries. Over-sampling of frequent words leads to an over-estimation of the number of words known by speakers. Goulden et al (1990) have provided a solution to these difficulties by using frequency data. Their study used a test where, in effect, a principled sample of the most frequent 25,000 words in Thorndike & Lorge's (1944) lists was tested and they were able to demonstrate that word knowledge was almost entirely focused within these most frequent bands. Further testing beyond these bands did not contribute meaningfully to the size of the estimate. Subsequent vocabulary size tests tend to be based on corpus and frequency information rather than dictionaries and this has helped produce much more stable and understandable estimates of size. Milton & Treffers-Daller (2013) are also able to show that there is a pronounced frequency effect of acquiring a lexicon, where more frequent words tend to be learned in greater numbers than less frequent words producing a vocabulary profile (Meara, 1993). A frequency-based test, therefore, allows the research to investigate not just how many words are known, therefore, but also which words, and this can provide the basis of a theory of vocabulary acquisition.

Goulden et al (1990) also used a definition of word that more recent researchers espouse. Early researchers tended to treat every inflected and derived form of a word as a different word and counted these words separately. Thus, *manage, manages, managing, managed, manager, manageable mismanage and unmanageable*, are all counted as different words. It is now thought that the mental lexicon does not work this way and that learning a word involves learning a base form and a number of rules by which a word can be changed. Thus, a base form *cat* can be made plural by adding the plural *-s*, *cats*. This is a rule that applies to most nouns in English so learners do not have to acquire every plural form of every word separately, they can extrapolate (at least some of) its derivations from one instance of a word base form. With this idea in mind it makes sense to count word families, a base word and its derivations and inflections as a single unit, as words. Not surprisingly, this process results in much smaller estimates of an English speaker's vocabulary size and Goulden et al (1990) suggest that an educated native speaker might know about 17,000 word families rather than the hundreds of thousand that earlier research suggested.

While Goulden et al's word family unit of count is now widely used in research (e.g. Milton & Teffers-Daller, 2013) and in the creation of new tests for adults (e.g. Nation's Vocabulary Size Test, 2012), the use of such a broad definition of a word may not be applicable for all learners. In English many of the rules for morphemic derivation are both infrequent and inconsistent and even in native speakers it is suggested that these may not be fully acquired until adolescence (Milton, 2009). This suggests that these are features of a very well-developed lexicon that has taken many years to acquire. Very young native language learners, and L2 learners at low level, of course, do not have this quality of lexicon and a different unit of count is thought to be appropriate. In many L2 vocabulary size tests (e.g. Meara & Milton's X-Lex, 2003) the lemma is used; a lemma being a smaller word family grouping where only a base word and its most regular and frequent inflections are counted as a single word, and less frequent and regular morphemic derivations are excluded and counted individually as separate words. A lemma count, it is thought, provides the most reliable estimates of L2 learners vocabulary knowledge (Vermeer, 2004). Pienemann & Håkansson (1999) describe the lemma as the basis of all language learning and so, among very young learners it seems that a lemma may also be appropriate.

3. Vocabulary development in the early years

Where estimates of an adult's vocabulary size can vary so much, it is not surprising if estimates of vocabulary uptake among young learners can also vary hugely. Diller (1978) suggests that secondary school children learn 20,000 words a year. Miller and Gildea (1987) suggest 5,000 words per year for school learners. A particularly frequently cited figure (e.g. Graves, 2006; Nagy, 1988; Marzano, 2004) is 3,000 words per year and this seems to be uncritically taken from a single study by Nagy and Herman (1984). Drawing on Golden et al's estimate of adult vocabulary size, Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) estimate that 1000 words per year are acquired through childhood. This is a figure that is supported but more recent research such as that of Biemiller and Boote (2006) suggest that typically developing children have acquired 6,000 root word meanings by the end of grade two, although there is a great deal of variation: children in the lowest quartile have no more than 4,000 root words and those in the highest quartile know 8,000 root words. Still other research has produced slightly smaller estimates and some of the more recent studies, using frequency based tests and the lemma as a unit of measurement, result in a figure of lexical growth of about 600 words per year during childhood (e.g. Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Anglin, 1993; Coxhead, Nation & Sim, 2015; Milton & ALSager, 2017).

Recalculated as uptake of words acquired per day, these numbers vary from children acquiring about 55 new words a day in Diller's estimate, down to about 2 words per day among the smallest estimates. This diversity may emerge because the smallest estimates are probably the most insightful, realistic and reliable. The tests on which these smaller estimates are based seem better constructed and the estimates allow the learning process to be understood. It is not clear how as many as 55 new words a day could be encountered, with sufficiently rich context to provide cues to use them, an input required everyday for some 20 years to reach totals of over 200,000 words. It is this sort of figure, which gives rise to the idea that words are learned incidentally and without real effort on the part of the learner. A particular feature of ideas surrounding the incidental learning hypothesis is that much of this comes from reading (e.g. Krashen, 1989). But this idea presents a particular challenge in explaining uptake among very young learners who are not literate and cannot possibly be learning from written input and uptake of words. In so far as it can be measured, it appears to be fairly consistent both before and after the acquisition of literacy. This gives rise to a real challenge with the larger estimates in order to explain progress that is so fast that direct instruction of vocabulary cannot possibly account for the vast growth (Coady & Huckin, 1997). By contrast, it can be argued that the learning of about two words per day allows word learning to be explained in terms of explicit learning. The cognitive load (Schütze, 2017) involved in acquiring two

words a day in a first language is believable and realistic, but learning over 50 per day is probably not. This type of consideration can be argued to fit with research by Beck and McKeown (2001) who attempted to investigate the vocabulary input in school among young learners in an attempt to explain Nagy and Hermann's figure of 3,000 words per day and concluded that the acquisition of only about 300 of these 3,000 words could be explained by explicit instruction at school (cited in Duke & Carlisle, 2011). If vocabulary learning in young native speakers is occurring at a rate of about two words a day or 600 words per year, then it becomes possible in principle to make up any deficiencies which exist in some learners through explicit instruction.

It is thought that strangely enough, there is 'a paucity of intentional, rich, explicit vocabulary instruction in primary grade curricular materials or classrooms' (Beck, McCaslin, & McKeown, 1980; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000 all cited in Dwyer, 2010, p.3). However, as Graves (2006) notes, there have been a number of attempts to bolster the vocabulary knowledge of lexically disadvantaged children, for example, Dialogic Reading (Whitehurst et al, 1988), Text Talk (Beck & McKeown, 2001), Direct and Systematic Instruction (Biemiller, 2003), and Anchored Instruction (Juel & Deffes, 2004). The details of how the words these materials contain are selected, and how many words there are, is not clear from the literature. Nor is it clear just how successful these interventions are either in bolstering vocabulary knowledge or in alleviating the education deficiency which, it is thought, vocabulary shortcomings create. Coxhead, Nation and Sim (2015) note that vocabulary uptake among schoolchildren in New Zealand was better explained by time than by input. Thus, children with birthdays around the August and September academic calendar divide, tended to have similar vocabulary sizes even if they were in different classes and had significantly different volumes of formal input as a consequence. It is not that input is unimportant in this interpretation (provided of course that sufficient input is provided), rather that the cognitive load of acquiring new concepts and labelling them is sufficiently great that actually increased input alone cannot easily increase the rate of acquisition.

Despite this observation, the role of vocabulary rich input to promote language and educational development in very young learners is still considered important. When it comes to teaching very young learners, the most common teaching frameworks include:

- Stories and fairy tales
- Hand puppet games
- Songs, rhymes and chants
- Total Physical Response (TPR) activities
- Arts, Crafts & Drama
- Games
- Topic or Theme based Projects
- Technology/multimedia

Because very young learners have limited attention span, they are not very disciplined in learning in traditional settings. That is why any form of implicit, playful, alternative and unconventional teaching is encouraged at this early stage. All kinds of visual stimuli are useful since they provide an aid to memory development and recall (Alexiou, 2009). Preschool TV series, for example, intended for L1 children have huge potential for L2 learners at this age. Recent research has indicated that popular cartoons such as *Peppa Pig* (Alexiou, 2015; Alexiou & Kokla, 2018), *Charlie & Lola* (Alexiou & Yfouli, 2019), *Cailou* (Alexiou, Zapounidis & Kostopoulou, 2015) or playful educational URL sites and games like *Wii-fit* (Alexiou & Chondrogianni, 2017) can serve as rich input for effective and memorable vocabulary learning. In addition, when teaching lexis, context is essential. Lewis (2002) argues that lexical phrases and chunks are easier to learn because it is easier to deconstruct a chunk than to construct it and these playful settings provide ample context and not just isolated word

items. This idea needs to be more considered in the development of very young learners' lexis.

While good practice in teaching and promoting lexical learning is clear, it is not so clear why learners vary in terms of the words they can take from this kind of input, although this variety is at the heart of Word Gap ideas, not how they vary. It is not only a question of how many words makes the difference between a successful educational performer and an unsuccessful one, but also *which* words are making the difference. There is some evidence from L2 acquisition that young L2 learners of English may vary in their learning aptitudes and the type of words that they acquire (Meara, Milton & Lorenzo-Dus, 2003). Some learners, they tentatively suggest, may acquire structure and frequent vocabulary early, while others acquire the more concrete and lexical vocabulary more easily. We lack the type of vocabulary tests with the sensitivity and structure to address this kind of question in very young native language learners. However, there are language learning aptitude tests designed for very young learners (e.g. see YLAT in Alexiou, 2005), which can test learners' memory and analytic abilities.

There are some measures of receptive vocabulary size of children (for a review see Alexiou & Milton, 2020) but there are still issues that make them either insufficient or impractical. An improved vocabulary testing procedure would greatly enhance our capacity to understand how much variation there is in language knowledge and whether such differences are qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. Towards this effort, Pic-lex (Alexiou, 2020) was designed.

4. The what and the how of the revised Pic lex

The first pilot version Pic-lex (Alexiou, 2019) was designed with very young learners' in mind who are pre-literate. It measures receptive knowledge of English vocabulary from the first five 1000-word frequency bands so that a vocabulary size is calculated. It is a child friendly picture-based online vocabulary test and lasts for about 10-15 minutes. The process is easy and the instructions are straightforward. Right after the child (in cooperation with a teacher or parent) fills in the participant's profile on the screen, the child listens to a word, sees 4 pictures on a screen and then clicks the one he/she feels is the right one depicting what s/he heard. It is not cognitively demanding and on purpose, the words selected are nouns since these are the ones that they are exposed to and because this would make the test fair and easy (Alexiou & Milton, 2020). The thematic areas the words are taken from are child relevant and concrete in line with children's developmental characteristics (Alexiou & Konstantakis, 2009; Alexiou, Roghani & Milton, 2019). The vocabulary is not randomly selected but drawn from Kilgariff's recent frequency word list (2016). This wordlist is a selection from the 5,000 most frequent words and the total word items are 100. The duration is 10-15 minutes, which adds to the practicality of the particular measurement tool (see sample in Figure 1 below).

The test in its first form showed some positive elements. In terms of reliability, preliminary studies in 2019 were very promising showing reliability up to .964. ($\alpha = .964$). Regarding validity, frequency profiles were generated and Friedman test showed that the effect is general so content validity was also found. The test has demonstrated good concurrent content validity as it produced scores which correlate with other tests of the same quality. More specifically, it has been found to correlate with and X-Lex (.714**) and Aural-Lex (.414**) (Meara & Milton, 2003). These tools assess knowledge of the most frequently occurring 5,000 words in English and therefore estimate overall knowledge of this vocabulary. Moreover, it appears to produce equivalent scores compared with other tests of the same measure as it highly correlates with the British Picture Vocabulary Test (Nation & Anthony, 2016) (see Mills & Milton, this volume).



Figure 1: Screenshot from the pilot version

In 2019, the receptive vocabulary size of 165 Greek learners aged 6-9 years old was measured using X-Lex and Piclex (Rodousaki & Alexiou, forthcoming). In this test once again, Pic-Lex correlated significantly with the English X-Lex (0.662**). Interestingly enough, when we run a Greek X-Lex to the same group of learners, there was a high correlation between Greek X-Lex and Pic-lex (ibid); therefore signifying that L1 vocabulary is indicative if not predictive to an extent of the success in vocabulary in other languages as well.

Based on the preliminary studies, it was possible to suggest how the scores of Pic-lex are calibrated to the CEFR levels (see Table 1). This is particularly important as the test seems to distinguish learners at the Pre-A1 level and since this is new level introduced especially for these very young ages, it could be useful to be able to establish this threshold (Alexiou & Stathopoulou, this volume). Teachers can then decide which words they can expose learners to and they would be able to select and adapt educational materials based on these guidelines.

CEFR level	Approximate Pic-lex score range
Pre-A1	Less than 70
A1	70-85
A2	85-95
B1	95+

Table 1 Pilot Pic-lex test scores and suggested CEFR levels
(taken from Milton & Alexiou, 2020, p.24)

The new version is an enhanced development of the pilot version and the added elements make it even more appropriate and user-friendly to the target group. It is done in a game-like form where a monkey goes through different levels and works like the mascot of this test. The words can also be

read on the screen for the older children and they are in yellow background and dyslexia-friendly fonts, making it all the more appropriate for children who may face dyslexia.



Figure 2: The new updated version of Pic-lex

In addition to the test of 5000 words where a ceiling effect was noticed, a more advanced version of 10000 words was added in order to gain understanding of the model of vocabulary learning at school ages and stretch the differences in levels and cover more CEFR levels if delivered to primary learners who at the end of primary school may reach higher than pre-A1 or just A2. There is evidence that suggests some learners reach up to B1 or even B2 level so this graded test can do the job of discriminating between levels, offering an opportunity to sketch a model of vocabulary learning and a learners' profile. Furthermore, in this renewed test, the pictures in Pic-Lex are not repeated or used more than once throughout the test.

What is more, in this revised version, the same two set of tests (one of the first 5k and the other of the 10k) were created in Greek to check native learners' level of vocabulary from preschool to the end of primary school and also to check CEFR levels in young learners who learn Greek as a second or foreign language. For example, this test can be useful to young learners whose second language is Greek and live abroad with Greek parents while it can also serve as a tool for multilingual contexts and/or refugee educational contexts.

5. Concluding remarks

The process of measuring vocabulary knowledge among very young learners is delicate and for this reason several factors need to be taken into consideration. We need to guard young learners' confidence, foster their positive attitude towards languages and at the same time provide valid and reliable game-like tools to facilitate and enhance language development.

Assessment tools like Pic-lex (Alexiou, 2020) intended for very young learners up to primary school age could be used to assess receptive vocabulary size from picture cues in L1, L2, L3 or multiple other languages. The next stage which is currently underway, is to use and standardize them in both languages in order to investigate their potential to be mapped to CEFR levels. A vocabulary size metric can offer much to a more principled and systematic way of assessment and can impact their future educational attainment (Milton & Alexiou, 2009). It is true that the inclusion of more parts of

speech (not just nouns) may improve the item and sampling validity and it will certainly affect the frequency results but that would be useful only if we are to distinguish between the whole range of CEFR (Pre-A1 to C2); this is part of a future project. In any case, other tests which also tend from their construction to avoid items other than nouns, e.g. Roghani's category size tests (2017) suggest that the assessment of just nouns does not affect the size of the estimate.

And although the entirety of a child's vocabulary knowledge in any language can not be either measured or assessed, productive vocabulary size tests could also prove to be very useful in giving an estimate of ability in production even at an early age and could be the next route to take in future studies.

References

- Alexiou, T. (2019; 2020). *Pic-lex: Picture Vocabulary size test*. <http://gp.enl.auth.gr/piclex/>
- Alexiou, T. (2005). *Cognitive development, aptitude and language learning in Greek young learners*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Swansea.
- Alexiou, T. (2015). Vocabulary uptake from Peppa pig: A case study of preschool EFL learners in Greece. In C. Gitsaki and T. Alexiou (eds) *Current Issues in Second/ Foreign Language Teaching and Teacher Development: Research and Practice* (pp.285–301). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Alexiou, T. (2009) Young learners' cognitive skills and their role in foreign language vocabulary learning. In M. Nikolov (ed.) *Early Learning of Modern Foreign Languages: Processes and Outcomes* (pp. 46–61). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Alexiou, T. & Chondrogianni, M. (2017). Bringing innovation to the primary EFL classroom: Total Physical Response with Twister and Wii-fit. In Tsihouridis, Ch. et al (eds) *Conference Proceedings from the 3rd International Conference for the Promotion of Educational Innovation*, (pp.425-432), Larisa, University of Thessaly.
- Alexiou, T. & Kokla, N. (2018). Cartoons that make a difference: A Linguistic Analysis of Peppa Pig. *Journal of Linguistics and Education Research*, 1(1), pp.24-30, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/jler.v1i1.314>
- Alexiou, T. & Konstantakis, N. (2009). Lexis for young learners: Are we heading for frequency or just common sense?. In A. Tsangalidis (Ed.) *Selection of papers for the 18th Symposium of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics* (pp.59-66). Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- Alexiou, T. & Milton, J. (2020) Pic-Lex: A new tool of measuring receptive vocabulary for very young learners. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing ELT Education* (pp.103-113). Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2020/AELE_Book_ALLT_Z_U_Web_V02.pdf
- Alexiou, T. & Yfouli, D. (2019). Charlie & Lola: An innovative way of promoting young learners' EFL lexical development. In Tsihouridis et al (eds). *Conference Proceedings from the 4th International Conference for the Promotion of Educational Innovation*, pp. 323-330, Larisa, University of Thessaly, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1g0D0pzz4vadC8w3eM8m-eM5P8nfi84y>
- Alexiou, T., Roghani, S. & Milton, J. (2019). Assessing the Vocabulary Knowledge of Preschool Language Learners. In Prosic-Sandovac, D. and Rixon, S. *Integrating Assessment into Early Language Learning and Teaching Practice*, (pp.207-224) Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Alexiou, T., Zapounidis, T. & Kostopoulou, I. (2015). *In quest of the magic element in preschoolers' vocabulary reception* (poster presentation). International research conference: Issues of

- Multilingualism in Early Childhood Education: Zero to Six, Roma Tre University, 26 -27 November, Rome, Italy.
- Anglin, J.M. (1993). Vocabulary development: A morphological analysis. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 58(10), Serial No. 238.
- Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G., (2001). Text Talk: Capturing the benefits of read-aloud experiences for young children. *The Reading Teacher*, 55(1), 10-20.
- Biemiller, A. & Boote, C. (2006). An effective method for building vocabulary in Biemiller, A. & Slonim, N. (2001). Estimating root word vocabulary growth in normative and advantaged populations: Evidence for a common sequence of vocabulary acquisition. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93,498-520.
- Biemiller, A. & Slonim, N. (2001). Estimating root word vocabulary growth in normative and advantaged populations: Evidence for a common sequence of vocabulary acquisition. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93,498-520.
- Biemiller, A. (2003). Vocabulary: needed if more children are to read well. *Reading Psychology*, 24, 323.
- Coady, J & Huckin, T. (1997). *Second language vocabulary acquisition*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Coxhead A, Nation P. & Sim D. (2015) Measuring the Vocabulary Size of Native Speakers of English in New Zealand Secondary Schools. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*. 50, 121-135.
- Diller, K. C. (1978). *The Language Teaching Controversy*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House
- Duke, N. & Carlisle, J. F. (2011). The development of comprehension. In Kamil, M.L., Pearson, P.D, Afflerbach, P.A. & Moje, E.B. (eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research*, Vol. 4, 199-228. New York: Routledge.
- Dwyer, J.C. (2010). *Investigating the efficacy of a preschool vocabulary intervention designed to increase vocabulary size and conceptual knowledge*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan. Retrieved from https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/77705/dwyerj_1.pdf?sequence=1
- Goulden, R., Nation, P. & Read, J. (1990). How large can a receptive vocabulary be? *Applied Linguistics*, 11 (4), 341-363.
- Graves, M. F. (2006). *The Vocabulary Book*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hartmann, G.W. (1946). Further Evidence on the Unexpected Large Size of Recognition Vocabulary among College Students. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 37, 436-439.
- Juel, C., & Deffes, R. (2004). Making words stick. *Educational Leadership*, 61(6), 30-34.
- Kilgarriff, A. (2016) *BNC frequency lists*. <http://kilgarriff.co.uk/> (accessed 29 November 2016).
- Krashen, S. D. (1989). We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the Input Hypothesis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73, 440-464.
- Lewis, M. (2002). *The Lexical Approach: The State of ELT and a way Forward*. London: Heinle, a part of the Thomson Corporation.
- Marzano, R.J. (2004). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research on what works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Meara, P. & Milton, J. (2003). *X-lex: the Swansea levels test*. Newbury. UK: Express Publishing.
- Meara, P. (1993). Tintin and the World Service. *IATEFL 1993 Annual Conference Report*, 32-37.
- Meara, P., Milton, J. & Lorenzo-Dus, N. (2003) *Language Aptitude Tests*. Express (LAT) v.2.0; Swansea, UK: Lognostics.
- Miller, G. A. & Gildea, P.M. (1987). How children learn words. *Scientific American*, 257 (3), 94-99.
- Milton, J. (2009). *Measuring Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Milton, J. & Alexiou, T. (2009) Vocabulary size and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In B. Richards, H. Daller, D.D.Malvern, P. Meara, J. Milton, J., & J. Treffers-Daller (Eds.) *Vocabulary studies in first and second language acquisition: The Interface Between Theory and Application* (pp.194-211). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Milton, J. & Alexiou, T. (2020). Vocabulary Size Assessment: Assessing the vocabulary needs of learners in relation to their CEFR goals. In M. Dodigovic, M. P. Agustín-Llach (eds.), *Vocabulary in*

- Curriculum Planning*, Palgrave MacMillan: Switzerland, pp.9-27, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48663-1_2
- Milton, J. & Alsager, R. (2017). Measuring Communicative Academic Performance. In L. Torres-Zúñiga and T. H. Schmidt (Eds.) *New Methodological Approaches to Foreign Language Teaching*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge scholars Publishing, 83-100.
- Milton, J. & Treffers-Daller, J. (2013). Vocabulary size revisited; native speakers' vocabularies and the link with academic achievement. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 4(1), 151-172.
- Nagy, W. E. & Herman, P. (1984). Limitations of vocabulary instruction. (Tech. Rep. No. 326). Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Center for the Study of Reading.
- Nagy, W. E. (1988). Teaching vocabulary to improve reading comprehension. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Nation, P., & Anthony, L. (2016). Measuring vocabulary size. *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, 3, 355-368.
- Pienemann, M. & Håkansson, G. (1999). A unified approach towards the development of Swedish as L2: A processability account. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21, 383-420.
- Roghani, S. (2017). *Investigating the Use of Category Generation Tasks in Estimating Productive Vocabulary Size in a Foreign Language*. PhD thesis, Swansea University.
- Schmitt, N. & McCarthy, M. (eds.) (1997). *Vocabulary: description, acquisition and pedagogy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schütze, U. (2017). Efficiency in Second Language Vocabulary Learning. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*, 50(1), 22-31, <https://doi.org/10.1111/tger.12019>
- Sénéchal, M., Ouellette, G., & Rodney, D. (2006). The misunderstood giant: On the predictive role of early vocabulary to future reading. In D. K. Dickinson & S. B. Neuman (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (Vol. 2, pp. 173-182). New York: Guilford Press.
- Thorndike, E. L. & Lorge, I. (1944). *The teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words*. Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.
- Vermeer, A. (2004). The relation between lexical richness and vocabulary size in Dutch L1 and L2 children. In P. Bogaards and B. Laufer (Eds.), *Vocabulary in a Second Language* (pp.173-189). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Webb, S. & Nation P. (2017). *How Vocabulary is Learned*. Oxford: OUP.
- Whitehurst, G.L, Falco, F. Lonigan, C.J, Fischel, J.E., DeBaryshe, B.D. Valdez-Menchaca, M.C. & Caulfield, M. (1988). Accelerating language development through picture-book reading. *Developmental Psychology*, 24, 552-558.
-

Thomai Alexiou (thalexiou@enl.auth.gr) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Her expertise is in early foreign language learning, SLA pedagogy and material development for young learners. She has been invited as a speaker and trainer in Greece, Europe, Australia, Russia and the UAE. She has also authored textbooks for children learning English as a foreign language. She has developed Y-LAT (Alexiou, 2005) which tests cognitive skills and language aptitude in young learners and Pic-lex (Alexiou, 2020), a receptive size vocabulary test for very young learners.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 76-92

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

***Peppa Pig*: An innovative way to promote formulaic language in pre-primary EFL classrooms**

Natassa KOKLA

The present paper presents a study examining the effect of the preschool cartoon series *Peppa Pig* on EFL formulaic language acquisition. To this end, 55 Greek preschoolers from a private school in Athens were tested to measure the lexical chunks they have acquired. The children were divided into different groups: the control groups simply watched a set of episodes of *Peppa Pig* in English and then were tested, while the experimental groups watched the same set of episodes of the programme, received instruction, and then were tested. Results showed that preschoolers can benefit considerably from merely watching *Peppa Pig* episodes and that reinforcing it with instruction can lead to significant formulaic gains.

Key words: cartoons, preschoolers, formulaic language, incidental learning, explicit teaching

1. Background

Very young children are a very different group of learners not only because of their age and their lack of knowledge and experiences, but also because of their unique traits and needs. They are enthusiastic learners who need rich language experiences to learn a new language (Cameron, 2001). Also, young learners “appear to absorb knowledge like sponges” (Alexiou, 2015, p. 285) but have very short attention spans. That is why they need to deal with a variety of activities and they desire lively, humorous and enthusiastic teachers (Brown, 1994; Reilly & Ward, 1997). Research over the last decades has shown that starting a language young can have great benefits in later development and can lead to successful language users (Nikolov, 2009). That is the reason why most European countries today introduce foreign languages to much younger age groups compared to a decade ago. The Eurydice Report (2017) shows that in 2014, EU students of primary education who studied at least one foreign language were increased by 16.5% compared to 2005. More significantly, the report states that the

starting age of the first foreign language ranges from 6 and 8 years old, with some EU countries introducing reforms to lower the starting age. Consequently, early language learning is one of the most popular fields of language learning today and is in great need of thorough research.

1.1 Early Language Learning

There are great benefits involved in early language learning (for a review on benefits see Alexiou, 2020). Age-related L2 research of the last decades has concluded that early starters, provided they get rich input and a lot of interaction in English, can achieve native-like fluency, specifically native-like accent (Gordon, 2007; Pinter, 2011; Cameron, 2001). Furthermore, early language learning gives young children the opportunity to develop a positive attitude towards other languages and cultures. It motivates language learning and aids them in becoming proficient language users when they reach adulthood (Nikolov, 2009; Edelenbos & Kubanek, 2009).

Teaching very young children is nonetheless really challenging since they have not fully developed cognitively (see also Alexiou, this volume), so, our pedagogical and psychological approach needs to be totally different than that of older learners (Prosic-Santovac, 2017). Very young children have very short attention spans. That is why they get bored very easily and may misbehave, especially if a task seems useless or difficult to them or if it does not appeal to their immediate interest (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990; Brown, 1994; Cameron, 2001; Alexiou, 2015; Alexiou, Roghani, & Milton, 2019). That is why they need changes in tasks every five to ten minutes and a variety of activities (Brown, 1994; Reilly & Ward, 1997) and they desire lively, playful and unconventional teaching approaches (Alexiou, 2015; Prosic-Santovac, 2017). Also, very young children “need to have all five senses stimulated” (Brown, 1994, p. 92) and need to be instructed and assessed in concrete lexical items through realia and objects (Alexiou, Roghani, & Milton, 2019).

Concrete vocabulary and rich input are vital for preschool learners who possess an extraordinary talent of acquiring new vocabulary (Gathercole et al., 1992). Vocabulary after all is “a central element of language, and it is likely to be a focus of effective foreign language teaching from the earliest years” (Alexiou, Roghani, & Milton, 2019, p. 207). Thus, it is an undisputed fact that vocabulary is a key element in language learning and especially during this early period. That is why the focus of early language learning has shifted to it and all FL stakeholders try to discover the most effective way to teach and assess vocabulary knowledge.

Recent studies indicate that young children can learn new words after being exposed to them only once (Tiefenthal, 2008 cited in Alexiou, Roghani, & Milton, 2019) and that exposure to authentic language can lead to incidental vocabulary acquisition (Alexiou & Yfouli, 2019). Very young learners are usually taught an amplitude of nouns since they are concrete and can be easily depicted and translated (Kersten, 2015). Although this aids language acquisition, young learners are incapable of using these nouns in meaningful contexts. Children’s exposure to fixed phrases or lexical chunks (Hunston et al., 1997; Willis, 2003) can be the solution to this problem. It can give young learners “the opportunity to develop more abstract notions of language” (Kersten, 2015, p. 137).

It is generally agreed that young children store language in fixed phrases or lexical chunks (Hunston et al., 1997; Willis, 2003). This so-called prefabricated language is widely used in early language learning in both L1 and L2 (Fillmore, 1976; Peters, 1983; Lieven et al., 1992; Wray, 2000; Perera, 2001) even before they reach the final stages of cognitive development (Wray, 2002). Formulaic language is found in the

input young learners receive every day; songs, rhymes, classroom language or their carer's speech, they all contain formulae (Cameron, 2001; Bannard & Lieven, 2009). So, the early language produced by very young children contains a variety of fixed expressions (Wray, 2002) -a fact that helps them become more fluent (Kersten, 2015) and helps them sound natural (Milton & Alexiou, 2012). Nonetheless, there is limited use of formulaic language in some children, whereas there is an amplitude of formulae in the speech of others. According to Wray (2002, p. 117), "it seems that the child's understanding of what language is for, can play a role in determining the approach that is taken to learning". Expressive language tends to be stored as a whole while referential language is usually broken down into individual words (ibid). This combination of fixed phrases and single lexical items seems to be the recipe for successful language learners (Kersten, 2015).

The hot question then, after considering all the aforementioned points, is how we can successfully teach vocabulary, or more specifically lexical chunks, to so young children. A very popular vocabulary teaching approach for early language learning is the story-based framework that can aid the introduction of lexical chunks and the children's cognitive, linguistic and emotional development (ibid). Other widely used techniques for vocabulary teaching are: songs, rhymes, riddles, total physical response activities, arts and crafts, drama, projects and games (Alexiou, 2015). A useful teaching tool, which has recently emerged, is children's TV programmes. They can be particularly successful in vocabulary teaching because they help young learners link a word to a picture very easily since they provide them with rich visual stimuli (Alexiou, 2015). Also, children's TV programmes excite young children with the use of pictures, music and movement (Cremin, 2009) and constitute rich input for successful vocabulary learning which can be retained (Alexiou & Vitoulis, 2014).

1.2 TV Viewing & Vocabulary Uptake

Television has been part of our everyday life for many decades but at first it was regarded only as a source of entertainment and information and not as a source of language learning (Rice & Woodsmall, 1988). Initially, research focused on educational cartoons in relation to first language learning and only in the last decade has research begun to examine early foreign language learning via TV cartoon programmes.

Arikan & Taraf (2010) examined if fourth graders can acquire grammar and vocabulary by watching the cartoon TV series, *The Simpsons*. The researchers found that the experimental group, which simply watched the TV series, outperformed the control group that followed a traditional grammar-based syllabus. Alexiou (2015) examined the vocabulary gained by preschoolers (4, 5 and 6-year-olds) through simply watching *Peppa Pig*. The results showed that the learners were able to learn a third of all the vocabulary they were exposed to without receiving any instruction. It was also found that participants used cognates and were in favour of concrete words that could easily be translated in their mother tongue. The surprising finding in this study was that 4-year-olds scored better than 5-year-olds. In another study, Prosic-Santovac (2017) concluded that watching the *Peppa Pig* series combined with the use of branded toys and products related to the show resulted positively in vocabulary and grammar development and enhanced the pronunciation and the fluency of the 4-year-old participating in this case study.

Scheffler (2015) also investigated the effect of three British children's animation series (*Peppa Pig*, *Humf*, and *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom*) on his 21 months-of-age twins' EFL vocabulary development.

Through observation, the researcher concluded that the toddlers could use an amplitude of words and memorized lexical chunks to talk about their daily life and their habits. In a study about the infant-directed television programme *Dora the Explorer*, the receptive and productive vocabulary gain of preschool learners (4-year-olds and 5-year-olds) was investigated and its retention as well (Kokla, 2016). The results showed that more than half of the words tested were learnt receptively and that receptive vocabulary gains were greater than productive ones. Also, older learners were found to outpace younger ones in receptive vocabulary and in its retention but not in production. There were similar results in productive tests in both groups.

Furthermore, Mitroudi (2019) investigated second-graders (7-8 years old) who were exposed to the cartoon series *Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom* without any explicit instruction. Observations determined that learners acquired numerous words and lexical chunks, which they started using spontaneously, and that girls outperformed boys in vocabulary uptake. Moreover, receptive and productive lexical knowledge of children who watched the cartoon TV series *Charlie & Lola* was the focus of the study by Alexiou and Yfouli (2019). They concluded that children acquired many of the lexical items and chunks receptively and could produce some of them. Younger learners outperformed older ones in this study.

Lastly, Alexiou and Kokla (2018) provided a thorough linguistic analysis of *Peppa Pig* which proved that there is a combination of frequent and infrequent vocabulary in the show including both the beginners' level vocabulary and the more infrequent language which is used in everyday life or is part of young children's world. Also, the researchers found that this cartoon contains both simple and situation-related lexical chunks that are frequently repeated throughout and across episodes. *Peppa Pig* though is not only a useful linguistic tool. It has been proved to promote multilingualism and positive pro-social behaviour and support gender equality by assigning a different role of women in society (Alexiou & Kokla, 2019).

1.3 The Preschoolers' TV Programme Peppa Pig

Peppa Pig is a British animated programme addressed to preschool native speakers of English. It is aired in 180 countries (Vaidyanathan, 2010) and has received many awards. The show has five-minute-long episodes which is ideal for young children who have short attention spans. The heroine of the show is a 5-year-old female pig (Peppa) whom we see with her family and friends in their everyday life, dealing with real-life problems. "Peppa's world reflects very closely the reality of a small child" (Scheffler, 2015, p. 15) which is why children can relate to it and can easily associate new words to their everyday experience. The rare feature of *Peppa Pig* is that its lead character is a female but does not adopt the stereotypical role of women (Prosic-Santovac, 2017). On the contrary it supports equality between men and women and presents a different role of women in society (Alexiou & Kokla, 2019).

What makes *Peppa Pig* a unique teaching tool for preschoolers is that it contains natural, authentic, easily-accessible English vocabulary (Alexiou, Roghani, & Milton, 2019). Quite interestingly, it "provides exposure to formulaic language and Situation-Bound Utterances, and indirectly teaches pragmatic conventions" (Nightingale, 2014, p. 209). But most importantly, the show is structured in a way that leads to language development in child-directed speech: "short length of utterance, repetition, language tied to immediate, concrete referents" (Prosic-Santovac, 2017, p. 571).

2. The Study

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether *Peppa Pig* can successfully teach formulaic language to preschool children. In particular, it examines whether formulaic language can be acquired simply by watching *Peppa Pig* and whether its acquisition is reinforced through explicit teaching. It also wants to determine if there is an age difference in the formulaic language acquisition. There are three main research questions examined in this study:

1. Can preschoolers acquire formulaic language through exposure to *Peppa Pig*?
2. Is formulaic language acquisition reinforced through explicit teaching?
3. Is there an age effect on young learners' formulaic language acquisition?

2.2 Methodology

Fifty-five (55) Greek preschoolers from Kessaris Private School in Athens, Greece took part in the study. The children had English instruction since it was part of their school's syllabus (45-minute EFL lessons every day). The children were divided into five groups: two groups of 5-year-olds (MA:5.5), a control group that simply watched an episode of the show and was tested, and an experimental group that watched an episode, received explicit instruction and then was tested. Two groups of 4-year-olds (MA: 4.4), a control and an experimental group, and a group of 3-year-olds (MA:3.5) that received instruction since the children were very young.

Four receptive pre-tests were first administered to the children to determine the lexical chunks which would be included in the actual tests. Then, twelve receptive tests (Appendix) were given in total, each one after the episode they watched (twelve episodes in total; three for each of the four seasons of the show at the time). Each test consisted of 3-7 lexical chunks, depending on the episode, which is quite a lot considering that the show has five-minute episodes. The episodes shown and the lexical chunks included on the tests were selected by the researcher, so that they would all be concrete lexical chunks that were more appropriate for the young children's cognitive level. All the tests were created on the iPad widget *Bookry* and were administered through the use of iPads (each participant had his own iPad). So, the tests were presented to them like a game on the iPad because 'superficially game like' tests are more appropriate for very young learners (Alexiou & Milton, 2020). The pre-tests contained four pictures, the target lexical chunk and three distractors, while the actual tests contained two pictures, the target lexical chunk and one distractor. The pictures of the pre-tests were different from the ones on the actual tests. Each participant had to click on the correct picture on his iPad after the researcher provided them orally with the lexical chunk tested; the total score of each child was calculated and the right and wrong answers were shown in the end.

3. Results & Discussion

The results of the study will be presented in order of the research questions in the following sections.

Research question 1: Can preschoolers acquire formulaic language through exposure to *Peppa Pig*?

The results of the control groups of 5-year-olds and 4-year-olds will be presented in this section since they were the ones who were merely exposed to the show and did not get any kind of instruction on the target lexical chunks. So, as it is obvious in Chart 1, both of these groups were very successful in receptive formulaic language acquisition.

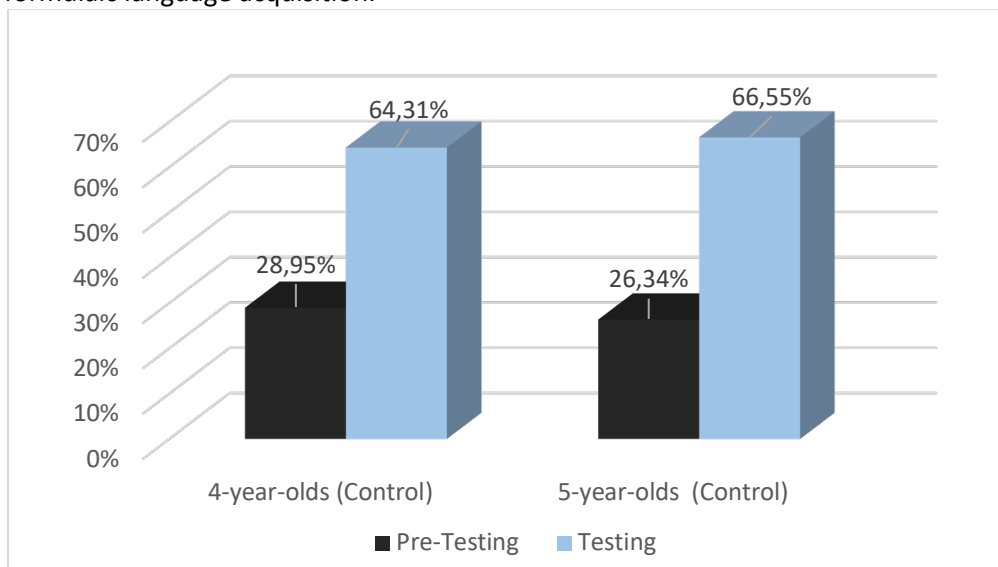


Chart 1: Simply watched Peppa Pig - Formulaic language acquisition

It is obvious that 4-year-olds doubled their scores in actual testing yielding statistically significant results in the Paired Samples T-tests performed in almost half of the chunks ($p < .05$ in 17 chunks; $p < .01$ in 2 chunks, see Table 1).

Paired Differences			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 2	.444	.527	.035
Pair 8	.444	.527	.035
Pair 9	.444	.527	.035
Pair 11	.500	.535	.033
Pair 12	.625	.518	.011
Pair 14	.500	.535	.033
Pair 15	.625	.518	.011
Pair 18	.625	.518	.011
Pair 20	.500	.535	.033
Pair 22	.667	.500	.004
Pair 24	.444	.527	.035
Pair 28	.444	.527	.035
Pair 29	.556	.527	.013
Pair 31	.556	.527	.013
Pair 34	.750	.463	.003
Pair 37	.625	.518	.011
Pair 40	.500	.535	.033
Pair 41	.625	.744	.049

Table 1: Paired Samples T-tests of the Control Group of 4-year-olds – Pre-testing vs Testing

5-year-olds' scores in actual testing were almost tripled with statistically significant differences occurring in almost half of the chunks in the Paired Samples T-tests ($p < .05$ in 7 chunks; $p < .01$ in 7 chunks, $p < .001$ in 7 chunks, see Table 2). These results are in line with previous research which found that mere exposure to *Peppa Pig* led to successful acquisition of a third of all the vocabulary they were exposed to (Alexiou, 2015).

Paired Differences			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	.750	.452	.000
Pair 3	.583	.515	.002
Pair 9	.429	.646	.028
Pair 10	.357	.497	.019
Pair 14	.500	.650	.013
Pair 15	.571	.514	.001
Pair 18	.643	.497	.000
Pair 20	.929	.267	.000
Pair 21	.667	.492	.001
Pair 27	.500	.674	.026
Pair 28	.500	.674	.026
Pair 29	.917	.289	.000
Pair 30	.583	.515	.002
Pair 31	.417	.515	.017
Pair 32	.667	.492	.001
Pair 33	.417	.515	.017
Pair 35	.583	.515	.002
Pair 39	.500	.522	.007
Pair 40	.500	.522	.007
Pair 41	.583	.515	.002
Pair 43	.583	.515	.002

Table 2: Paired Samples T-tests of the Control Group of 5-year-olds – Pre-testing vs Testing

Research question 2: Is formulaic language acquisition reinforced through explicit teaching?

The results of the experimental groups of 5-year-olds and 4-year-olds and the results of the 3-year-olds will be presented since they were the ones who received instruction after viewing the episodes.

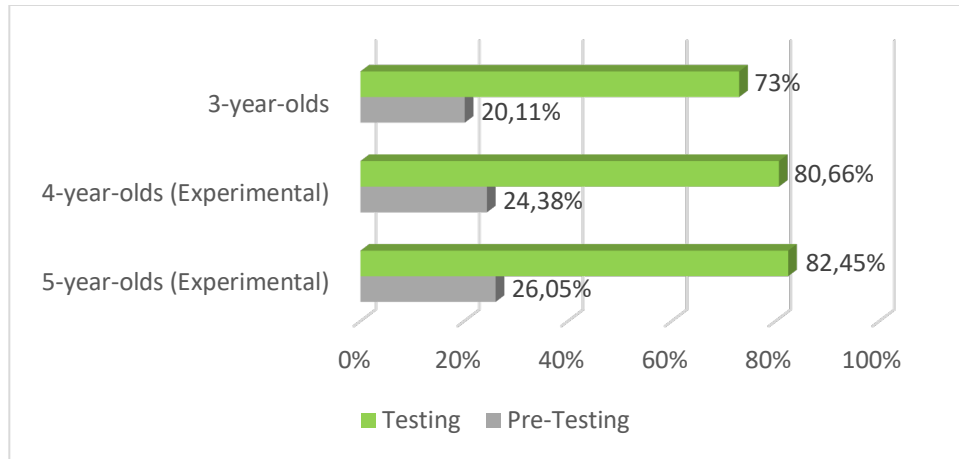


Chart 2: Watched Peppa Pig & got instruction - Formulaic language acquisition

As can be seen in Chart 2, 3-year-olds tripled their scores in actual testing. In fact, there were statistically significant differences in half of the chunks tested ($p < .05$ in 16 chunks; $p < .01$ in 6 chunks, $p = .001$ in 2 chunks, see Table 3).

Paired Differences			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	.833	.408	.004
Pair 3	.667	.516	.025
Pair 5	.667	.516	.025
Pair 6	.667	.516	.025
Pair 8	.833	.408	.004
Pair 9	.833	.408	.004
Pair 10	.625	.518	.011
Pair 12	.500	.535	.033
Pair 13	.625	.518	.011
Pair 14	.625	.518	.011
Pair 15	.625	.518	.011
Pair 16	.625	.744	.049
Pair 17	.625	.518	.011
Pair 24	.571	.535	.030
Pair 28	.571	.535	.030
Pair 32	.714	.488	.008
Pair 34	.571	.535	.030
Pair 35	.714	.488	.008
Pair 36	.857	.378	.001
Pair 37	.571	.535	.030
Pair 41	.857	.378	.001
Pair 43	.714	.488	.008
Pair 44	.571	.535	.030
Pair 45	.571	.535	.030

Table 3: Paired Samples T-tests of the Group of 3-year-olds – Pre-testing vs Testing

4-year-olds also tripled their scores in actual testing having statistically significant results in almost 70% of the chunks tested ($p < .05$ in 13 chunks; $p < .01$ in 12 chunks, $p = .000$ in 7 chunks, see Table 4).

Paired Differences			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 4	.545	.688	.025
Pair 5	.636	.505	.002
Pair 6	.636	.505	.002
Pair 7	.545	.688	.025
Pair 9	.545	.522	.006
Pair 10	.636	.505	.002
Pair 11	.727	.467	.000
Pair 13	.636	.505	.002
Pair 14	.636	.505	.002
Pair 15	.909	.302	.000
Pair 16	.636	.674	.011
Pair 17	.818	.405	.000
Pair 19	.727	.467	.000
Pair 20	.818	.405	.000
Pair 23	.667	.500	.004
Pair 24	.556	.527	.013
Pair 25	.667	.500	.004
Pair 26	.556	.527	.013
Pair 27	.889	.333	.000
Pair 29	.556	.527	.013
Pair 30	.667	.500	.004
Pair 31	.444	.527	.035
Pair 32	.556	.527	.013
Pair 35	.556	.527	.013
Pair 36	.444	.527	.035
Pair 37	.667	.500	.004
Pair 38	.556	.527	.013
Pair 39	.556	.527	.013
Pair 41	.750	.463	.003
Pair 43	.444	.527	.035
Pair 44	.889	.333	.000
Pair 47	.667	.500	.004

Table 4: Paired Samples T-tests of the Experimental Group of 4-year-olds – Pre-testing vs Testing

Lastly, 5-year-olds' scores were also tripled in actual testing with statistically significant differences appearing in almost 80% of the chunks ($p < .05$ in 2 chunks; $p < .01$ in 9 chunks, $p < .001$ in 2 chunks, $p = .000$ in 23 chunks, see Table 5). The results here support the previous research of Prosic-Santovac (2017) who found that watching the show and then playing with branded toys or using products related to the show resulted positively in vocabulary acquisition.

Paired Differences			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	.733	.458	.000
Pair 2	.933	.258	.000
Pair 3	.600	.507	.000
Pair 5	.600	.507	.000
Pair 7	.800	.414	.000
Pair 8	.933	.258	.000
Pair 9	.667	.488	.000
Pair 10	.467	.640	.014
Pair 11	.600	.507	.000
Pair 12	.667	.488	.000
Pair 13	.733	.458	.000
Pair 16	.846	.376	.000
Pair 17	.692	.630	.002
Pair 18	.462	.519	.008
Pair 19	.769	.439	.000
Pair 21	.692	.480	.000
Pair 23	.533	.516	.001
Pair 24	.467	.640	.014
Pair 25	.600	.507	.000
Pair 26	.667	.488	.000
Pair 27	.600	.632	.003
Pair 28	.667	.488	.000
Pair 31	.600	.632	.003
Pair 32	.600	.507	.000
Pair 34	.429	.514	.008
Pair 35	.571	.646	.006
Pair 36	.500	.519	.003
Pair 37	.714	.469	.000
Pair 38	.786	.426	.000
Pair 39	.929	.267	.000
Pair 40	.643	.497	.000
Pair 41	.643	.497	.000
Pair 43	.786	.426	.000
Pair 44	.500	.519	.003
Pair 45	.643	.633	.002
Pair 46	.714	.611	.001

Table 5: Paired Samples T-tests of the Experimental Group of 5-year-olds – Pre-testing vs Testing

So, it is obvious that explicit teaching resulted in higher scores compared to merely being exposed to the show, but it is interesting to examine if there were great differences between the control and the experimental groups.

Paired Samples Test				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
5-year-olds	Group – Tests 1-12	-73.15655	12.20710	.000
4-year-olds	Group – Tests 1-12	-71.33429	14.26791	.000

Table 6: Experimental vs Control Groups' Formulaic Language Acquisition

The Paired Samples T-tests performed yielded statistically significant results (Table 6) between the control and experimental groups for both ages. As expected, explicit instruction of the target lexical chunks reinforced their acquisition.

Research question 3: Is there an age effect on young learners' formulaic language acquisition?

To examine the age effect, the control and the experimental groups of 4-year-olds and of 5-year-olds were clustered together. Age was used as a categorical value based on the way the classes were grouped in the school.

	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	5-year-olds
Test 1	64.28%	76.16%	80.72%
Test 2	73.75%	78.86%	79.09%
Test 3	84.6%	85.28%	88.95%
Test 4	77.5%	85.86%	87.04%
Test 5	78.56%	80.54%	79.1%
Test 6	74.1%	78.46%	79.68%
Test 7	69.31%	77.79%	83.1%
Test 8	72.11%	77.44%	83.36%
Test 9	63.88%	74.84%	85.76%
Test 10	77.77%	75.39%	76.18%
Test 11	79.16%	82.66%	85.47%
Test 12	74.99%	87.84%	86.37%

Table 7: Formulaic Language Acquisition – Age Effect

Older learners were found to score higher than younger ones as expected. As shown in Table 7, 5-year-olds outperformed 3-year-olds and in the One-way ANOVA test that was performed (having age as the factor), there were statistically significant differences in five of the twelve tests (Table 8).

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Test_1	Between Groups	1559.982	1	1559.982	6.777	.014
	Within Groups	7826.051	34	230.178		
	Total	9386.033	35			
Test_7	Between Groups	1241.012	1	1241.012	5.971	.020
	Within Groups	7274.668	35	207.848		
	Total	8515.680	36			
Test_8	Between Groups	820.434	1	820.434	4.521	.041
	Within Groups	6351.299	35	181.466		
	Total	7171.733	36			
Test_9	Between Groups	3016.833	1	3016.833	14.424	.001
	Within Groups	7320.374	35	209.154		
	Total	10337.207	36			
Test_12	Between Groups	832.367	1	832.367	6.211	.018
	Within Groups	4690.320	35	134.009		
	Total	5522.687	36			

Table 8: One-way ANOVA Test – Factor: Age - 3-year-olds & 5-year-olds

Moreover, the 5-year-olds scored higher than the 4-year-olds with statistically significant differences emerging in two of the twelve tests in the One-way ANOVA test performed (Test 9: $p = .007$ and Test 12: $p = .036$). Finally, 4-year-olds scored higher than 3-year-olds. However, no significant differences were detected. This may be explained by the fact that the age difference was so small between these two groups (less than a year for some participants) that great differences could not be observed.

4. Conclusions

This study was an attempt to examine if formulaic language can successfully be acquired by preschool children who watch *Peppa Pig* and whether explicit instruction can make a great difference in formulaic language gains. The results showed that mere exposure to the show led to statistically significant differences in formulaic language gains; the 4-year-old control group doubled and the 5-year-old control group almost tripled their scores compared to pre-tests. Explicit instruction proved to reinforce formulaic language acquisition. All groups who received explicit instruction (3-year-olds, the experimental group of 4-year-olds and the experimental group of 5-year-olds) tripled their scores compared to pre-testing, yielding statistically significant differences. Moreover, the experimental groups outperformed the control groups with statistically significant differences. Last but not least, the age was

proved to play an important role in formulaic language acquisition. Older learners generally performed better than younger ones.

What is safe to conclude is that *Peppa Pig* can be an effective EFL teaching tool for early language learning and in particular for formulaic language acquisition. That is why all stakeholders (teachers, material and curriculum designers) should include it in the teaching process. What would be interesting to examine in further research is whether the formulaic language acquired can be retained long-term.

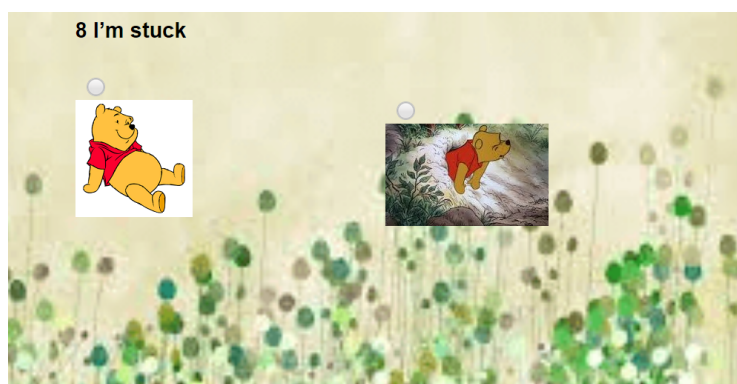
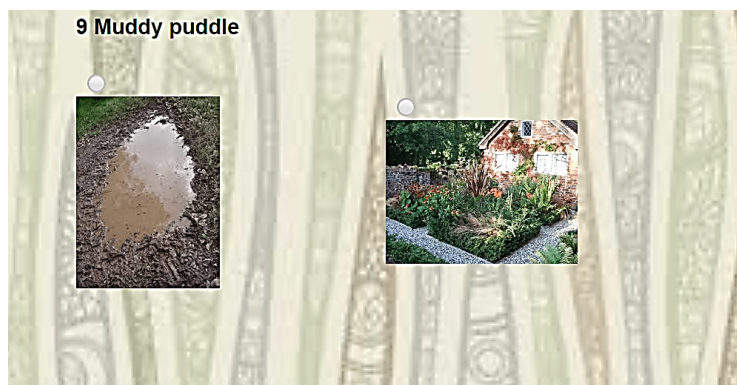
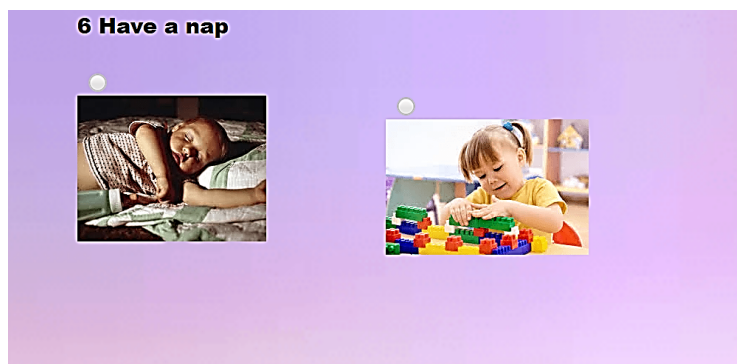
References

- Alexiou, T. (2020). *Introducing EFL in preschools: Facts and Fictions*. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing English Language Education*. Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications, p.61-74, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2020/AELE_Book_ALLT_ZU_Web_V02.pdf
- Alexiou, T. (2015). Vocabulary uptake from Peppa pig: a case study of preschool EFL learners in Greece. In & T. C. Gitsaki, *Current Issues in Second/foreign Language Teaching and Teacher Development: Research and Practice* (pp. pp. 285-301). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Alexiou, T., & Kokla, N. (2018). Cartoons that make a difference: A Linguistic Analysis of Peppa Pig. *Journal of Linguistics and Education Research*, 1 (1), 24-30.
- Alexiou, T., & Kokla, N. (2019). Teaching Cultural Elements and Pro-social Behaviour to Preschoolers through Peppa Pig. *4th International Conference for the Promotion of Innovation in Education* (pp. 299-305). Larisa: University of Thessaly.
- Alexiou, T., & Milton, J. (2020). Pic-Lex: A new tool of measuring receptive vocabulary for very young learners. In W. Zoghbor, & T. Alexiou, *Advancing English Language Education* (pp.103-113). Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2020/AELE_Book_ALLT_ZU_Web_V02.pdf
- Alexiou, T., & Vitoulis, M. (2014). iGeneration issues: Tracing preschoolers English receptive and productive vocabulary through interactive media: Mission impossible? In J. Enever, Lindren, E., & S. (. Ivanov, *Conference Proceedings from Early Language Learning: Theory and Practice 2014* (pp. 16-22). Umea, Sweden: Umea University.
- Alexiou, T., & Yfouli, D. (2019). Charlie & Lola: An innovative way of promoting young learners' EFL lexical development. *Conference Proceedings from the 4th International Conference for the Promotion of Educational Innovation*, 323-330.
- Alexiou, T., Roghani, S., & Milton, J. (2019). Assessing the Vocabulary Knowledge of Preschool Language Learners. In D. Prosic-Sandovac, & S. Rixon, *Integrating Assessment into Early Language Learning and Teaching Practice* (pp. pp.207-220). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Arikan, A., & Taraf, H. U. (2010). Contextualizing young learners' English lessons with cartoons: Focus on grammar and vocabulary. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, 5212–5215 .
- Bannard, C., & Lieven, E. (2009). Repetition and reuse in child language learning. In R. Corrigan, E. Moravcsik, H. Ouali, & K. and Wheatley, *Formulaic Language: Volume 2. Acquisition, loss,*

- psychological reality, and functional explanations* (pp. 299-322). Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Brown, D. (1994). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cremin, T. (2009). *Teaching English Creatively*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Edelenbos, P., & Kubanek, A. (2009). Early foreign language learning: Published research, good practice and main principles. In M. Nikolov, *The Age Factor and Early Language Learning* (pp. 39-58).
- European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice. (2017). *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Gordon, T. (2007). *Teaching Young Children a Second Language*. Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger.
- Kersten, S. (2015). Language Development in Young Learners: The Role of Formulaic Language. In J. Bland, *Teaching English to Young Learners - Critical Issues in Language Teaching with 3-12 Year Olds* (pp. 129-146). London, New York: Bloomsbury.
- Kokla, N. (2016). Dora the Explorer: A TV character or a preschoolers' foreign language teacher? *Selected Papers of the 21st International Symposium on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics (ISTAL 21)* (pp. 666-683). Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- Milton, J., & Alexiou, T. (2012). Vocabulary input, vocabulary uptake and approaches to language teaching. *The Language Learning Journal*, 40 (1), 1-5.
- Mitroudi, V. (2019). *The Impact of Cartoons on Young Learners' Vocabulary Acquisition: A Case Study on Ben and Holly*. Thessaloniki: Unpublished MA thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- Nightingale, R. (2014). Well I Never!: Formulaic Language as a Pragmatic resource in child Entertainment Media. In D. Gabrys-Barker, & A. (. Wojtaszek, *Studying Second Language Acquisition from a Qualitative Perspective* (pp. 203-218). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- Nikolov, M. (2009). The age factor in context. In M. Nikolov, *The Age Factor and Early Language Learning* (pp. 1-38). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Pinter, A. (2011). *Children Learning Second Languages*. Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Prosic-Santovac, D. (2017). Popular video cartoons and associated branded toys in teaching English to very young learners: A case study. *Language Teaching Research* 21 (5), 568 –588.
- Reilly, J., & Ward, S. M. (1997). *Very Young Learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rice, M. L., & Woodsmall, L. (1988). Lessons from Television: Children's Word Learning When Viewing. *Child Development* 59 (2), 420-429.
- Scheffler, P. (2015). Introducing very young children to English as a foreign language. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 25 (1), 1-22.
- Scott, W., & Ytreberg, L. (1990). *Teaching English to Children*. London, New York: Longman.
- Vaidyanathan, R. (2010, April 27th). *Peppa Power*. Retrieved from BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8646601.stm>
- Wray, A. (2002). *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Appendix

Below there are photos of some of the Lexical Chunks included in the actual tests. This is exactly how each lexical chunk appeared on the screen of the iPad with each chunk being provided orally by the researcher since the children could not read the chunk. Above each of the photo, there is a button, which they had in order to click to select the picture.

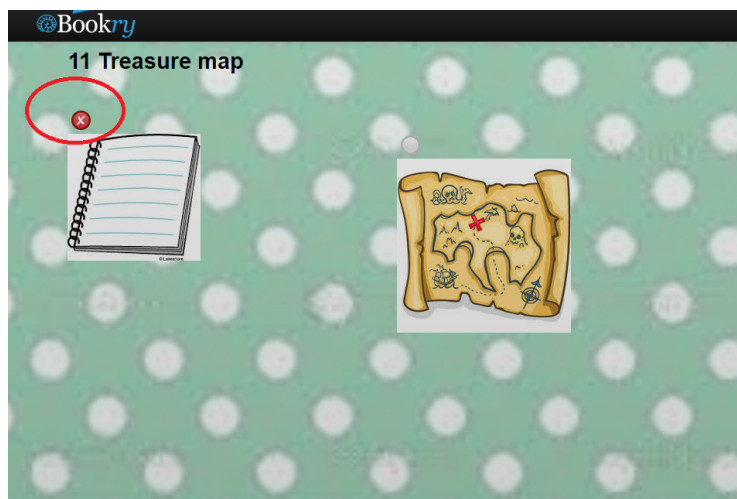


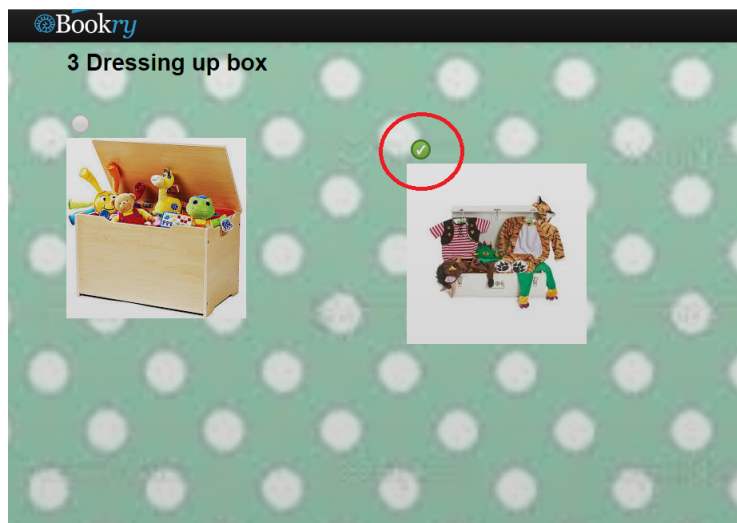


When the button was clicked, it became blue so it was clear that this picture was selected.



In the end, after they submitted the test, the right and wrong answers were given to them and the researcher could see each one of them clearly.





Natassa Kokla (koklanas@enl.auth.gr & natasa.kokla@gmail.com) is a PhD Candidate in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and an English teacher in a private school in Athens. The focus of her research is early EFL learning. She holds a BA in English Language and Literature from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and a MA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has been teaching English in private schools and in the Center for Education & Rehabilitation for the Blind. She has been teaching mainly very young learners for the last five years. She has taken part in conferences within and outside Greece and her research interests include early language learning, Content and Language Integrated Learning, educational research methods, teacher education and development.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 93-103

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

#LetMeepleTalk¹: Using board games for EFL preschoolers

Athanasios KARASIMOS

This paper probes into the merged area between language pedagogy, CLIL, preschoolers learners and educational technology, and centers on weaving multi-genres board games (both physical and digital ones) in early language teaching. Based on the communicative approach to foreign language pedagogy, we trace the development of modern board games that are language (in)dependent and link them to the teaching of early EFL within a constructivist learning framework. Up to now, previous computer gaming suggestions for educational purposes were game specified, and thus could not be generalized. Moreover, board game suggestions usually focused on non-language teaching proposals. In this proposal, we will present specific board game selection criteria for presenting or eliciting language and a template of integrating every gaming genre. We will present a model wherein any board game can be used in the current foreign language classroom by tying them to the teaching of specific language skills. We propose that every genre can be used to teach a specific language skill (e.g., speaking via board game streaming presentation or developing thematic vocabulary) in CLIL and early language contexts.

Key words: board gaming, language learning, language teaching, game-based teaching and learning theory, early language learning

1. Introduction

“The way a man plays a game shows some of his character.
The way he loses shows all of it.”
– Unknown

Game-based learning and teaching theory (GBLTT) is a theoretical approach and framework that has measured learning outcomes based on gaming and learning procedure. Generally speaking, GBLTT focuses on balancing information with gameplay as well as the ability of each learner to retain and

¹ Blend of the words “my” and “people”; a small person-shaped figure used as a player's token in a board game.

frame this subject in more realistic contexts. Moving from GBLTT to *Gamification*, one obtains a different kind of learning experience. The gamification process transfers dominant gaming features (such as experience points, achievements, user badges, challenges, leaderboards, progress status, etc.) to a non-game environment. Its major advantage is to turn boredom, routine, uninspired tasks into innovative, challenging and interesting experience.

According to the GBLTT plan, every game-based lesson should have specific learning objectives. The teacher could assign some roles to students so that everyone could be a gamer at some point. Furthermore, all necessary procedures and rules should be explained clearly and slowly from the very beginning. Since preparation is the key to success and to failure (play some game sections several times, provide supporting material and predict students' questions and reactions), this strategy could create a non-threatening, non-competitive, yet entertaining environment.

Additionally, we strongly underline that the teacher should not forget to apply the selection criteria carefully (Karasimos & Chrysovitsanos, 2020), even if there is a large number of them. More specifically, we should keep preschoolers' interests and attention intact while the concentration - which is involved while playing a video game- can be used to educate them and keep their minds active (Alexiou, 2020). The education community tries to 'force the videogaming industry to support their need for fun-based learning by developing educationally engaging games and devising GBLTT techniques and settings which would activate children' learning awareness during board games sessions.

An important step in the GBLTT plan is for the teacher to check the available websites before a game is chosen. The online board game database of BoardGameGeek² can be a real thesaurus³ with plenty of ideas and materials for teaching situations. Even if someone does not like (nor is used to playing games), he/she will find the board games to be valuable for fun, self-awareness, imagination and creativity. During the teaching process, a different kind of failure is quite possible. Gameducation may reveal some teaching weaknesses and frustrated situations when someone fails to fulfil the gaming objectives and hereafter, reach the language learning goals. If an educator creates a game-based teaching session, he/she should be able to deal with instances where students may not be able to solve the riddles or complete quests or even follow the storyline.

As opposed to video games, the teacher can manipulate the board gaming time, the rules and the stressful issues easier. Consequently, if his/her game-based decisions have been converted into positive learning outcomes, the educator should attempt and spread these techniques and theories to the teachers' community so that they can apply them in their classrooms. Even for an experienced board gamer and educator, the preparation time might be quite extensive and long, the effort could be intense and the lesson plan quite detailed in order to avoid any possible unpleasant surprises. Nevertheless, the actual impact from this implementation could be impressive and essential for young learners.

To sum up, besides being innately fun, board games affect teacher-talking time by shifting the focus to young learners' interactions and their discussion. The gaming goals or quests encourage students to work through challenges and encourage healthy competition between classmates, which helps

² <https://boardgamegeek.com/>

³ BGG is an online board gaming resource and community. The site is updated on a real-time basis by its large and still growing user base, making the 'Geek the largest and most up-to-date place to get gaming information! There is no charge for becoming a registered member of BGG, although you are certainly encouraged to help improve the site by adding your own reviews and thoughts on games to the existing database. There are reviews, ratings, images, play-aids, translations, and session reports from board game geeks across the world, as well as live discussion forums (https://boardgamegeek.com/wiki/page/Welcome_to_BoardGameGeek).

build solid relationships (specially with board games in cooperative mode) and provides evolving speaking opportunities as students work together to solve a mystery or a riddle. With the teacher's interference, vocabulary and spelling skills through structured activities can be honed. Finally yet importantly, board games provide a break from the traditional lesson structure, encourage creative and strategic thinking and "force" students to have fun and enjoy their lessons.

2. Games in the early foreign language context

"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing."
– George Bernard Shaw

McDonough (1981, p. 32) suggests that "children are the best examples of language learners because of their spontaneous nature of language acquisition". They may not be able to rationalize a grammatical rule. However, they are able to learn short phrases (not just individual words), which they can use to communicate with some reasonable degree of grammaticality. During an L2 learning process, teachers' priority and focus is given to oral skills during the early stages, as "children have not yet developed literacy skills in their first language" (Alexiou, 2015, p. 192). A significant issue with preschoolers learning or acquiring a second language is their limited attention span and their lack of discipline and persistence. Consequently, playful, alternative and unconventional teaching techniques are encouraged at this early stage (ibid). This is the reason they get excited with any form of implicit, playful, alternative and unconventional teaching. Moreover, visual stimuli aid their memory development, recall, and this is why popular cartoon series, for instance, can also serve as educational tools (see Alexiou, 2015; Alexiou & Kokla, 2018; Kokla in this volume). Recent research has indicated that various playful websites for example, can serve as rich input for effective and memorable vocabulary learning (Alexiou & Vitoulis, 2014; Alexiou & Chondrogianni, 2017).

The teaching procedure during these early stages usually includes informal vocabulary and a variety of songs and rhymes, short stories, colouring and drawing that create a cheerful and playful learning environment. Children always enjoy funny and easy-to-remember rhymes, riddles, jokes and hands-on activities (Oesterreich, 1995). Based on Halliwell (1992), physical response activities, handcrafts and arts, theatrical plays and drama, games and projects are all appropriate since they make children use language authentically and for meaningful purposes. Miller (2014) underscored the facilitation of memory and thinking procedures through comic series as well as the function of both brain parts in order to process the data received either visually or orally. Consequently, animated stories offer a combination of visual representations, sound and text (Alexiou & Yfouli, 2018). Language learners' contact with video games (Karasimos & Zorbas, 2020) and board games (Karasimos & Chrysovitsanos, 2020), which contain entertaining, interactive but also meaningful and adaptable content, is conducive to language improvement, effective lexical development and constitutes a well-established context for both adult and young learners.

It is widely accepted that education should be based on holistic development and ought to be child-centered while its content should mirror real-life experiences. Culture free play is crucial for their social, emotional and cognitive development while it promotes collaboration and eliminates fears and insecurities (Alexiou & Chondrogianni, 2017). In Alexiou and Chondrogianni's (2017) small-scale study, playing Twister and Wii-Fit appears to enhance the learning process, accelerate the learning rate, increase their attention span, boost motivation and positively impact cognitive development. Most importantly, however, they accomplished all these in "a stress-free environment and they learnt while playing and enjoying themselves" (Alexiou & Chondrogianni, 2017, p. 430). The process of setting an alternative task to the level of the learner is essential for useful outcomes to emerge. According to Alexiou, Roghani and Milton (2019, p. 208) "even where learners possess considerable

vocabulary knowledge, they may be unable to show this if the format is unfamiliar or too challenging”.

Early childhood educators are called to make informed choices that can inspire and empower children’s learning potential and maximize language opportunities (Alexiou & Vitoulis, 2014). Teaching with new technologies, interactive material and alternative games today is a challenge and there is a rhetoric question: Can we really afford being game-phobic, game-ignorant, game-addicted or game-friendly?

3. Board games: Re-visiting the area of gameducation

“You have to learn the rules of the game.
And then you have to play better than anyone else.”
– Albert Einstein

3.1. The variety of the board gaming genres

Board games are a dominant entertaining hobby with several categories and subcategories. Their representation of real-life situations can range from having no inherent theme, like checkers, to having a specific theme and storytelling, like *Mysterium*. The rulebooks include some very simple rules, like *Taboo*, to those presenting a fully detailed game universe, like *Dungeons & Dragons*® – although most of the latter are role-playing games where the board is secondary to the game, serving to help visualize the game scenario. Usually the relation between time required to learn and the mastering curve is strongly correlated with a board game type and its features. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily associated with the complexity of rules or the number of its components.

The board games classification systems are several and depend on the researchers’ or game designers’ approach. To our knowledge, there is not actually a globally-recognized classification system for board games. Rather, a handful of researchers or experts have tried to make sense of the sheer diversity of game designs and premises with different levels of success. Moving from an extensive, quite chaotic and complex classification to a plethora of genres and considerable overlapping categories (Edwards, 2016), we follow a more concrete and straightforward board games classification suggested by expert board gamers⁴, designers and reviewers as more accurate.

On the other hand, Notebaert and Cornilly (2001) tried to fulfill the most important aim of the Flemish Games Archives which was to create an easy-to-classify system of the huge amount of different modern and new age board games, so that players, designers, educators, students and researchers can use those games and group them based on their similarities. They modified the *Deutsch Spiele-Archiv* classification, which describes a very strong, quite clear and straightforward insight into the different systems of board games. However, they include six major categories for board games (lay down games, role-playing games, thinking games, dice and be-lucky games, dexterity and action games and the rest) and three categories for card games (abstract card games, role playing card games and communication card games) with several subcategories for each one (from four to nine sub-classifications). For an extensive discussion about board game classification, see Sousa and Bernardo (2019).

Nevertheless, the typical question from researchers and educators is usually the following: *“I played that particular game and I would like to know what other games are similar. Can you give me a list of equivalent games or can you suggest me a board game genre that is proper for my classroom?”*

⁴ By TheKnight: <https://tableknight.com/board-game-genres/> and by Brian Truong: <https://gamecows.com/types-of-board-games/>

(adapted from Notebaert & Cornilly, 2001, p. 3). We suggest a classification system that is more compact and straightforward for an easier use by the non-expert board gamers and educators/researchers.

The key role in success or failure in using games in an EFL classroom is the selection of an appropriate board game, the relation to the real needs of the students and the active participation of the students. The selection of the appropriate game is based on three constituents, on some core criteria modified for board games for preschoolers.

The *age recommendation and appropriateness* are one of the three minimum required icons (with duration and number of players) on every board game box case. Therefore, following the same restrictions as with PEGI ratings for video games (Karasimos & Zorbas, Computer games and language teaching and learning: A multi-skills theoretical proposal, 2020), we should select board games that fulfill the minimum age suggestions by the designers and publishers. This criterion is based on the difficulty of the board game and depends on specific skills, such as speed, memory, attention, flexibility, comprehensibility, problem solving and language level.

Moreover, the *time factor* is essential and crucial for a preschool classroom; the duration range comes with a huge variety (from 10-15 minutes games to 360 minutes). Our ideal spot for preschoolers is around forty minutes plus or minus 10 minutes.

The third significant information for a board game is the *number of players* who can participate. Although it is a restrict factor for a normal play, for a teaching/learning play it can be easily modified. For a cooperative board game, the teacher can actually duplicate the number of players, and for a competitive one, the teacher can assign the role of each player to a small group (2 to 4 players). Therefore, the number of players can be expanded without issues or problems.

Furthermore, since our subjects are preschoolers, all the appropriate games are by default very easy. Otherwise, a difficult game is going to dramatically increase the complexity of the lesson as well as the danger of preschoolers feeling unconfident, afraid and overwhelmed. Additionally, the *language factors* are the most relevant for our (board) game-based learning and teaching theory (for more info check in Karasimos & Zorbas, 2020).

Moreover, less amount of information, less amount of language, limited number of rules, and the amount of time can be a real treat for a board game session in a pre-school and/or kindergarten. According to Arcario (1993) and Stempleski and Tomalin (1990), the *amount* is inversely proportional to *comprehension*.

3.2 The language independence factor

Board games can be broadly divided into two categories: language dependent games with text reading during the play and language independent games with no texts in their cards. Although several language dependent games do not require a high level of English, usually they are by definition more difficult to use in a classroom. We can build a specific rule or threshold for the language dependence factor in the case of preschoolers' scenarios. Nevertheless, the majority of these games contain a many-pages rulebook, bundles of cards with texts or include campaign modes with storybooks written in Advanced English (it is a kind of interactive and evolving literature-like gaming experience). Therefore, we strongly recommend avoiding language dependent board games for preschoolers.

On the other hand, all language independent games have the four characteristics that one looks for in board games for all-level of the CEFR English learners or generally for mixed languages learners.

The first one is that the games contain mostly *pictures*. For example, a common trait of the Eurogames category is that the same game can be used in any language by only translating the manual. In order to achieve that, game components rely on images, symbols and numbers rather than text to communicate what they do.

The second characteristic is the *simple rules* with interesting gameplay. Therefore, the golden rule of board gaming can be modified into “*if the game is complicated to learn and understand, it can be hard to teach it to a person who speaks a different language. It also makes answering questions about gameplay tricky*”. Based on the BGG database, the best language-independent games⁵ have simple rules you can teach by showing, not telling, which is a great task for teaching writing or speaking. Besides, compact and straightforward rules do not imply that it is a boring, simple game.

A third and skill-related feature of language independent games is that during the play, the *learners do not have to talk much*. If the students in your classroom speak different languages or are shy or they avoid the use of the spoken form of English, a game with lots of talking is not such a great idea for low-level language speakers. Trading, complicated bluffing games, and cooperative games all require a lot of talking. This is why they do not always work so well. Therefore, these subcategories without text are strongly recommended for advanced learners, since it requires a lot of talk and they are great types for speaking tasks and activities.

Finally, the fourth characteristic is the *absence of cultural references*. Games like *Pete The Cat’s Cupcake Party*, *Colorama*, *Hoot Owl Hoot*, *Dr. Seuss “I Can Do That!” card game*, *Charades for Kids*, *Sequence for Kids* or all-time classic games such as chess (see also Zapounidis in this volume) and backgammon are awesome picture-based games. Hopefully, they are not difficult for the learners to give good, yet obscure enough clues to do well in the game. This is quite important, since cultural associations differ from one country to the other (see compared discussion about it, Arcario, 1993). What is considered obvious in one country might not be obvious in another one. Most of them are target skill building, dexterity, challenges, cooperative, simple strategy, imagination, connection, spatial awareness, matching, etc.

3.3. Cooperative vs. Competitive board games

Cooperative (coop) board games are a general top-category in the board games hierarchy where players play as a group in order to achieve a goal together. Therefore, they are going to win or lose as a team. These types of board games emphasize collaboration over competition. A cooperative game attracts players who usually enjoy the social aspect of games and it can be characterized as the ideal genre to get new board game players interested in the area (Wilkes, 2018).

Either the players win the game by reaching a pre-determined objective, or all players lose the game, often by not reaching the objective before a certain event. For example, *Hoot Owl Hoot’s* goal (according to its manual instructions) is for the group to cooperate to get the owls back in the nest before the sun rises. During their turn, players must play a sun, if they have one (then proceed to the sunrise). Otherwise, they play one of their colour cards. The colour lets you move an owl closer to the next. You can play with a different number of owls (up to 6) to make it easier or harder. The game has enough strategy to be fun, and kids get to learn how to work together too.

⁵ It based on user’s rating, reviews and hotness factor of the BGG subscribers.

On the other hand, competitive games are the opposite of the aforementioned genre. They are like the classic never-ending games of Monopoly – instead, a new wave of games uses interesting themes, challenging tasks and innovative ideas to provide a guaranteed fun factor among the players (Nicholson, 2008). The main core rule of this category remains the player vs. player and the competition rises from every player's move, which creates antagonistic, stressful and heated moments. Nevertheless, to assure that learners are always entertaining themselves and learn outside of an adversarial environment, the educators should carefully choose the proper board games for their class.

To make a long story short, the ideal mode is definitely the cooperative one, since it offers a smooth and easy-going playing and learning environment. For those who avoid board games because of competitiveness around the table, the cooperative board games offer unique challenges that can only be solved together, so communication becomes the difference between winning and losing. These games emphasize teamwork rather than a mad scramble to victory. Playing board games with preschoolers is expected not only to strengthen the relationship connection between educator-pupil and pupil-pupil, but this playful learning has cognitive and metacognitive benefits for children.

During the board game sessions, children and youngsters acquire social skills such as oral communication and sharing, especially in coop mode. The board games sessions motivate players and pupils to increase their focus and to cultivate patience during their turn-waiting mode. Preschoolers enjoy the scenario to work on mastering letter recognition, word meaning, hand-eye coordination, and imagination. Along with these benefits, playing games together gives children a comforting space to learn how to play within the rules and boundaries of the game and then it will be easier to follow a grammar rule.

For preschoolers (even at the age of 3), much of understanding is quite difficult to predict, to anticipate, to control and to support. Therefore, we strongly believe that board games provide an unusual and uncommon sense of empowerment as preschoolers conquer this understanding through game sessions. Additionally, board games are an interesting medium to teach a preschooler about cooperation, teamwork and group effort. It resembles a Montessori-like case where older preschoolers play a few of these board games with the younger ones, so they can learn to work with people of different ages while also learning how to be fair. For more discussion regarding the benefits of collaborative games, see Zagal, Rick and His (2006).

3.4. CLIL-ing board games

Preschoolers remember information learned while having fun much longer than information learned through rote memorization. When kids have fun, they retain so much more information and which stays with them in the long-term memory; it stays much longer than it otherwise would. Especially if children already enjoy a certain subject, board games can help them make connections, and build on their existing knowledge.

Playing board games together strengthens social relationships. Playing games together is also a fantastic way to connect with the learners. Therefore, if an educator is going to use board games, why not choose board games that teach the educator how to have fun with them along with the process of teaching? This way, educators can expand their cooperation for combined themes during a board game play. Science board games can be an excellent supplement to formal science instruction or serve as a core part of a DIY science curriculum. Hopefully, language learning and language teaching are and can be part of any gaming session. For any CLIL scenario, there is always at least one board game that offers plenty of options for a more interactive, engaging and fun-learning experience.

Instead of using a formal science curriculum, the teachers should regularly check out science books from the library and the web to find answers to frequent and random science questions. Science board games are yet another way for us to reinforce the knowledge we already have and learn simple science facts at the same time! Science-themed board games are an increasingly popular way to learn about everything from eco-friendly behavior to simple chemical and space scenarios. The topics and the themes are almost limitless and since the board game invasion is worldwide, every country or civilization has influenced one way or another the game designers.

4. Examples and board game suggestions

Choosing a board game to play during teaching sessions with your toddlers and preschoolers is a tricky proposition. The children are developing rapidly, so it is not uncommon for them to throw a tantrum over, or be indifferent toward, something they loved moments earlier. This can happen with preschoolers' board games, too, but board games tend to bring people (and their moods) together in a way that other toys do not.

There are a few things, which teachers can look for when choosing a toddler game. The aforementioned criteria could be: the board game should be colorful, a little silly, and very simple and easy. If a game is too complex and not completely intuitive for your preschoolers, there might be some crying, screaming and definitely no learning at all. Although the basic baseline for most of the new board game is above 8- and 9-year old players, there are several board games for preschoolers.

We suggest *Katamino Duo*, *Animal Upon Animal*, *Bee Alert*, *Karuba Junior*, *Mystery Garden*, *Blokus*, *Cobra Paw*, *Click Clack Lumberjack*, *Dancing Eggs*, *Monza*, *Rhino Hero*, *Avocado Smash!*, *Bamboleo*, *Bandido*, *Bugs on Rugs*, *Catan: Junior*, *Chop! Chop!*, *Cockroach Salad*, *Coconuts*, *Echidna Shuffle*, *Enchanted Forest*, *Get Packing*, *Halli Galli*, *Happy Salmon*, *ICECOOL*, *Leo*, *Nope!*, *Peach Snaps*, *Penguin Party*, *PitchCar*, *Problem Picnic: Attack of the Ants*, *Qwirkle*, *Rat-a-Tat Cat*, *Rory's Story Cubes*, *SET*, *Speed Cups*, *The Magic Labyrinth*, *The Mysterious Forest*, *Walk the Plank!*, *Zitternix* among others.

For example, *Zeus on the Loose* is a great game for building quick addition skills – perfect for children (and grown-ups) ages 8+. It is also just downright fun, and the rounds go quickly, making it perfect for squeezing in a card game for math and language. Moreover, *Sum Swamp*, a popular mathematics board game for children just learning simple math calculations (such as addition and subtraction) is another pick from the learning pile of board games. In *Sum Swamp*, they will make their way over the crocodile shortcut and through the swamp to the finish by using the numbers on number dice in combination with a math symbol die to make additions and subtractions. They try to make it across the swamp, hopping across the boulders, which is a great combination of math, ecology and language.

Furthermore, *Sumoku* is great for mental mathematics, since in this crossword-like numbers game players seek combinations of numbers that add up to multiples of the “key number” (which you find from an included die). *Operation*, it is still fun as an adult, even more for children. It is simple for little ones but still challenging for preschoolers since they are learning language and biology.

One last example is *Mystery garden*, where one player takes a card on which a picture is displayed which is also on the game board. The next player may ask one question which can only be answered with a yes or no. In clockwise order, the next player may ask a question and so on. Whether the

answer to the question is yes or no, the playing-figure moves up one space in the direction of the castle. There are 15 spaces between the gate in front of the garden and the castle, so a maximum of only 15 questions can be asked. It is not allowed to ask a question about the location of the picture on the game board. Instead of asking a question, a player may also say what picture is on the card when he thinks he knows it.

5. Conclusions

It is fascinating to see the learning process at work with youngsters. There is an air of excitement about what happens in the classroom. Preschoolers produce spontaneous responses and build confidence, because they do not spend too much time thinking about what to say. An answer just comes to them. Sometimes it is right, sometimes it is not.

At any rate, games allow preschoolers to show a portion of their personalities, strengthen interpersonal connections with others, practice and improve several skills. Moreover, they allow the educator to observe who has mastered the information and who is (or is not) afraid of sharing it. This way, what children need more instruction on or what concepts can or cannot be performed adequately becomes even more apparent. The more teachers use games in their classroom, the more effective their teaching becomes. Furthermore, as one progresses, it becomes second nature to them to form groups, to share and follow rules and procedures, to be consistent, to deal with competition and collaboration as well as to evaluate the benefits of educational games.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dimitris Grammenos for his detailed and insightful list with board games for pre-school and primary school learners.

References

- Alexiou, T. (2015). Vocabulary Uptake from Peppa Pig: A Case Study of Preschool EFL Learners in Greece. Στο C. Gitsaki, & T. Alexiou, *Current Issues in Second/Foreign Language Teaching and Teacher Education: Research and Practice* (pp. 285-301). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Alexiou, T. (2020). Introducing EFL in preschools: Facts and Fictions. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing English Language Education*. Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications, p.61-74.
- Alexiou, T., & Chondrogianni, M. (2017). Bringing innovation to the primary EFL classroom: Total Physical Response with Twister and Wii-fit. *3ο Διεθνές Συνέδριο για την Προώθηση της Εκπαιδευτικής Καινοτομίας* (pp. 425-432). Λάρισα: ΕΕΠΕΚ.
- Alexiou, T., & Kokla, N. (2015). Cartoons that make a difference: A linguistic analysis of Peppa Pig. *Journal of Linguistics and Education Research* 1(1), pp. 24-30.
- Alexiou, T., & Vitoulis, M. (2014). iGeneration issues: Tracing preschoolers English receptive & productive vocabulary through interactive media. Mission impossible?'. In J. Enever, E. Lindren, & S. Ivanov (Ed.), *Conference Proceedings from Early Language Learning: Theory and Practice 2014*, (pp. 16-22). Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden.
- Alexiou, T., & Yfouli, D. (2018). Charlie & Lola: An innovative way of promoting young learners' EFL lexical development. 4th International Conference for the Promotion of Educational Innovation, (pp. 323-330). Larisa: ΕΕΠΕΚ.

- Alexiou, T., Roghani, S., & Milton, J. (2019). Assessing the Vocabulary. In *Integrating Assessment into Early Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 207-220). Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters.
- Arcario, P. (1993). Criteria for selecting video material. In S. Stempleski, & P. Arcario, *Using, selecting and producing video for the classroom* (pp. 109-122). Alexandria, VA: TESOL Inc.
- de Voogt, A. (2015). The role of the dice in board games. In J. Silva, A. de Voogt, C. Santos, F. Frazão, I. Finkel, J. Neto, . . . U. Schädler (Eds.) *Board Game Studies Journal online*, 9, pp. 1-7.
- Edwards, J. (2016, February 05). *Wayback Machine*. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20160205071220/http://visionandvalues.org/docs/familymatters/Edwards_Jason.pdf.
- Halliwell, S. (1992). *Teaching English in the primary classroom*. UK: Pearson Educational Ltd.
- Karasimos, A., & Chrysovitsanos, G. (2020). Escape (Class)Room: an ideal board game genre for EFL. *24th International Symposium on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics*. Thessaloniki, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- Karasimos, A., & Zorbas, V. (2020). Computer games and language teaching and learning: A multi-skills theoretical proposal. *Proceedings of 4th International Conference "Education Across Borders": Education in the 21st Century: Challenges and Perspectives*. Florina: University of Western Macedonia.
- Linse, C. (2005). *Young Learners*. USA: McGraw Hill.
- Martinson, B., & Chu, S. (2008). Game-based learning in design history. In *Handbook of Research on Effective Electronic Gaming in Education* (pp. 478-488). Pennsylvania: IGI Global.
- McDonough, S. (1981). *Psychology in foreign language teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Miller, M. (2014). *Minds Online*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Nicholson, S. (2008). Modern board games: It's not a Monopoly any more. *Library Technology Reports*, 44(3), pp. 8-39.
- Notebaert, P., & Cornilly, H. (2001). Classification of board games: an easily adaptable system to classify board games. *Board Games in Academia IV International Colloquium* (pp. 1-16). Fribourg: KHBO-Spellenarchief.
- Oesterreich, L. (1995). *Ages & stages-five-year-olds*. Iowa State: National Network for Child Care (NNCC). Retrieved from <http://www.nncc.org/Child.Dev/ages.stages.5y.html>
- Slavicsek, B., & Baker, R. (2005). *Dungeons & Dragons® For Dummies®*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Wiley Publishing Inc.
- Sousa, M., & Bernardo, E. (2019). Back in the Game: Modern Board Games. In N. Zagalo, A. Veloso, L. Costa, & O. Mealha (Ed.), *Videogame Sciences and Arts* (pp. 72-85). Aveiro, Portugal: Springer.
- Stempleski, S., & Tomalin, B. (1990). *Video in Action: Recipes for Using Video in Language Teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall International .
- Wilkes, C. (2018). Cooperative games. *Library Journal*, 143, pp. 44-49.
- Young, S., & Wang, Y. (2014). The game embedded CALL system to facilitate English vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 3, pp. 239–251.
- Zagal, Z., Rick, J., & Hsi, I. (2006). Collaborative games: lessons learned from board games. *Simulation Gaming*, 37(1), pp. 24-40.

Athanasios Karasimos (akarasimos@gmail.com) is a graduate of the Department of Philology, University of Patras. He holds two European Masters in Speech and Language Processing (one of them at the University of Edinburgh) and his doctoral dissertation is in Computational Morphology. He participated in several research projects on Modern Greek dialects, corpora, aphasic speech, digital humanities and training of English language teachers. He was a postdoctoral research fellow funded by IKY. He worked as an Adjunct Lecturer at HOU, AUTH and NKUA teaching Educational Technology, Research Methodology, Computational Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics. He is a researcher in the national infrastructure for Digital Humanities DARIAH-GR / DYAS (Academy of Athens). His research interests focus on computational linguistics and machine learning, the use of corpora, education technology and integrating video and board games into language teaching and learning.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 104-123

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Is a 'a little doll' truly a little doll? Morphology teaching through children's stories

Marina TZAKOSTA, Chrysavgi DERTZEKOU & Georgia PANTELOGLOU

The acquisition of word formation processes is considered to be the necessary prerequisite for the mastery of the morphology of the mother language as well as vocabulary development and vocabulary learning and teaching (Nagy et al., 2006; Nagy & Herman, 1987; Templeton, 1989). In addition, the acquisition of the morphological component of a language makes predictions regarding the acquisition of other linguistic components, such as the syntax and/or the semantics. The aim of this paper is to describe the main axes of a program of teaching the morphology of Greek through children's stories and the results of its implementation in class. The core of the program is a story accompanied by consolidation exercises. Aki-aros-itsa, the teaching program, was implemented to a) a group of 94 monolingual preschool children (age range: 5-6 years) who served as the experimental group and b) a group of 54 adults (age range 18-50 years) who served as the control group. The results of the implementation of the program underlined the fact that the experimental and control groups' scores improved with respect to the assimilation of derivational rules and principles after the teaching intervention. This entails that focused children's stories provide an effective and fast way of teaching the morphology of Greek L1.

Key words: word formation processes, derivation, diminutization, augmentation, children's stories, language teaching material

1. Introduction

The acquisition of word formation processes is the vehicle for morphological development and vocabulary learning and teaching (Nagy et al., 2006, Nagy & Herman, 1987; Templeton, 1989). The importance of the above lies in the fact that the acquisition of the morphological component of a language makes predictions regarding the acquisition of other grammatical components, such as the phonology, the syntax and the semantics of the language. Except for the acquisition of the morphophonological component, story reading and story retelling are thought to be suitable for oral and verbal language development in L1 (Brice-Heath, 1982; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Egan, 1989; Isbell et al., 2004; Morrow, 1985; Penno et al., 2002; Read, 2008) but also L2 (Sinclair-Bell, 2002;

Shyu, 2008; Tsou et al., 2006). However, none of the aforementioned studies target a specific vocabulary/ grammatical category.

In the present study, we explore the mechanisms, rules and principles, which drive the process of word formation by native speakers of Greek but are also activated throughout. In other words, we investigate the linguistic performance of native speakers with respect to the internal structure of derived forms as well as the relation among distinct derivational constituents, the degree of activation of derivational mechanisms and rules. Emphasis is placed on the formation of diminutive and augmentative forms, which are frequently produced in child and child-directed speech (hereafter CDS) (Stephany, 1995, Thomadaki, 2007; Tzakosta & Hadzidaki, 2013).

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 discusses the rules and principles of derivation in Greek, while section 3 presents the axes and goals of the teaching program. Section 4 offers a detailed presentation and discussion of the teaching intervention, the methodology, the intervention parts and the findings. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Derivation in Greek and cross-linguistically

Greek derivation is defined as the word formation process, which takes the form of affixation (Ralli, 2005). Affixation may take the shape of prefixation (as shown in 1a), suffixation (as shown in 1b), or both in the same word (as shown in 1c).

- 1a. **δια-βιβάζ-ω** <dia-vivaz-o> ‘transmit – 1PR.IND.SG.’
- 1b. παιδ-**ικ-ός** <ped-ik-os> ‘infantile, childish – ADJ.MASC.NOM.’
- 1c. **δια-βιβάστ-ικ-ός** <dia-vivast-ik-os> ‘transmitter – ADJ.MASC.NOM.’¹

In Greek, diminutization and augmentation (i.e., the derivational processes during which nominal forms undergo a change in their semantics in order to define ‘small’ and ‘big’ items of anaphora, respectively) take the form of suffixation. Especially diminutization, which also expresses affection, is broadly used in CDS (Thomadaki, 2007) and is a very productive word formation process cross-linguistically. Therefore, it is worth presenting some cross-linguistic data before we turn to the Greek facts. We will focus on data from Russian, Lithuanian, Finnish, Hebrew and Italian.

In Russian, although diminutization is a non-regular process, it is a frequently attested process. It takes the form of suffixation: the use of suffixes depends on word gender and phonological shape. Some representative examples of Russian diminutives are provided in (2) below.

- 2a. sestra ‘sister’,
- 2b. sestr-**ICHK**-a or sestr-**JONK**-a ‘sister-DIM.’

According to Voeykova (1998), the preference for certain suffixes depends on input frequency: In addition, it is only after the age of 1.08 years that ‘conscious’ use of diminutive forms begins in child speech. However, such claims do not lead to safe conclusions since they come from one child only (Voeykova, 1998).

In Lithuanian, diminutization is the most frequent word formation process. Like in Russian, it takes the form of suffixation and the preference for certain suffixes/ forms is attributed to input frequency

¹ Greek inflectional suffixes are attached to the right of derivational suffixes. Therefore, inflectional suffixes are in bold letters together with derivational suffixes but they are isolated with an -.

effects. Savickiene (1998) claims that diminutive vocabulary enrichment is reported after the age of 1.08 years. The most frequent suffixes are *-elis* for the masculine gender and *-ele* for the feminine gender. Representative examples of Lithuanian diminutives are provided in (3a) and (3b) below (Savickiene, 1998).

- 3a. sen-**elis** 'grandfather',
 3b. sen-**ele** 'grandmother'

In Finnish, an agglutinative language, diminutization is realized by means of suffixation and stem changing processes. Suffixed diminutization is illustrated in the data in (4a-b) and stem changing diminutization is exemplified in (4c-e) (Laalo, 1998).

- 4a. - **nen** → kala 'fish' - **kalanen** 'little fish'
 4b. tyttö 'girl' - **tyttönen** 'little girl'
 4c. - **nenu** 'little nose' - derived from **nenä** 'nose'
 4d. - **simmu** 'little eye' - derived from **silmä** 'eye'
 4e. - **känny** 'little hand' - derived from **käsi** 'hand'

Although diminutization is frequently attested in child speech, it is not a frequent word formation process in adult speech and CDS. The data from one child acquiring Finnish as a mother language, though limited, report the extensive use of the second type of diminutization (namely, stem changing diminutization) already by the age of 0.10 years (examples in (3c-e)). This preference is explained by the fact that the products of diminutization are forms which are characterized by their prosodically simple phonological shape (Laalo, 1998), (i.e., their simple syllabic and prosodic structure).

In addition, diminutization in Hebrew is realized through two fundamental processes: suffixation and reduplication are both productive and frequently attested in child and adult speech. Representative examples of suffixed and reduplicated diminutives are provided in (4a) and (4b), respectively.

- 4a. kos 'glass', **kosit** 'wineglass'
 4b. kaxol 'blue', **kaxalxal** 'light blue'

Diminutive forms appear relatively late, i.e., after the age of 2.00 as shown in the data of eight children (age range: 1.02-5.06). Hebrew children do not make use of adult forms and prefer to produce diminutives of the suffixation *-i* pattern (Ravid, 1998).

Finally, Italian data from one child who was tested between the age of 1.04-3.09 display that diminutization takes place through suffixation and infixation. Recursivity is quite frequently and early attested in child speech, as shown in (5a) (De Marco, 1998). According to De Marco (1998) semantic acquisition in Italian occurs only after augmentatives emerge. It is important to note that none of the above studies considered augmentation, specifically the rules and principles governing this word formation process and its relation to diminutization.

5. albergh-**ett-uccio** 'hotel-dim-dim'

Turning to Greek and given the existing literature, diminutives appear in the speech of infants around the age of 2.00 (Stephany, 1995). Diminutization seems to be determined by transparency of meaning, transparency of morphology, and productivity (Dalalakis, 1996). In other words, diminutive forms have specific meaning, and specific anaphora. Therefore, they are easy to decompose since they are morphologically simple and transparent. This is in accordance with the ideas developed by Dalalakis et al. (1999) who have pointed out that complex words take longer to process than simpler

ones independent of their (syllabic) length.

Furthermore, morphologically transparent complex words are processed faster than lexicalized complex words. For example, the word *κουκλ-άκ-ι* is more transparent than the originally diminutive form *σακάκ-ι*, which is not perceived as a diminutive form anymore. It is rather considered to be a lexicalized word. In addition, morphologically licit decomposition is easier than morphologically unmotivated decomposition. This is attested in the cases of *κουκλ-άκ-ι* vs. *αυγ-ουλ-άκ-ι*. In addition, Dalalakis (1996) tested nine subjects diagnosed with Developmental Language Impairment (DLI) who varied in age between 5.00 and 16.00 years of age. Dalalakis tested 80 real (62.6%) and 20 novel words (42.4%) through two tasks, one testing comprehension and one testing production. The results show that subjects performed better in the comprehension task (82.2%) as opposed to the production task (75.6%) in real *-ak-i* diminutives. Both DLI and typically developing controls showed that performance improves with age.

Moreover, Thomadaki (2007) has reported that the *-ak-i* suffix is the most frequently attested followed by *-ul-a* and *-its-a*. She further claims that type frequency rather than token frequency contributes to suffix productivity.² In addition, the emergence of new diminutives is related to child vocabulary growth in general. Finally, Tzakosta & Hadzidaki (2013) display that diminutization is a very productive word formation processes. Diminutives are preferred to augmentatives in ~65% of the tested cases. Diminutive preference is further inferred by the fact that ~40% of the augmentative forms are not successfully answered as opposed to 15% of diminutives. *-ak-i* is massively produced by preschool native speakers of Greek, followed by all other suffixes which exhibit much lower rates. It is worth mentioning that non-diminutive forms display a 10% rate of emergence. In addition, Tzakosta & Hadzidaki (2013) argue that in Greek the most frequently emerging diminutive suffixes are usually composed by simple syllabic structures lacking complex onsets and codas and are characterized by the unmarked prosodic patterns, i.e., they are disyllabic. This is the case with the diminutive suffixes *-ak-i* or *-ul-a*.

3. Dyonomasia & Akiarositsa: the journeys of a centipede in Grammarland

The aim of this section is to discuss the axes governing *Aki-aros-itsa*, one of the two focused language teaching programs – the second one is *Dyonomasia* - created by Sinodi and Tzakosta (2014a, 2014b), which aims to facilitate and reinforce learning and teaching of specific word formation mechanisms. The implementation of *Aki-aros-itsa* and *Dyonomasia* in class may assist language educators to accurately evaluate the factors, the principles and the conditions that govern and, at the same time, facilitate language learning and teaching. The teaching materials consider the fundamental aim of the preschool curriculum, i.e., that teaching should take place in a playful manner (Read, 2008). Each of them describes and targets a morphological aspect of Greek. Specifically, *Aki-aros-itsa* targets word derivation and *Dyonomasia* targets word compounding. Derivation and compounding are two distinct “journeys of a centipede in Grammarland”. Both teaching materials are driven by the same ‘philosophy’. More specifically, each program is based on a story made up of real and novel words in order to test the degree to which word formation is governed by mnemonic strategies or the productive and conscious application of word formation rules.

Aki-aros-itsa, which is utilized in the present study (Sinodi & Tzakosta 2014b), is based on the findings and claims made by Kalligiannaki and Tzakosta (2013), Tzakosta (2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2017)

² However, Thomadaki (2007) does not make clear why type frequency rather than token frequency contributes to suffix productivity.

and Tzakosta and Mamadaki (2013) according to which preference for specific morphological forms is defined by mnemonic mechanisms in existing words. However, full mastery of the morphological rules by the learners results in variability in the production of non-existing newly formed words.

The central heroes of the story are two little animals, Roussa, a centipede, and Noula, a kitten. Roussa and Noula become friends and they travel around Grammarland, they make new friends and enrich their linguistic knowledge. The story has been chosen as the best tool for the evaluation of language knowledge since it offers a context of meaningful communication. Story reading and story retelling are suitable for oral and verbal language development (Egan, 1989; Isbell et al., 2004; Morrow, 1985). The story is accompanied by a guide addressed to parents and language instructors as well as a set of suggested linguistic activities (see Figures 1 and 2).

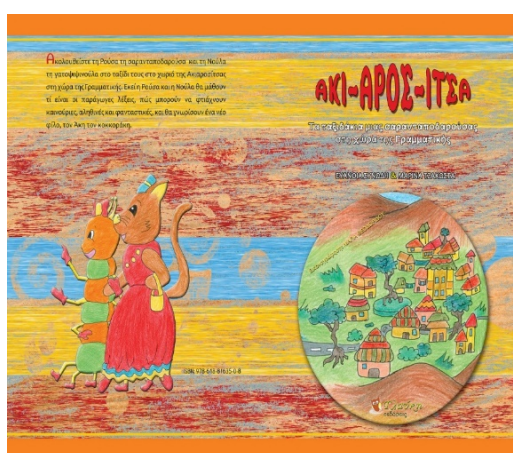


Figure 1
The Dyonomasia story cover



Figure 2
The Aki-aros-itsa parts

4. Methodology of the present study

The major aim of the research presented in this paper is to test whether targeted language teaching materials are more accurate for language development and language teaching. More specifically, we aim to:

- Evaluate the linguistic level of the control and experimental group with respect to their word formation skills,
- Test whether there are different degrees word formation processes/ functions preferences for different groups, for example, diminutive forms over augmentative forms or vice versa,
- Assess whether both the control and experimental groups' language skills improve after the teaching intervention.

We assume that:

- Diminutization is preferred to augmentation given both groups' linguistic background,
- Both groups language skills improve after the teaching intervention.

4.1. The material

As already mentioned, *Aki-aros-itsa* aims to evaluate the degree of accurate application of word formation processes and tests the productive use of existing as well as non-existing derived forms, (more specifically, nominal and verbal words, diminutives and augmentatives as well as word families). Its name is made of the combination of three major Greek diminutive and augmentative derivational endings, i.e. **-ak-i**, **-ar-os**, **-its-a** and consists of three parts: a story, a set of 10 representative teaching/ practice activities and a guide directed to parents and educators. The linguistic activities take the shape of word matching, word combination, filling the blanks, choosing the correct form.

4.2. The participants

Aki-aros-itsa was implemented to a) a group of 94 monolingual preschool children (age range: 5-6 years) (hereafter **Experimental Group 1, EG1**), since we aimed to test the effect of the program before the critical period age limit (7 years) (Lenneberg, 1967), and b) a group of 54 adults (age range 18-50 years) (hereafter **Experimental Group 2, EG2**). The reason we used adults as controls is because we find it essential to compare the preschoolers' scores with the scores of native speakers who are expected to have fully acquired the rules of word formation processes and, therefore, have full mastery of their mother languages' distinct ways of expression.

The program was carried out in three phases in real class settings by three researchers. The class teacher was present during the entire process in order to facilitate the procedure if/ when needed. In Phase 1, the participants had to a) have the story read to them by the class's teacher, b) talk in class about the story's content, the derived words found in it and their properties, and, c) make a list of the derived forms of the story. In Phase 2, only EG1 had to draw a scene from the story (Figure. 3), while in Phase 3, EG1 and EG2 participated in various linguistic activities which took the form of picture naming tasks, close test and word-matching (Figure. 4). The three phases were preceded by a pre-test phase and followed by a post-test phase during which the EG1 participants were tested in the formation of derived forms. Only EG1 participated in the pre-test and post-test phase. Adults who are thought to have reached full mastery of the morphology of the mother tongue did not participate in the pre-test and post-test phase. However, they participated in all three phases of the project. Story reading took place in a university class and EG2 participants were tested individually. The implementation of the teaching program was carried out within a school/ academic week.



Figure 3: Drawing augmentative and diminutive forms during Phase 2.

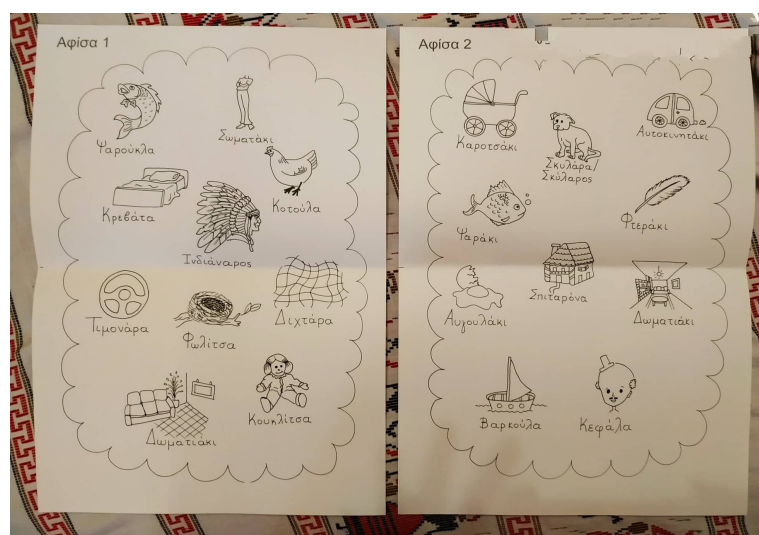


Figure 4: A representative word-matching task in Aki-aros-itsa

4.3. Findings

This subsection discusses the findings of the implementation of the teaching program. For the ease of reading, all tables are moved to the appendix. However, all tables are referred to in the discussion. Our findings display that diminutive endings were massively used for the formation of diminutive forms by all participants of EG1 and EG2 (85.38%) as opposed to other forms of diminutizing (6a). This preference created a huge gap between diminutive endings and the second category of diminutives, namely, periphrastic diminutives (5.6%) (6b). The other categories garnered smaller percentages. The maximum number of answers for diminutive endings was 21 with a 9.99 mean number of answers (table 1).

6a. kout-i → kout-ak-i 'box – little box'
Box-dim. end.

6b. kout-i → para poli mikro kout-i
Very very little box

-ak-i is clearly the most frequently attested diminutive ending (percent: 67.9%, mean number of answers: 6.93). -ak-i is followed by -its-a which has a much lower production rate (percent: 16.94%, mean number of answers: 1.73), while the third diminutive ending is -ul-a (percent: 11.98%, mean number of answers: 1.22). -al-ak-i, -ul-ak-i and -its-its-a are the three double diminutive endings³ which exhibit lower scores, 1.65%, 0.25 and 0.25, respectively. These production rates of diminutive endings are in line with the findings of Stephany (1995), Thomadaki (2007) and Tzakosta and Hadzidaki (2013) (table 2).

Like in the case of diminutive forms, augmentative endings are used for the formation of augmentative forms (67.4%), followed by periphrastic augmentatives, e.g., (17.47%). There are also other types of augmentatives formation (for example, compound forms, unchanged forms or forms with double derivational endings). The mean number of answers for the most productive

³ Diminutization is recursive in Greek, therefore, it is possible to attach multiple derivational/ diminutive endings in the stem of the word.

augmentatives' category is 7.3. In addition, the use of double augmentation (7c) is small (percent: 0.38%, mean number of answers: 0.04) (table 4).

- 7a. aftocinit-o → aftocinit-**ar-a** 'car - very big car'
- 7b. aftocinit-o → para poli megalō aftocinito
Very very big car
- 7c. aftocinit-o → aftocinit-**ar-ara**
Very very big car

-ar-a/ -ar-os/ -ar-o appear to be the most frequently attested augmentative forms (percent: 85.13%, mean number of answers: 6.03) **-ar-a/ -ar-os/ ar-o** are followed by **-ukl-a** (percent: 4.78%, mean number of answers: 0.34%). These findings are in line with those in Tzakosta and Hadzidaki (2013) (table 4).

Tables 5-8 in the appendix summarize the production rates of diminutive and augmentative types and endings specifically for EG2 (adults). It appears that for both diminutive and augmentative forms derived words are preferred at higher rates compared to the total results in tables 1 and 2. Therefore, diminutive endings apply in 92,85% of the produced forms (mean number of answers: 13.22) (table 5), while augmentative endings apply in 89.98% of the produced forms (mean number of answers: 10.98) (table 7). The preference for **-ak-i** in the case of diminutive forms (table 6) and **-aros/-ara/-aro** in the case of augmentative forms (table 8) is equivalent to the rates emerging for all participants.

Tables 9-12 present the data of EG1 (children) in the pre-test phase (namely, before the teaching intervention was implemented in class). Clear diminutive and augmentative forms are preferred to other types of diminutization (table 9) and augmentation (table 11) **-ak-i** and **-ar-os/ -ar-a/ -ar-o** remain the most popular diminutive and augmentative endings (table 10, table 12), although children's rates are lower than those of the adults. It is interesting that **-ak-i** displays lower rates (69,65%) than **-ar-os/ -ar-a/ -ar-o** (86.46%).

Finally, tables 13-16 display the rates of the produced diminutive and augmentative forms after Aki-*aros-itsa* was taught in class. It is evident that all data are in line with the data in the tables for all participants but also separate groups. More specifically, diminutive formation prefers derivation through suffixation (percent: 87.11%, mean number of answers: 8.99) and **-ak-i** is the preferred diminutive suffix (percent: 66.25%, mean number of answers: 6.20) and it is followed by **-its-a** (percent: 18.52%, mean number of answers: 1.73) and **-ul-a** (percent: 12.27%, mean number of answers: 1,15).

Children's progress in the formation of diminutive and augmentative forms after the teaching intervention is reported in figures 5-7. More specifically, figure 5 shows that diminutive forms are preferred to augmentative forms both in the pre-test and post-test phase. Progress was greater for augmentatives compared to diminutives. Therefore, diminutive formation is improved by 2.95%, while for augmentatives the improvement rate was as much as 5.97%.

Figures 6 and 7 illustrate children's improved scores for diminutive and augmentative forms, respectively. Figure 6 shows that children's productions were improved for all diminutive endings. **-ak-i** got the lower improvement scores since this ending already displayed high scores.

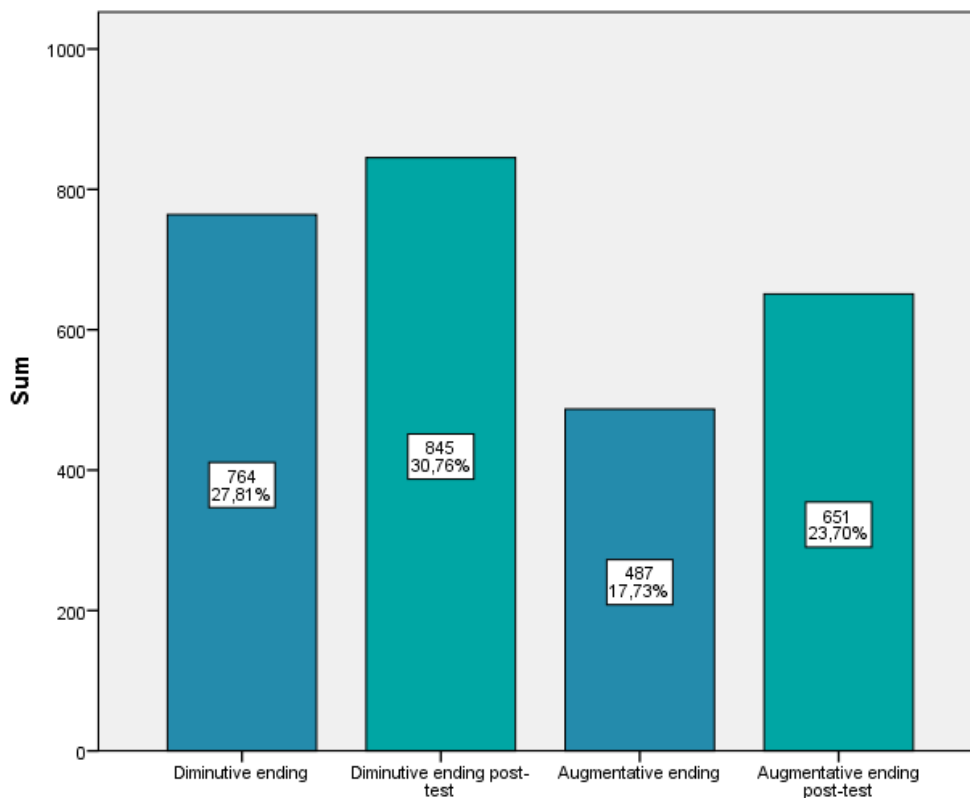


Figure 5: Diminutive and augmentative forms emerging in the pre and post- phase

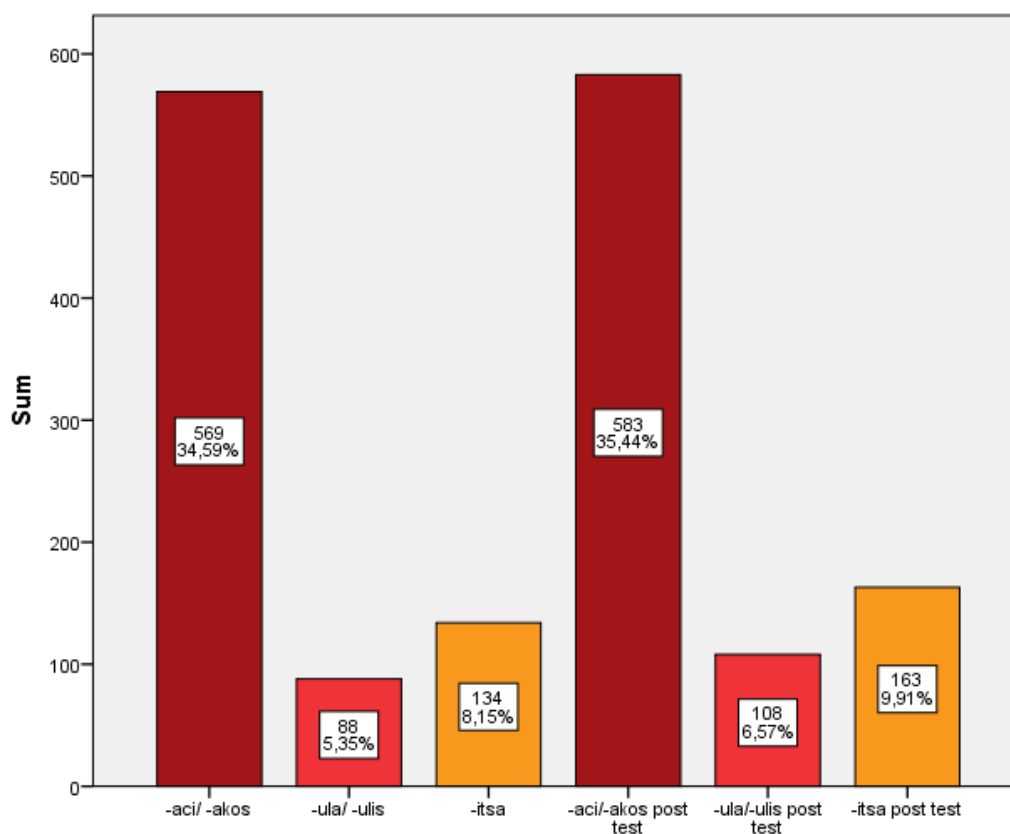


Figure 6: Diminutive endings in the pre- and post-phase

The same holds for augmentative endings in figure 7. On the one hand, there is clear improvement of the children’s general word derivation skills. Children’s preferences follow the patterns of emergence reported in previous studies (Tzakosta & Hadzidaki, 2013).

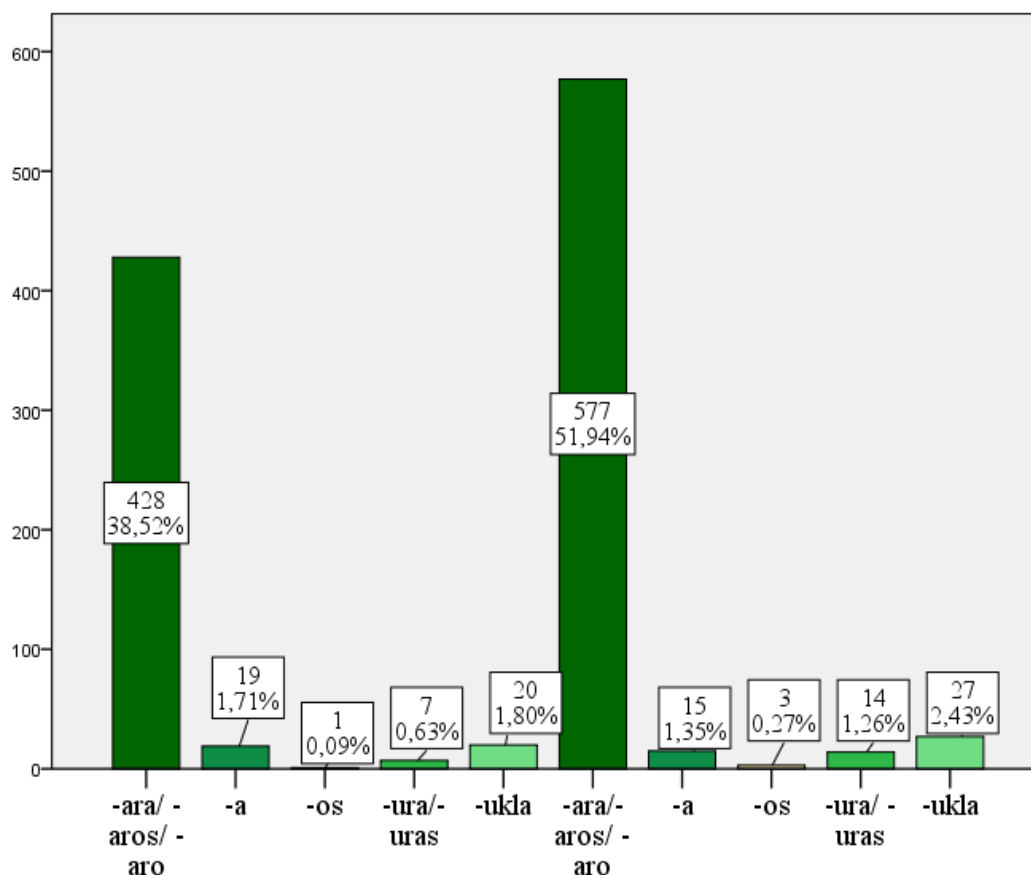


Figure 7: Augmentative endings in the pre- and post-phase

Finally, figures 8-11 compare children’s scores in the pre-test and post-test phases with those of the adults. Figures 8 and 9 refer to the comparison of the produced diminutive and augmentative forms. Figures 10 and 11 compare the suffixed diminutive and augmentative forms. It is obvious that children’s morphological development improves in the post-test phase. However, children’s scores are lower than those of the adults, since children are still in the process of acquisition of the morphological component of their mother tongue.

To summarize the above findings, it is evident that diminutive endings are massively used for the formation of diminutive forms by all participants of EG1 and EG2 (85.38%) as opposed to other forms of diminutizing, like periphrastic diminutives or idiosyncratic forms. **-ak-i** is clearly the most frequently attested diminutive ending, a finding which verifies and supports the findings of Stephany (1995), Thomadaki (2007) and Tzakosta and Hadzidaki (2013). As far as augmentation is concerned, suffixation is also massively preferred by all participants. **-ar-a/ -ar-os/ -ar-o** appear to be the most frequently attested augmentative forms followed by **-ukl-a** (see also Tzakosta & Hadzidaki, 2013, for similar results). The major outcome of the implementation of Akiarositsa is twofold: on the one hand, diminutization and augmentation are very productive word formation processes, which

facilitate morphological development, and, on the other hand, specialized language teaching programs can promote and reinforce language development. Put differently, language teaching projects/ materials can be effective if they tackle all aspects of a targeted linguistic phenomenon which is, in turn, treated in a playful manner like by means of a story. The teaching intervention has led to the children’s gradual but clear progress regarding the formation of diminutive and augmentative forms.

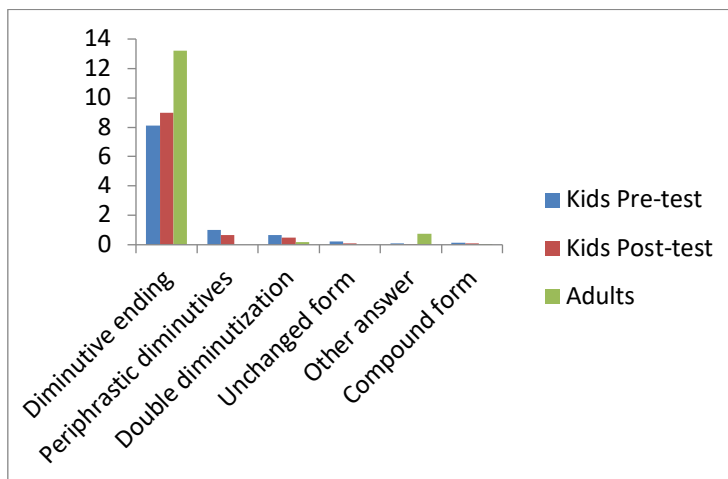


Figure 8: Diminutive forms for children (pre-, post-phase) and adults

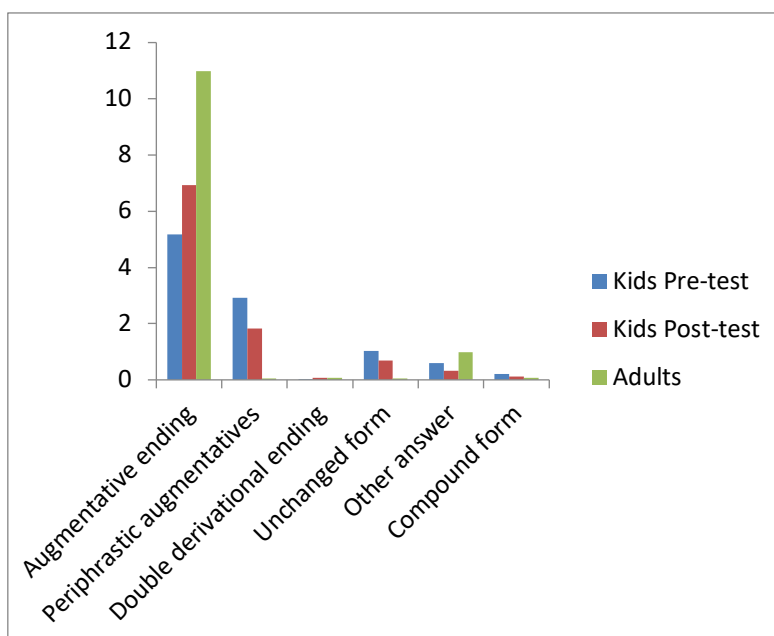


Figure 9: Augmentative forms for children (pre-, post-phase) and adults

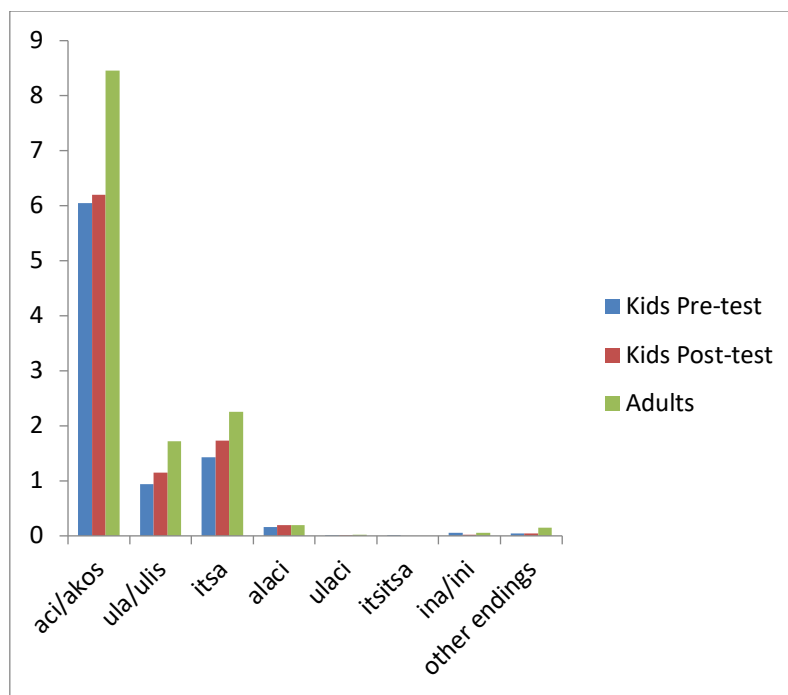


Figure 10: Diminutive endings for children (pre-, post-phase) and adults

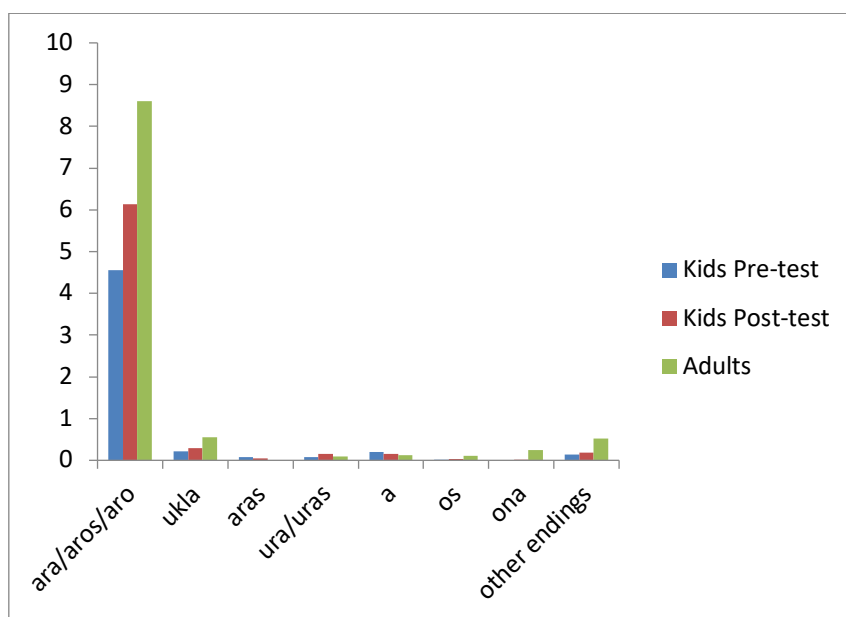


Figure 11: Augmentative forms for children (pre-, post-phase) and adults

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have tested the results stemming from the implementation of a teaching program, which places emphasis on the formation of derived forms, more specifically, diminutization and augmentation. The results displayed that teaching materials which target specific grammatical phenomena get clear results with respect to the participants' understanding of the phenomena and

the degree of learning the rules which underlie the tested grammatical phenomena. Our findings further underline the fact that children's stories not only provide a natural and effective way of language teaching, in general, and teaching the morphology of Greek as mother language, in particular but also highlight the importance of specialized and focused teaching material for the acquisition of the morphological component, vocabulary development and enrichment of the mother tongue. We argue that such teaching programs could also be successfully utilized in second language learning and teaching as well as the detection and diagnosis of language disorders. Research is still open in these fields.

References

- Brice-Heath, Sh. (1982). What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. *Language and Society*, 2, 49-76.
- Chomsky, N. (1959). A review of B.F. Skinner verbal behavior. *Language*, 35, 26-58.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1975). *Reflections on language*. New York: Pantheon Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1981). *Lectures on government and binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of language: its origin, nature and use*. New York: Praeger.
- Connelly, F.M. & Clandinin, D.J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14.
- Dalalakis, J.E. (1996). *Developmental language impairment: Evidence from Greek and its implications for morphological representation*. Ph.D. diss., McGill University.
- Dalalakis, J.E., Kehayia, E. & Tsapkini, K. (1999). Constraints on morphological decomposition: Evidence from Greek diminutives. In *Greek Linguistics '97: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on the Greek Language* (pp. 789-798). Athens: University of Athens.
- De Marco, A. (1998). The acquisition of diminutives in Italian'. In S. Gillis (ed.), *Antwerp Papers in Linguistics*, 95: 199-218.
- Egan, K. (1989). *Teaching as story-telling. An alternative approach to teaching and curriculum in the elementary school*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Ganger, J. & M.R. Brent (2004). 'Reexamining the vocabulary spurt'. *Developmental Psychology*, 40(4), 621-632.
- Isbell, R., Sobol, J., Lindauer, L & Lawrence, A. (2004). The effect of storytelling and story reading on the oral language complexity and story comprehension of young children. *Early Childhood Educational Journal*, 32(3), 157-163.
- Kalligiannaki, S. & Tzakosta, M. (2013). Common characteristics in compound formation: Evidence from bilingual acquisition and L2 language learning. In N. Lavidas, Th. Alexiou & A.M. Sougari (eds.), *Major Trends in Theoretical and Applied Linguistics: Selected Papers from the 20th International Symposium from Theoretical and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 219-232). London: Versita.
- Laalo, K. (1998). Diminutives in Finnish child and child-directed speech.' In S. Gillis (ed.), *Antwerp Papers in Linguistics*, 95, 155-168.
- Lenneberg, E. H. (1967). *Biological foundations of language*. Wiley.
- Morrow, L.M. (1985). Retelling stories: a strategy for improving young children's comprehension, concept of story structure and oral language complexity. *The Elementary School Journal*, 85(5), 647-661.
- Nagy, W.E., Berninger, V.W & Abbott, R.D. (2006). Contributions of morphology beyond phonology to literacy outcomes of upper elementary and middle-school students' *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(1), 134- 147.

- Nagy, W.E., & Herman, P.A. (1987). Breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge: Implications for acquisition and instruction. In M. McKeown & M. Curtis (Eds.), *The nature of vocabulary acquisition* (pp. 19-35). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Penno, J.F., Wilkinson, I.A.G. & Moore, D.W. (2002). Vocabulary acquisition from teacher explanation and repeated listening to stories: Do they overcome the Matthew effect? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 94*(1), 23-33.
- Read, C. (2008). Scaffolding children's learning through story and drama. *IATEFL, 2*, 6-9.
- Ralli, A. (2005). *Morfologia [Morphology]*. Athens: Patakis.
- Ralli, A. (2007). *Sinthesi lekseon: Mia diaglossiki prosegisi [Word compounding: A cross-linguistic approach]*. Athens: Patakis.
- Ravid, D. (1998). 'Diminutive in Early Child Hebrew'. In S. Gillis (ed.), *Antwerp Papers in Linguistics 95*, 169-197.
- Savickiene, I. (1998). The acquisition of diminutives in Lithuanian. In S. Gillis (ed.), *Antwerp Papers in Linguistics, 95*, 130-153.
- Sinclair-Bell, J. 2002. Narrative inquiry: more than just telling stories. *TESOL Quarterly 36.2*. 207-213.
- Shyu, J.-T. (2008). Using stories to promote children's Mandarin language development in kindergarten. *ACIE Newsletter, 11*, 1-8.
- Sinodi, E. & Tzakosta, M. (2014 b). *Akiarositsa: Ta taksidakia mias saradapodarousas sti hora tis grammatikis [Akiarosista: The travels of a forty-legged bug in grammarland]*. Chania: Glafki.
- Sinodi, E. & Tzakosta, M. (2014 a). *Dionomasia: Ta taksidakia miaw saradapodarousas sti hora tis grammatikis [Dionomasia: The travels of a forty-legged bug in grammarland]*. Chania: Glafki.
- Stephany, U. (1995). The acquisition of Greek. In D. Slobin (ed.), *The Cross-linguistic Study of Language Acquisition*, Vol. 4, Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Templeton, S. (1989). Tacit and explicit knowledge of derivational morphology: foundations for a unified approach to spelling and vocabulary development in the intermediate grades and beyond. *Reading Psychology, 10*, 233-253.
- Thomadaki, E. (2007). On the Productivity of the Diminutive Suffixation in Greek child. In E. Agathopoulou, M. Dimitrakopoulou & D. Papadopoulou (eds.), *Selected Papers from the 17th International Symposium on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics. Vol. II* (pp. 486-497). Thessaloniki, Department of English Language and Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- Tsou, W., Wang, W. & Tzeng, J. (2006). Applying a multimedia storytelling website in foreign language learning. *Computers and Education, 47*, 17-28.
- Tzakosta, M. (2009). Perceptual ambiguities in the formation of Greek compounds by native speakers. In G.K. Giannakis, M. Baltazani, G.I. Xydopoulos, & T. Tsaggalidis (eds.), *E-proceedings of the 8th International Conference of Greek Linguistics* (pp. 545-557). Ioannina, Department of Philology, University of Ioannina.
- Tzakosta, M. (2011a). L1 transfer in L2 Learning: compound forms in the speech of Turkish learners of Greek. In E. Kitis, N. Lavidas, N. Topintzi & T. Tsangalidis (eds.), *Selected papers from the 19th International Symposium on Theoretical and Applied Linguistics (19th ISTAL)* (pp. 459-468). Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- Tzakosta, M. (2011b). L1 transfer in L2 word formation. In the *E-proceedings of the 9th International Conference of Greek Linguistics* (pp. 416-427). Chicago: University of Chicago. (<http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/ICGL/proceedings/>).
- Tzakosta, M. & M. Hadzidaki (2013). Word formation in child speech: evidence from preschoolers. In the *E-proceedings of the 10th International Conference of Greek Linguistics* (pp. 571-577). Komotini: Department of Philology, Democritus University of Thrace. <http://www.icgl.gr/el/papers-in-english.html>
- Tzakosta, M. & Mamadaki, M. (2013). Compound formation in L2 learning: the case of Bulgarian, Romanian and Russian learners of Greek. In the *E-proceedings of the 10th International Conference of Greek Linguistics*, Komotini: Department of Philology, Democritus University of Thrace (pp. 578-583). <http://www.icgl.gr/el/papers-in-english.html>

Voeykova, M.D. (1998). Acquisition of diminutives by a Russian child. In S. Gillis (ed.), *Antwerp Papers in Linguistics 95*, 108-128.

Werker, J., Fennell, C.T., Corcoran, K.M. & Stager, C.L. (2002). Infants' ability to learn phonetically similar words: Effects of age and vocabulary size. *Infancy*, 3(1), 1-30.

Appendix

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
Diminutive ending	148	0	21	1478	9.99	85.38%
Periphrastic diminutives	148	0	10	97	.66	5.6%
Double diminutization	148	0	7	71	.48	4.10%
Unchanged form	148	0	7	20	.14	1.6%
Other answer	148	0	6	51	.34	2.95%
Compound form	148	0	8	14	.09	0.37%
Valid N (listwise)	148					

Table 1: Types of diminutive forms for all participants

Diminutive endings	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
-aki/ -akos	148	0	13	1026	6.93	67.90%
-ula/ -ulis	148	0	5	181	1.22	11.98%
-itsa	148	0	6	256	1.73	16.94%
-alaki	148	0	1	25	.17	1.65%
-ulaki	148	0	1	2	.01	0.25%
-itsitsa	148	0	1	1	.01	0.25%
-ina/ -ini	148	0	2	8	.05	0.25%
other endings	148	0	2	12	.08	0.79%
Valid N (listwise)	148					

Table 2: Diminutive endings for all participants

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
Augmentative ending	148	0	17	1080	7.30	67.40%
Periphrastic augmentatives	148	0	12	277	1.87	17.47%
Compound form	148	0	10	25	.17	1.57%
Unchanged form	148	0	11	100	.68	6.26%
Other answer	148	0	10	109	.74	6.92%
Double derivational ending	148	0	1	6	.04	0.38%
Valid N (listwise)	148					

Table 3: Types of augmentative forms for all participants

Augmentative endings	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
-ara/ -aros/ -aro	148	0	13	893	6.03	85.13%
-ukla	148	0	7	50	.34	4.78%
-aras	148	0	2	7	.05	3.91%
-ura/-uras	148	0	3	12	.08	1.14%
-a	148	0	3	26	.18	1.24%
-os	148	0	1	7	.05	0.13%
-ona	148	0	1	13	.09	0.3%
other endings ⁴	148	0	5	41	.28	3.54%
Valid N (listwise)	148					

Table 4: Augmentative endings for all participants

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
Diminutive ending	54	6	21	714	13.22	92.85%
Periphrastic diminutives	54	0	0	0	.00	0.00%
Double diminutization	54	0	1	11	.20	1.43%
Unchanged form	54	0	0	0	.00	0.00%
Other answer	54	0	6	41	.76	5.33%
Compound form	54	0	2	3	.06	0.39%
Valid N (listwise)	54					

Table 5: Types of diminutive forms for EG2

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
-aki/ -akos	54	5	13	457	8.46	65.85%
-ula/ -ulis	54	0	5	93	1.72	13.40%
-itsa	54	0	6	122	2.26	17.58%
-alaki	54	0	1	10	.19	1.15%
-ulaki	54	0	1	0	.02	0.30%
-itsitsa	54	0	0	0	.00	0.00%
-ina/ -ini	54	0	1	3	.06	0.72%
other endings	54	0	2	8	.15	1.00%
Valid N (listwise)	54					

Table 6: Diminutive endings for EG2

⁴ The augmentative endings of the 'other endings' category are **-akl-as, -or-os, -ub-a, -un-a, -o, -ol-a, -ud-a, -el-a, -ar-is, -ud-ar-a.**

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
Augmentative ending	54	6	17	593	10.98	89.98%
Periphrastic augmentatives	54	0	2	3	.06	0.30%
Double derivational ending	54	0	1	4	.07	0.61%
Unchanged form	54	0	1	2	.04	0.46%
Other answer	54	0	10	53	.98	8.04%
Compound form	54	0	2	4	.07	0.61%
Valid N (listwise)	54					

Table 7: Types of augmentative forms for EG2

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
-ara/ -aros/ -aro	54	1	13	465	8.61	83.94%
-ukla	54	0	6	30	.56	5.42%
-aras	54	0	0	0	.00	0.00%
-ura/-uras	54	0	1	5	.09	0.44%
-a	54	0	2	7	.13	1.26%
-os	54	0	1	6	.11	0.55%
-ona	54	0	1	13	.24	2.35%
other endings	54	0	5	28	.52	5.05%
Valid N (listwise)	54					

Table 8: Augmentative endings for EG2.

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
Diminutive ending	94	0	13	764	8.13	79.42%
Periphrastic diminutives	94	0	10	97	1.03	10.08%
Double diminutization	94	0	7	60	.64	6.24%
Unchanged form	94	0	7	20	.21	2.08%
Other answer	94	0	3	10	.11	1.14%
Compound form	94	0	8	11	.12	1.14%
Valid N (listwise)	94					

Table 9: Types of diminutive forms for EG1/ Pre-test

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
-aki/ -akos	94	0	11	569	6.05	69.65%
-ula/ -ulis	94	0	5	88	.94	10.77%
-itsa	94	0	4	134	1.43	16.40%
-alaki	94	0	1	15	.16	1.22%
-ulaki	94	0	1	1	.01	0.49%
-itsitsa	94	0	1	1	.01	0.49%
-ina/ -ini	94	0	2	5	.05	0.49%
other endings	94	0	2	4	.04	0.49%
Valid N (listwise)	94					

Table 10: Diminutive endings for EG1/ pre-test

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
Augmentative ending	94	0	12	487	5.18	69.63%
Periphrastic augmentatives	94	0	12	274	2.91	18.29%
Double derivational ending	94	0	1	2	.02	0.74%
Unchanged form	94	0	11	98	1.04	6.84%
Other answer	94	0	6	56	.60	3.32%
Compound form	94	0	10	21	.22	1.18%
Valid N (listwise)	94					

Table 11: Types of augmentative forms for EG1/ pre-test

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	
-ara/ -aros/ -aro	94	0	11	428	4.55	86.46%
-ukla	94	0	7	20	.21	4.04%
-aras	94	0	2	7	.07	2.63%
-ura/-uras	94	0	3	7	.07	1.41%
-a	94	0	3	19	.20	3.84%
-os	94	0	1	1	.01	0.20%
-ona	94	0	0	0	.00	0.00%
other endings	94	0	2	13	.14	2.83%
Valid N (listwise)	94					

Table 12: Augmentative endings for EG1/ pre-test

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
Diminutive ending	94	0	14	845	8.99	87.11%
Periphrastic diminutives	94	0	9	61	.65	6.29%
Double diminutization	94	0	8	45	.48	4.64%
Unchanged form	94	0	5	9	.10	0.93%
Other answer	94	0	1	1	.01	0.1%
Compound form	94	0	9	9	.10	0.93%
Valid N (listwise)	94					

Table 13: Types of diminutive forms for EG1/post-test

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
-aci/-akos	94	0	10	583	6.20	66.25%
-ula/-ulis	94	0	5	108	1.15	12.27%
-itsa	94	0	6	163	1.73	18.52%
-alaci	94	0	1	18	.19	0.45%
-ulaci	94	0	1	1	.01	0.40%
-itsitsa	94	0	0	0	.00	0.00%
-ina/-ini	94	0	1	2	.02	1.16%
-araci	94	0	1	1	.01	0.40%
other endings	94	0	2	4	.04	1.0%
Valid N (listwise)	94					

Table 14: Diminutive endings for EG1/ post-test

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
Augmentative ending	94	0	12	487	5.18	69.63%
Periphrastic augmentatives	94	0	12	274	2.91	18.29%
Double derivational ending	94	0	1	2	.02	0.74%
Unchanged form	94	0	11	98	1.04	6.84%
Other answer	94	0	6	56	.60	3.32%
Compound form	94	0	10	21	.22	1.18%
Valid N (listwise)	94					

Table 15: Types of augmentative forms for EG1/ post-test

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Percent
-ara/-aros/ -aro	94	0	12	577	6.14	87.03%
-ukla	94	0	9	27	.29	4.07%
-aras	94	0	2	4	.04	0.60%
-ura/ -uras	94	0	3	14	.15	2.42%
-a	94	0	4	15	.16	2.50%
-os	94	0	1	3	.03	0.22%
-ona	94	0	1	1	.01	0.20%
-araros	94	0	2	4	.04	0.25%
other endings	94	0	3	18	.19	2.71%
Valid N (listwise)	94					

Table 16: Augmentative endings for EG1/ post-test

Marina Tzakosta (martzak@edc.uoc.gr, martzak74@gmail.com) is Professor of Language Development and Pedagogy of the Preschool Child at the Department of Preschool Education, University of Crete, Greece. Her research interests expand to the development of L1s – including bilingualism, and L2s, language teaching, language disorders, language contact, language change, dialectology and dialectal education. She has been awarded several research grants and scholarships by the European Commission, the Greek State Scholarships Foundation, The John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, the Stanley Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies – Princeton University, the Research Committee of the University of Crete.

Chrysavgi Dertzekou (chrderz@gmail.com) holds a B.A. from the Department of Preschool Education of the University of Crete and is currently an MA student working on a thesis on the acquisition of Greek derivation by preschoolers. She has participated in various research projects and has been the co-author of various papers. She has been awarded the Research Committee of the University of Crete scholarship for Excellence two times during her MA studies.

Georgia Panteloglou (gpanteloglou@gmail.com) holds a B.A. from the Department of Preschool Education of the University of Crete and is currently an MA student working on a thesis on the acquisition of phonological structures of Greek by preschoolers. She has participated in various research projects. She has been awarded the Research Committee of the University of Crete scholarship for Excellence once during her MA studies.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 124-137

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

“Listen to my story, play and interact”: Greek preschool children learning English in a digital environment

Eleni KOROSIDOU & Eleni GRIVA

Given the constantly changing social and educational landscape and the continuous advances in technology for learning/ teaching purposes, the question of what constitutes appropriate literacy pedagogy in a modern educational context has been raised by a number of researchers (see Kaminski, 2019; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). This paper argues in favor of integrating a multimodal approach into foreign language (FL) teaching to very young learners. An innovative educational program was designed and implemented to 26 preschoolers with the ultimate purpose of examining the potential of digital storytelling (Kim, 2014; Robin, 2016) as well as its gamification dynamics (rewards, feedback, time, scores etc.), in order to highly motivate and encourage 5-year-old children to synthesize knowledge from several sources (Kapp, 2012). Special emphasis was placed on the utilization of digital technologies as a means to offer extended opportunities for the promotion of cooperative learning, to strengthen interaction and to develop vocabulary skills (see also Bakhsh, 2016). The findings revealed that digital narratives and multimodal activities a) provided children with opportunities to interact in a gamified learning environment, and b) contributed to developing their listening comprehension skills. Furthermore, interplaying on multimodal interfaces with digital material designed for educational purposes proved to enable children to better acquire FL vocabulary.

Key words: digital storytelling, educational technology, gamification, foreign language, preschoolers

1. Introduction

The ways young learners communicate and express themselves are becoming more and more digital. On the one hand, a worldwide increase has been observed during the last decade in the use of Information and Computer Technologies (ICT) by young children, mainly regarding the home environment (Stephen & Edwards, 2018). Therefore, many children today start school being technologically literate. On the other hand, recent research work reveals that employing ICT as dynamic teaching tools in the language classroom seems to be imperative, as their integration and innovative teaching processes can contribute to meeting the challenges and opportunities of the mobile age (Kokkalia, Economou, Roussos & Choli, 2017; Merzifonluoglu & Gonulal, 2018), as far as

very young learners are concerned (see Korosidou & Bratitsis, 2019; Nikolopoulou, 2019). In that context, the concept of 'gamification of learning' emerges, which incorporates the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-game environments (Gibson, Ostaszewski, Flintoff, Grant & Knight, 2015). Through the introduction of play practices, the learning environment becomes more effective, while the learning experience is more motivating for the learner-user. Consequently, on a short-term level gamification intends to enhance student engagement in the learning process (Seaborn & Fels, 2015), while in the long run, it may be possible to instill behaviours that can foster knowledge acquisition and social interactions (Furdu, Tomozei & Köse, 2017). Considering the abovementioned, we aimed at designing and implementing an innovative foreign (English) language learning environment with kindergarten children, where interaction with ICT for educational purposes would be of utmost importance.

2. Literature review on digital technologies and young learners

Recently, researchers and practitioners have placed great effort into combining FL pedagogy with digital technologies, since young or even very young children tend to use emerging technologies increasingly. The positive effects of educational practices utilizing mobile and game-based learning on student motivation have affected the learning process and have subsequently raised students' interest in the subject matter (Seaborn & Fels, 2015). When learners work in digital environments they a) are provided with authentic learning opportunities, b) are given chances to develop language and digital skills as they make connections between text, images, video, audio and animation, and c) are engaged in meaning making processes, also making connections between their new and prior knowledge (Boyaci & Atalay, 2015; O' Hara, Pritchard, Huang & Pella, 2012).

Even for preschoolers, high-quality learning environments can provide a framework where their natural tendency to explore is developed along with the construction of knowledge and the possibility to raise questions (Chesloff, 2013; Cutter, 2015). To exemplify, interactive e-books help kindergarten children develop their EFL skills (Hans, 2018), with gains reported in listening and phonological awareness (Hamadtoh & Gohar, 2017). Online activities, such as online games, were also found to aid children's vocabulary learning through play and interaction, when employed in a manner appropriate to their needs and potentials (AlNatour & Hijazi, 2018). Moreover, children acquire vocabulary in the target language and become familiar with its use through digital applications and digital games used in education or through Digital Storytelling (DS) (Alexiou & Vitoulis 2014; Alsied & Pathan, 2013; Daniel & Cowan, 2012; O 'Hara, et al., 2012; Paluka & Collins, 2015; Shelby-Caffey, Úbéda & Jenkins, 2014).

In more detail, DS is an educational method which uses technological devices in order to help the user develop interesting stories (Robin, 2016). In DS the art of telling stories is combined with a variety of digital multimedia (Lathem, 2005; Robin & McNeil, 2012), in order to induce learning by implicitly highlighting the language elements aimed to be learnt. It actually represents an evolution of traditional storytelling, enhancing the relationships between user, narration and context through the introduction of new narrative models (Miller, 2004). As learners become more involved in DS processes, they concentrate on appropriate language use in context. Therefore, they do not focus on memorizing vocabulary but rather on using language for a purpose. Multiple intelligences are recognized and exploited through the possibilities provided for the use of images, sounds and text to tell each story. Through these processes, DS appears to reduce students' anxiety levels while enhancing their motivation to actively participate in learning.

Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, Souriyavongsa, Da and Ong (2011) observed that digital stories enhance the comprehension skills of preschoolers in a FL. Figg, McCartney and Gonsoulin (2009) conclude that by integrating DS in students' learning experiences, they are engaged in acquiring 21st century

skills, while teachers are provided with opportunities for differentiated instruction (Figg et al., 2009). Brenner (2013) noted the benefits of introducing DS processes to enhance children's intercultural awareness when learning a FL. She argued that digital stories are the ideal educational tool for learners to overcome the 'cultural shock' of learning the target language. Green (2013) and Skinner and Hagood (2008) reported similar findings.

Drawing on the above mentioned, language education more and more uses the power of multimodal tools to implement new teaching approaches for the benefit of learners. Thus, through DS educators seek to trigger young learners' creative thinking and allow them to develop the skills of a 'competent' technology user and a critical thinker. Overall, digital media constitute potent tools in education. However, focus should be placed on selecting applications or games suitable for the age of the children and tailored to their specific educational needs (see also Griva & Sivropoulou, 2009; Griva & Semoglou, 2012; Griva, Semoglou & Geladari, 2010). In other words, it should be assured that the digital material is linked to the learning objectives and clearly serves the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills (Chalkiadaki, 2018; Korosidou, Bratitsis & Griva, 2021), as well as the interaction among peers (De Freitas, 2018).

3. The research study

3.1. Aim and research questions

This study is part of a broader research project that lasted two school years. An early language learning program was launched in a state kindergarten and the 1st grade of a state primary school. In this paper, focus is placed on the first year of the study, which lasted one school year. DS and gamification of learning techniques were employed with preschoolers in order to enable the development of their language skills in the target language (English). By listening to 'authentic', yet simplified written texts through a DS process, an 'experience' was created for the very young learners-users (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Therefore, the following research questions were posed:

1. Can DS and educational technology have an impact on preschoolers' receptive language skills and their vocabulary development?
2. What are the opportunities for interaction created in a multimodal, gamified environment? What are the difficulties encountered in such a learning context?

3.2. Participants

The educational program was designed for very young learners and implemented to 26 preschoolers, 16 boys and 10 girls who attended a state kindergarten in an urban area in northern Greece. Their average age was 5.5 years old. All students were Greek and they had received no previous formal instruction in the target language, as EFL teaching in the Greek state school begins from the 1st grade onwards.

3.3. Methodology and research procedure

3.3.1. Syllabus design

Gamification of leaning techniques was integrated into a DS context, emphasizing 'authentic' language use and making the development of young learners' multiliteracies skills possible. At the same time, the cultural elements integrated in the stories helped the children correlate 'our culture' with a 'foreign' one, interrelating concepts of 'us' and 'the other'. The ultimate goal was to raise children's awareness of issues on multiculturalism and enable them to respect different 'identities'

around the world. Links between language, culture and ICTs were sought. Attempts were made to foster learning experiences that would ‘connect’ the children’s world with the environment around them (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2004), spark their interest and trigger their motivation; thus, creating the conditions for successful language learning.

The principles of the national Curriculum for the Kindergarten (2014) and the objectives included in the Kindergarten Teacher's Guide (2014), in accordance with the purpose and the specific objectives of the Curriculum for Early English Language Learning (PEAP, 2010) were initially taken into consideration by the authors. Furthermore, a coherent syllabus was designed by integrating the PEAP principles (<http://rcel.enl.uoa.gr/peap/articles/genikes-didaktikes-odigies>) with the purpose and the specific objectives of the present program. The choice of stories from all around the world was of primary importance for the creation of a teaching framework appropriate to the needs of the children. Stories seem to be the tool that can connect children’s imagination with the real world around them, facilitating their acquisition of language skills. It seems that young children’s concentration span becomes less limited and linguistic development is better achieved through stories (Vieira & Krcmar, 2011).

The syllabus was designed around 7 broad thematic units, with a digital story at the core of each unit. The educational material used was interactive and appropriate for children’s perceived needs (Lynch, 2015). All stories were authentic, while in the process of creating digital stories, the necessary adjustments were made to achieve the appropriate language level for the children. The researchers created the stories by using relevant DS tools, such as *Storybird* (<https://storybird.com>), *Storyjumper* (<https://www.storyjumper.com>) or *StoryboardThat* (<https://www.storyboardthat.com>). Stories were selected based on (i) children’s interests, as recorded through interviews with the children before the implementation of the educational program, (ii) children's learning needs, as reported in questionnaires distributed to their parents before the implementation of the educational program, and (iii) the authentic cultural elements and educational values contained in the stories, as documented by the researchers during the material design process.

3.3.2. Implementation of the program

The program lasted for a school year with 52 teaching hours allocated for 27 weeks. The educational activities were carried out for two teaching hours per week (1 teaching hour/ 2 times a week). In the following table (Table 1), the thematic areas of this part of the program and the corresponding story-based units are presented:

Thematic unit	Story
<i>Colors</i>	Our colorful world
<i>Numbers</i>	Let’s travel around the world through stories
<i>Family</i>	Small hands can help big
<i>Animals</i>	The beautiful differences around us
<i>Food</i>	A friend from Japan
<i>The weather</i>	Our Australian friends
<i>Face and body parts – Clothes</i>	The real image

Table 1. The program’s thematic units and the corresponding stories

The units were relevant to children’s daily experience and constituted a framework for vocabulary acquisition in the target language, as well as for oral production of short phrases. More specifically,

researchers integrated communication practices in EFL in the context of the digital stories. As one of the researchers was also the teacher of the classroom, she ensured that preschoolers were encouraged to develop motives for learning the target language by participating in the learning process in small groups, interacting with the digital material and 'realizing' social rules and roles.

The implementation of the educational program was carried out in three stages: the pre-stage, the main stage and the post-stage.

During the pre-stage preschoolers were engaged in the interactive, DS process. Before narrating the story, the teacher encouraged preschoolers to follow her in a digital trip to the country of its origin. The children were provided with opportunities to activate their previous schemata by interacting with digital maps and playing memory games with interactive flashcards depicting culture, tradition or food themes. They could also listen to the vocabulary in the target language through recorded messages in order to gradually be able to make connections between the concepts and the words through audio and visual stimuli. DS was used as a teaching tool for presenting the story in an attractive way (Robin, 2016), facilitating interaction between peers and the multimodal material and aiming at a better understanding of the content (Korosidou, Bratitsis & Griva, 2021). Using related vocabulary such as 'Look at the cover!', 'Let's flip through this (digital) book', 'Click the arrow to move to the next page' and by finger pointing through the text during storytelling, the teacher aimed at developing very young learners' oral skills. In addition, children were encouraged to participate in the learning process by making predictions, observing the images, the shapes and the colors that accompanied the text, in order to draw conclusions and develop multiliteracies skills.

The researcher engaged them in performing basic verbal acts (e.g., greetings, thanks, self-presentations, etc.), as the heroes of the stories did, making simple presentations or descriptions with emphasis on certain details (e.g., use of adjectives to describe people or objects, use of nouns to express emotions). Audiovisual material, animation, songs and links embedded in the stories allowed for memorization and repetition of target language vocabulary in an enjoyable way. Moreover, children familiarized with linguistic (verbal utterances), non-linguistic (gestures, body posture, facial expressions) and paralinguistic (pitch, rate) features in oral communication, which alerted them on how to interpret the messages during the meaning making process.

In the main stage, they worked in groups in a multimodal environment, they played educational games by using digital media and cooperated with peers in order to win other teams and collect as many points as possible in a given time or find the solution to a given "problem". Some of the activities included digital memory games, digital puzzles, audio-visual recognition matching games, digital inductive reasoning and image sequencing games, as well as painting games by using online applications (e.g., <http://www.crickweb.co.uk/Early-Years.html>, <https://www.dltk-kids.com/puzzles/jigsaw/ver20/canvas.asp?20160501>, <https://www.phonicsbloom.com/uk/game/match-cards?phase=2>).

Finally, during the post-stage, kindergarten children experimented with educational robotics, by feeding the floor robot with the correct answers found on the mats designed by the researchers. Moreover, they engaged in QR code learning activities, where they used pictures on which researchers embedded QR codes in order to motivate them in story-retelling processes. During the activities, special emphasis was placed on encouraging children to reflect on their thinking process, while also providing feedback and recycling vocabulary in the target language.

3.4. Research tools

Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered to assess the effect of the intervention on learners' language skills and their vocabulary development. Employing a data triangulation approach (Kember, 2003), the following research tools were used in the present study:

a) mid-term evaluation and post-test on vocabulary

All participants were assessed on their vocabulary comprehension at the mid of the school year, as well as after its completion, i.e., at the end of the intervention (post-test). The assessment was conducted using a test based on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - 4 (PPVT - 4) (see Dunn & Dunn, 2007). A 10-page picture booklet (see sample in Appendix I) was designed by the researchers to assess preschoolers' comprehension of oral speech in the target language. The questions were of graded difficulty and concerned nouns in singular or plural form or small noun-phrases in topics related to vocabulary used in early childhood (e.g., animals, family, colors, numbers, clothes, fruits, and vegetables).

Each child was asked to identify and indicate the word they listened to. The teacher/ researcher also used expressions such as: 'Show me ..', 'Can you point at...', while she was also recording the children's answers on an assessment form. Each question in this part had one correct answer. An alternative version of the mid-term evaluation booklet was designed and used for the needs of the final evaluation.

b) a teacher/ researcher's journal

Journals have been proven to be valuable tools for recording, reflecting on aspects and episodes of teaching and improving the teaching/learning process (see Griva & Kofou, 2019). For the purposes of this study, the researcher recorded her observations in the journal once a week, in order to reflect on the implementation of the educational program and critically monitor the approach adopted. The reflective journal was developed based on the reflective questions proposed by Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 44). In general terms, it aimed to interpret the strategies employed rather than simply record them in order to allow for ongoing evaluation and decision-making.

The qualitative analysis of 27 journals resulted into the following five typologies: i) Teaching approach, ii) Communication and interaction, iii) The role of the teacher, iv) Children's attitudes, and v) Evaluation of the learning process. Several categories and subcategories were organized and grouped into each typology (see Appendix II).

c) semi-structured interviews with the children

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted at the end of the school year with all the children involved in the program in order to investigate their attitude towards the program, the DS process and the target language. Children were asked to speak freely and reflect on their participation in the program. By describing their experiences, they were encouraged to offer ample research material to let researchers interpret their attitude towards the educational program. 'Did you like the stories/ games? Why?', 'Which was your favorite story/ game? Why?' or 'What did you learn in your English class?' were some of the questions posed.

4. Results

4.1. Mid-term and post-test on vocabulary

As the results of the conducted independent samples test show (Table 2, Table 3), the difference detected between mid-term and post-test evaluation means, *although not statistically significant*, tends to the acceptance limit ($p=0.052$); therefore, setting implications to effective vocabulary acquisition in the specific educational environment.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Mid-term	26	0,77	0,15	0,03
Post	26	0,85	0,12	0,02

Table 2. Mid-term and a post-test evaluation means

	Sig.(2-tailed)
Equal Variances assumed	0,052647
Equal Variances not assumed	0,052895

Table 3. Mid-term and a post-test evaluation (Levene's Test for Equality of Variances)

4.2. Teacher/ researcher's journal

According to the journal data, DS and educational tools employed in the current study had an important impact on preschoolers' language skills. The researcher noted that: *'they were interested in digital storytelling, reacting verbally and non-verbally'*, and *'they were very enthusiastic about the digital storytelling process and interacted with the digital material'*. DS attracted the interest of children, who *'got excited every time a new story was introduced in this multimodal learning framework'*. Employing multimodal material and having learners participate in activities relevant to each story's content, led to their active participation during the learning process and promoted the enhancement of their receptive skills, as the teacher/ researcher stated that: *'they are always eager to play language games on the interactive whiteboard, having opportunities to recycle the target vocabulary'* or *'they play and learn in groups, helping each other and using the L2 meaningfully'*.

The journal data also revealed that a host of opportunities for interaction were provided to children in the specific educational environment created. Their listening comprehension skills were developed, as the researcher recorded that *'the children understood the instructions given orally'* and that *'the children understood the simple phases uttered in oral language'*. The importance of using non-linguistic and paralinguistic elements was also of utmost importance, as *'with the help of gestures and body language the children comprehended the messages in the target language'*. The

children also seemed to gain knowledge relevant to topics of 'culture', 'tradition' or 'foreign language' and developed their respect towards the 'other', as they *'liked the traditional costumes of the heroes', 'paid attention to the flags of the countries, the shapes and the colors' or 'were encouraged to focus on the country of origin of each story, the traditional elements contained in it and people's habits in that part of the world'*.

In addition, the teacher/ researcher recorded some of the difficulties that preschoolers encountered in their attempt to understand oral language, either in a video, a song or during storytelling or when produced by the teacher herself. According to the journal entries *"they had some difficulty in comprehension during the narration of the story, but were willing to overcome it by making assumptions and trying to understand the meanings through the help of pictures, sounds or other supplementary material"* or *"sometimes children find it difficult to understand... the translanguaging mechanism is employed to let them successfully complete tasks without losing their interest."*

4.3. Interviews with the participants

The qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that children enjoyed learning English by being involved in DS. Children stated that *'I really liked English ...', 'Yes, I liked English and what we did here was nice'*.

The stories seemed to capture the interest of preschoolers. They reported: *"I liked the stories you told us and then I told them to my mum. I loved the Ugly Duckling,"* and *"I liked the story with the kangaroo and the baby, because I liked the pictures and the song we listened to and we were jumping up and down,"* or *"I liked the story you told us because we pressed the buttons and the pages turned in the book."*

Multimodal material was also observed to be an important factor in the language learning process, as it attracted children's interest and encouraged them to participate actively. More specifically, they stated the following: *"I liked the videos we watched and when we read the fairytale on the (interactive) whiteboard"* or *"all the videos we watched were fun... I asked my mum to watch them again at home."* Concerning the difficulties encountered, children mentioned that *"sometimes I don't understand because everything is in English...but my classmates help me,"* *"sometimes it's difficult for me to remember the words to play the games, but my group may know the answer and help me win"* or *"I like playing on the interactive whiteboard and I like the tablet... it's fun...but I don't like it when some children want to play all the time and they won't let us play."*

5. Discussion

The present study aimed at exploring the impact of DS and educational technology on the acquisition of preschoolers' foreign language skills through interaction in a multimodal, gamified environment. The analysis of the research data showed that preschoolers had various opportunities to expand their vocabulary knowledge in the target language and develop their receptive skills regarding oral language comprehension. Although some difficulties were recorded in listening comprehension or oral production of target language vocabulary, the findings of the present study indicated that the quality and frequency of the language input can significantly contribute to the enhancement of young children's language ability (see also Pfenniger & Singleton, 2017).

In relation to the impact the educational technology had on preschoolers' receptive language skills and their vocabulary development, it was revealed that the adaptation and the simple phrases in the digital narratives motivated children to watch the stories, while the existence of a specific and

repetitive structure in every story enabled children to understand the meanings in the target language. DS in the kindergarten context created appropriate and effective conditions for EFL learning, as stated in the relevant research (Kim, 2014), while the use ICT increased children's exposure to the target language (see also Sakamoto, 2015) and their motivation (see Bursztyn, Pederson, Shelton, Walker & Campbell, 2015); thus, having a positive impact on children's receptive skills and vocabulary development. Furthermore, several gains stemmed from children's contact with cultural elements embedded in the digital narratives (references to language, customs and traditions, songs, food, etc.), allowing for children's multicultural awareness raising.

Concerning the opportunities for interaction created in a gamified learning environment enhanced participation and created stimuli for cooperation in groups. The quantitative and qualitative data analysis showed that collaboration and the use of digital media allowed preschoolers to develop their receptive skills regarding oral language, by exercising their multiliteracy skills. Their metacognitive skills were also enhanced as young students were often encouraged to explain their thinking process to their classmates in order to facilitate problem solving, (e.g., when flipping through a digital book or when clicking on interactive flashcards or audio messages to get some feedback on a story's content). Moreover, the ICT-based activities maintained very young children's focused attention on the learning process for a longer period of time. Their enthusiasm, interest and eagerness to participate in gamified activities made it easier for children to acquire FL vocabulary in an effective and natural way. The positive effects of using educational digital tools in creating an effective learning environment for young children highlight the importance of integrating ICTs in early language learning environments. Similar research findings were reported in previous studies having revealed that stimuli provided in a multimodal environment leads to the creation of a dynamic language learning environment (Cutter, 2015; Hassan, Rosnani, Ahmad & Su, 2016). In other words, children's exposure to multiple modalities such as texts, images, videos or animation creates an educational framework that could significantly influence vocabulary learning.

Stakeholders should take into consideration that technological devices and applications along with the interrelationship and interaction with multimodal semiotic resources may affect the classroom environment and have a positive impact on learning (see Jewitt, 2006). Future research is suggested to investigate i) the impact of multimodal material on children's productive skills and ii) the long-term effect of early language leaning with the ICTs use on students' language skills. In addition, the feasibility of the project in other contexts should be carefully considered, as the current study sample was rather small.

6. Conclusion

The innovative framework, integrating DS and gamification techniques, proved to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of the learning process in early childhood education settings. DS introduces young children to meaning making through visual and audio material utilized to support the story's events. Moreover, the quality and frequency of the language employed leads to improved language ability (e.g., vocabulary gains, enhanced communication skills). Furthermore, the narrative process facilitated the development of listening skills and digital skills. The engaging and motivating content allows for young children's active participation, while play-based digital learning activities keep children's interest and attention high, enabling them to develop positive attitudes towards FL learning.

The findings of the current study should be of interest to FL curriculum developers and material designers. The use of technology and multimedia in early FL learning settings should also be identified by educators, who can consider the above-mentioned recommendations in order to

acknowledge the benefits and overcome the barriers toward the implementation and sustainability of early FL learning programs.

Considering the limitations of the study, although the findings indicate that DS and gamification of learning may be potent tools that can be employed for early FL learning, the existence of a control group could further confirm the effectiveness of the pilot implementation. Further studies could also detect any convergences and divergences between the traditional and digital storytelling on early FL learning outcomes and profoundly evaluate the impact of DS on children's learning in preschool and early primary school contexts.

References

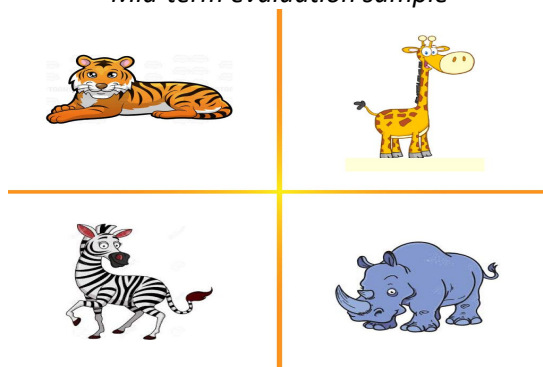
- Abidin, M. J. Z., Pour-Mohammadi, M., Souriyavongsa, T., Da, C. & Ong, L. K. (2011). Improving listening comprehension among Malay preschool children using digital stories. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(14), 159-164.
- Alexiou, T. & Vitoulis, M. (2014). iGeneration issues: Tracing preschoolers English receptive & productive vocabulary through interactive media. Mission impossible? *Conference Proceedings from Early Language Learning: Theory and Practice*, Umea, Sweden.
- AlNatour, A. S. & Hijazi, D. (2018). The impact of using electronic games on teaching English vocabulary for kindergarten students. *US-China Foreign Language*, 16(4), 193–205.
- Alsied, S. M. & Pathan, M. M. (2013). The use of computer technology in EFL classroom: advantages and implications. *IJ-ELTS*, 1(1), 61-71.
- Bakhsh, S. A. (2016). Using Games as a Tool in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners. *English Language Teaching*, 9(7), 120-128.
- Birbili, M., Kontopoulou, M. & Christodoulou, I. (2014). *Teacher's Guide for the Kindergarten Curriculum*. Retrieved June 15, 2015 from https://repository.edulll.gr/edulll/retrieve/11882/1859_.
- Boyacı, D.B. & Atalay, N. (2016). A Scale Development for 21st Century Skills of Primary School Students: A Validity and Reliability Study. *International Journal of Instruction*, 9(1), 133-148.
- Brenner, K. (2013). Digital Stories: A 21st-Century Communication Tool for the English Language Classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, 52(1), 22–29.
- Brewster, J., Ellis, G. & Girard, D. (2004). *The primary English teacher's guide*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bursztyn, N., Pederson, J., Shelton, B., Walker, A. & Campbell, T. (2015). Utilizing geo-referenced mobile game technology for universally accessible virtual geology field trips. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics: Science and Technology*, 3(2), 93-100.
- Chalkiadaki, A. (2018). A Systematic Literature Review of 21st Century Skills and Competencies in Primary Education. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(3), 1–16.
- Chesloff, J. D. (2013). STEM Education Must Start in Early Childhood. *Education Week*, 32, 32-27. Retrieved April 25, 2015 from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/03/06/23chesloff.h32.html>.
- Cutter, M. (2015). *Using Technology with English Language Learners in the Classroom*. Education Masters. Paper 313.
- Daniel, M.C. & Cowan, J.E. (2012). Exploring teachers' use of technology in classrooms of bilingual students. *Education and Learning Research Journal*, 97-110.
- Dunn, M. & Dunn, L. M. (2007). *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—4*. Circle Pines, MN: AGS.
- Figg, C., McCartney, R.W. & Gonsoulin, W. (2009). Differentiating instruction with digital storytelling while making connections to critical literacy. *Teaching and Learning*, 5(1), 31-44.

- Freitas (de), S. (2018). Are games effective learning tools? A review of educational games. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 21(2), 74-84. Retrieved July 26, 2019 from <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-18436-006>.
- Furdu, I., Tomozei, C. & Köse, U. (2017). Pros and cons gamification and gaming in classroom. *BRAIN: Broad Research in Artificial Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 8(2), 56-62.
- Gibson, D., Ostashewski, N., Flintoff, K., Grant, S. & Knight, E. (2015). Digital badges in education. *Education and Information Technologies*, 20(2), 403-410. doi:10.1007/s10639-013-9291-7.
- Green, L.S. (2013). Language learning through a lens: the case for digital storytelling in the second language classroom. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 19 (2), 23-26.
- Griva, E. & Kofou, I. (2018). *Alternative assessment in Language learning: Challenges and Practices* (Vol. I). Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis.
- Griva, E. & Sivropoulou E. (2009). Implementation and evaluation of an early foreign language project in kindergarten. *The Early Childhood Journal*, 37(1), 79-87. Ed. Springer.
- Griva, E. & Semoglou, K. (2012). Estimating the effectiveness and feasibility of an early EFL learning project based on physical activities. *English language teaching*, 5(9), 33-44.
- Griva, E., Semoglou, K. & Geladari, A. (2010). Early Foreign Language Learning: implementation of a Project in a game –based context. Selected Volume: *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 3700-3705). ELSEVIER.
- Hamadto, R. & Gohar, A. G. (2017). The impact of a proposed interactive e-book on developing English language skills of kindergarten children. *International Journal of Internet Education*. Retrieved October 3, 2019 from <http://ijie.journals.ekb.eg>.
- Hans, D. M. (2018). The concept of animated electronic books in increasing young learners' literacy skills in EFL classroom. *Pedagogy: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 6(1), 57–64.
- Hassan, M., Rosnani, M., Ahmad, F. M. A. & Su, L. W. (2016). Teachers' Acceptance of ICT and Its Integration in the Classroom. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 24 (1), 26-40.
- Jewitt, C. (2006). *Technology, Literacy, Learning. A Multimodal Approach*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge.
- Kalantzis, M. & Cope, B. (2012). *Literacies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaminski, A. (2019). Young learners' engagement with multimodal texts. *ELT Journal*, 1–11. doi:10.1093/elt/ccy060.
- Kapp, K. M. (2012). *The gamification of learning and instruction: game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. San Francisco: Wiley & Sons.
- Kember, D. (2003). To control or not to control: The question of whether experimental designs are appropriate for evaluating teaching innovations in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 28(1), 89-101.
- Kim, S. (2014). Developing autonomous learning for oral proficiency using digital storytelling. *Language Learning & Technology*, 18(2), 20-35.
- Kokkalia, G., Economou, A., Roussos, P. & Choli, S. (2017). The use of serious games in preschool education. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 12(11), 15-27. DOI: 10.3991/ijet.v12.i11.6991.
- Korosidou, E., Bratitsis, T. & Griva, E. (2021). A framework proposal for interdisciplinary early childhood education integrating ICT and foreign language. In Tsiatsos, T., Demetriadis, S., Dagdilelis, V. & Mikropoulos, A. (Eds). *Research on e-Learning and ICT in Education: Technological, Pedagogical and Instructional Issues*. Springer.
- Lathem, S.A. (2005). Learning communities and digital storytelling: new media for ancient tradition. In C. Crawford, et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference* (pp. 2286-2291), Chesapeake, VA: AACE.
- Lynch, M. (2015). More Play, Please: The Perspective of Kindergarten Teachers on Play in the Classroom. *American Journal of Play*, 7(3).
- Merzifonluoglu, A. & Gonulal, T. (2018). Review of Digital language learning and teaching. *Research, theory, and practice. Language Learning and Technology* 22(1), 65-68.

- Miller, C. (2004). *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*. Focal Press, Waltham.
- Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs (2010). Early English Language Learning Program. Retrieved on March 3, 2011 from <http://rcel.enl.uoa.gr/peap/>.
- Nikolopoulou, K. (2019) Mobile Technologies and Early Childhood Education. In Tsitouridou, M., A. Diniz J., Mikropoulos, T. (Eds.). *Technology and Innovation in Learning, Teaching and Education 2018. Communications in Computer and Information Science*, vol 993. Springer, Cham.
- O' Hara, S., Pritchard, R., Huang, C. & Pella, S. (2012). The teaching using technology studio: Innovative professional development to meet the needs of English learners. *TESOL Journal*, 4(2), 274-294.
- Paluka, E. & Collins, C. (2015). Tandem Table: supporting conversations and language learning using a multi-touch digital table. *Proceedings of the 41st Graphics Interface Conference* (pp.139-146), Canadian Information Processing Society.
- Pedagogical Institute (2014). Kindergarten Curriculum. Retrieved on January 11, 2015, from <https://repository.edulll.gr/edulll/retrieve/7058/1947>.
- Pfenniger, E. S. & Singleton, D. (2017). *Beyond age effects in instructional L2 learning: Revisiting the age factor*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Richards, J. C. & Lockhart, C. (1994). *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. Cambridge, MA, Cambridge University Press.
- Robin, B. R. (2016). The power of digital storytelling to support teaching and learning. *Digital Education Review*, 30, 17-29.
- Robin, B.R. & McNeil, S.G. (2012). What educators should know about teaching digital storytelling. *Digital Education Review*, 22, 37-51.
- Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research*. Patstow, UK, Wiley.
- Sakamoto, B. H. (2015). The role of technology in early years language education. In Mourão, S. and Lourenço, M. (Eds.), *Early Years Second Language Education: International Perspectives on Theories and Practice* (pp. 120-136). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Seaborn, K. & Fels, D. I. (2015). Gamification in theory and action: A survey. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 74, 14-31.
- Shelby-Caffey, C., ÚbEDA, E. & Jenkins, B. (2014). Digital Storytelling Revisited. An Educator's Use of an Innovative Literacy Practice. *The Reading Teacher*, 68, 191-199.
- Skinner, E. N. & Hagood, M.C. (2008). Developing Literate Identities with English Language Learners through Digital Storytelling. *The Reading Matrix*, 8(2). Retrieved on September 17, 2015 from http://www.readingmatrix.com/articles/skinner_hagood/article.pdf.
- Stephen, C. & Edwards, S. (2018). *Young Children Playing and Learning in a Digital Age*. Milton Park: Routledge.
- Vieira, E. & Krcmar, M. (2011). The Influences of Video Gaming on US Children's Moral Reasoning About Violence. *Journal of Children and Media*, 5(2), 113-131.
- Werbach, K. & Hunter, D. (2012). *For the win: How game thinking can revolutionize your business*. Wharton Digital Press.
-

Appendix I

Mid-term evaluation sample



Appendix II

Indicative typologies and categories of the teacher/ researcher's journal

Typology	Categories
A. Teaching approach	Developing multiliteracies skills Developing cross cultural skills Developing language skills Multimodal learning environment Collaborative learning Engaging in problem solving
B. Communication and Interaction	Taking initiatives L2 use and paralinguistic features L2 use L1 use Translanguaging Multiliteracies meaning making

Eleni Korosidou (ekorosidou@uowm.gr) is an Adjunct Lecturer in the University of Western Macedonia and has also served for years in the post of EFL teacher in Primary and Secondary Education. She holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics and a Master's Degree in Teaching Methodology and Curriculum Design from the University of Western Macedonia. She graduated from the School of English Language and Literature of the Aristotle University, Thessaloniki and the Department of Primary Education of the University of Western Macedonia, Florina. Her research interests include foreign/ second language teaching and learning, teaching young learners, as well as plurilingualism and the application of educational technology in language learning contexts.

Eleni Griva (egriva@uowm.gr) is a Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Western Macedonia – Greece. She is the Director of the Research Institute of Greek Language and the Director the Postgraduate Program “Educational Studies and Information Technologies” of the UOWM. Her research focuses on: Teaching an L2/FL to young learners, intercultural communication, Teaching Greek as an L2/FL, language learning strategies, Bilingualism/multilingualism, Alternative Assessment. She has published 8 books and more than 230 papers, which appear in various international and national journals, collected editions and conference proceedings.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 137-149

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

The use of digital reading pens in the early foreign language classroom

Daniela ELSNER & Astrid JURECKA

In order to actively participate in a globalised and digitalised world, students must develop a wide range of competencies from a very early age onwards, among them, communicative competencies in the English language and digital skills. To this end, technology has become a strong ally for teachers, utilizing the strengths of smartboards and the like. Yet, the digital infrastructure in German schools is rather limited. Thus, digital reading pens have become popular, as their use does not require internet access. Whether those pens add any value to formal language learning processes, however, is a question TEFL research has just started to find an answer to. The study in this paper aims to discover the benefits of digital reading pens in a primary foreign language classroom in Germany. Two separate studies were conducted; the first focused on reading aloud competencies and the second focused on English vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. Both study samples consisted of 3rd grade primary students, who were divided into a control group that worked with the teacher and an experimental group that worked with the reading pen. In both studies, both groups showed an increase in all aforementioned variables, regardless of the source of input, i.e. language model, they used.

Key words: Digital Reading Pen, EFL, Primary School, Language Learning

1. Learning and Teaching English in German Primary Schools

Foreign language instruction in German primary schools is compulsory from 3rd grade onwards. On average students are offered two hours of English¹ per week. The goal is to develop English language competencies at the A1 level of the CEFR by the end of grade four. Teaching and learning follow a holistic approach with a clear focus on oral skills' training. Games, songs, rhymes and dialogues are frequently used to build vocabulary, and train students' listening and speaking competencies (Elsner, 2015). Reading and writing play a minor role in the early foreign language classroom, yet children read and copy the vocabulary they are supposed to actively use in conversations; moreover, they

¹ Some schools located near the French border offer French as the first foreign language, yet English is the norm.

read simple sentences and short texts with the support of the teacher. Teachers' main task is to motivate students to speak the foreign language as often as possible, enable comprehension through interactive learner support (scaffolding) (Gibbons, 2002) and provide the students with various resources for encountering and practicing new words to build up and retain vocabulary (Elsner, 2015). To enable children to connect English phonemes and graphemes as well as to prevent wrong pronunciation, it is recommended to let children repeat new vocabulary and read aloud words and short sentences often and repeatedly and in varying contexts (Keaveney & Lundberg, 2014). However, since the amount of teaching lessons for English as FL in primary school is usually limited to two or three hours per week, it is difficult to reach all learning objectives within instruction time. Therefore, additional opportunities for autonomous learning should be provided for the learners. As learners usually do not learn voluntarily at home if learning materials are too "schoolish" (Smith & Wilhelm, 2004, p. 460), the provided tools and activities should be motivating and fun.

In this context multimodal and technology based interactive materials come into play, as they not only appeal strongly to children but may also serve as powerful instruments to spark learning processes, given the fact that they are chosen wisely and integrated adequately into the teaching and learning procedure (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012).

Research looking at the use of digital technologies in language classrooms shows that learners of all levels can benefit from their use with regard to language development, as they offer the opportunity to involve more students actively in the learning process at a time (Derakshan et al., 2015). Cutrim-Schmidt (2018) demonstrates such learner-activating and motivating effects when using smartboards in primary school English lessons for a tele-collaboration project. Other studies show that learners cooperate more intensively with each other when using digital devices such as tablets to produce stories in the foreign language classroom (Dausend, 2018). Bernert-Rehaber and Schlemminger (2013) promote the potential of virtual learning worlds and serious games for language learning, since these, according to the authors, initiate action-oriented, self-directed and discovery-based learning situations. Moreover, the use of digital technologies in the language classroom offers opportunities for more individualized development and differentiated support, e.g., through adaptation and feedback (Heinen & Kerres, 2015), e.g., in vocabulary learning, grammar or reading apps, or in multilingual resources for language learning such as multilingual digitalized storybooks (Buendgens-Kosten & Elsner, 2018).

Despite of these results, the systematic use of digital technologies in classrooms has not yet become commonplace (Drossel et al., 2018). Although teachers consider themselves to be generally open-minded with regard to the use of technology in their classrooms (Bitkom, 2015), less than one third of all teachers in Germany regularly make use of them (European Commission, 2014; Drossel et al., 2018). On the one hand, this is due to the fact that teachers themselves are still rather skeptical about the added value of digital technologies with regard to competence development of learners (Schwanenberg et al., 2018). On the other hand, teachers lack (subject-related) digital competencies and corresponding planning competencies for the digitized lesson design and, even more fatal, most German schools still lack a sufficient digitized infrastructure (WDR, 2019). Especially teachers in primary schools complain about scanty circumstances: no access to the internet, a lack of tablets and/ or interactive boards, and no centralized IT support.

Against this background, "easy to handle" media such as paper-based textbooks and CDs or digital technologies that work without Wi-Fi and complicated installation procedures, such as the digital reading pen, are preferred by the teachers (Priboschek, 2017).

2. Digital Reading Pens in the Early Foreign Language Classroom

Digital reading pens (also called digital audio pens) have become quite popular in Germany (and in other parts of the world) on a private basis as well as in school contexts (Rechlitz & Lampert, 2010). The digital pens (such as TINGsmart, TipToi, Bookii or the Anybookreader) work in combination with books, including textbooks (for the EFL classroom). By placing the reading pen on a picture, symbol or word in the book, previously recorded audio-files (either words or sentences, spoken by a native speaker) are played from a speaker integrated in the reading pen. Children can use headphones to work on their own or use the loud-speaker function of the pen to work in pairs or a group.

Research studies on the use of digital pens in the context of first language literacy development show a wide acceptance for reading pens as a useful and motivating toy by children and parents (Rechlitz, 2017). Droll and Staiger (2015) evaluated students' usage of reading pens in combination with books during first reading clubs in multiple primary schools in Freiburg, Germany. The results show that, since the books have a low threshold for engagement, students tend to spend more time with them during their free reading time as compared to the time they spend with looking at paper books. The authors assume that since the digital tools are primarily designed as entertainment, they are simply more motivating to children. Yet, they argue that reading pens cannot be seen as a replacement for a teacher or caregiver, but they can be a stepping-stone into a culture of reading and writing.

Chen, Chen and Chen (2015) found that Taiwanese children, reading digital pen supported paper picture books in English, show higher reading motivation and better comprehension of the book than children reading paper picture books or electronic picture books. Rothstein (2017) points out, that digital pens used in family or in kindergarten contexts build first literacy experience. However, they cannot and should not replace human interaction when reading aloud. Nevertheless, they can serve as an additional tool to support literacy development.

In the context of foreign language instruction in primary classrooms in Germany, reading pens have been discussed as a suitable supportive tool for adaptive learning processes, especially with regard to vocabulary learning and pronunciation practice as well as in terms of reading aloud practice (Glaser, 2018; Rymarczyk, 2014). The combination of sound, images and typeface provided by the reading pens and the corresponding texts, offers learners a multimodal resource for working with words. Moreover, learners can listen to the words and sentences as often as they need to from an individual point of view. The "time on task hypothesis" suggests that the amount of time spent with a task (i.e., hearing, reading and using vocabulary) has an important impact on the learning outcome (Carroll, 1973; Hopf, 2005). Yet, content needs to be practiced in various ways and in different contexts (Larsen-Freeman, 2012), and reading pens provide varied iteration.

Glaser (2018) concludes that reading pens have many advantages: method and material variety, learner-centeredness, increase of motivation, options for differentiation, and most importantly, a continuous provision of meaning, spelling and articulation. Simultaneous presentation of spelling and articulation, moreover, helps alleviate any problems related to phoneme-grapheme correspondence. Yet, Glaser also points to the limitations of the product: spontaneous, unplanned discursive speech is still in need of a real collocutor and cannot be replaced by a digital pen, not even if it has a recording function, like many of the newer versions do.

Research on the use of reading pens in foreign language classrooms in primary school and their impact on the development of certain competencies, however, is still scarce.

3. Research questions and hypotheses

On the one hand, empirical studies show positive effects of digital learning tools on motivation and language proficiency in language classrooms; on the other hand, it is argued that those tools cannot replace the teacher as a language model. However, with regard to digital reading pens, it can also be argued that –within a limited scope, for example with regard to pronunciation, vocabulary learning or practicing reading and speaking aloud – teachers, as well as reading pens, provide an authentic language model to the students (in case of the reading pen even an audio file of a native speaker). Furthermore, time with the teacher as language model is very limited during classroom time, especially when students work individually on different learning tasks, and not available when practicing at home. Therefore, the following overall research questions were formulated:

1. Does the use of digital reading pens for vocabulary learning (in terms of meaning and pronunciation) and reading aloud practice lead to the same learning effects as the rather common “teacher-as-input-provider”/ “language model” approach in EFL instruction in primary school?
2. Are reading pens suitable to providing additional study opportunities and motivate autonomous learning for primary school children learning EFL?

Therefore, two different exploratory studies were conducted, both using a quasi-experimental pre-post-cross-sectional design, and both comparing two groups of German 3rd-grade primary school children, either with a reading pen or a teacher as language model for practicing reading and pronunciation in English (EFL). Both studies are going to be described below.

3.1. Study 1

The first study focused on the effect of reading pens on reading aloud competencies of children, consisting of reading fluency (operationalized by WCPM-score (e.g. Hasbrouk & Tindal, 2006): amount of words read in 60sec – amount of errors) and pronunciation of target words, as well as reading motivation (frequency of reading at home) as dependent variables. The source of input (i.e., the language model) served as independent variable.

3.1.2 Method and Design

The sample consisted of two small groups of German primary school children (3rd grade, n1=16, n2=17; female (n1)=12; (n2)=10; M (age) = 8,18 years). All children went to the same school and were taught by the same teacher, therefore were comparable regarding teaching methods. Furthermore, ANOVAs showed no differences regarding several control variables such as age ($F=.662$; $df = 1$; $p=.422$), overall competencies in English as a foreign language ($F=1,898$; $df=1$; $p=.846$) and reading abilities in English (reading text aloud; $F=.042$; $df = 1$; $p=.84$); These abilities were estimated by the teacher for each of the students on a five-point rating scale (one = almost never true; five = almost always true). Although these estimations do not derive from standardized tests, they are, however, based on consequently carried out, criteria-based oral observations and short written assessments connected to a textbook (reading, listening, vocabulary knowledge and writing), which were done every four weeks during the six months before the intervention took place.

Within the two parts of the study (EG and CG changed after four weeks), both groups of children were given eight different one page comic strips from an EFL reading book (Englisch-Stars 3; Gleich et al., 2013), four for each of the two phases; a new comic strip was presented every second week over a period of four months. Altogether, 48 new target words, i.e., words the children had not yet learned in the context of language instruction, were identified for each phase.

In both phases, the cartoons were introduced in class by the teacher. The respective experimental group (EG) was then instructed to use the reading pen (TING) for their reading practices, whereas the control group (CG) practiced reading the comics with their teacher for the rest of the lesson. Additionally, both groups were instructed to practice at home autonomously and to use a fill-in journal provided by the teacher for each student to note down how often they practiced reading aloud (EG = with reading pen / CG = without reading pen), as a measure for their reading motivation, frequency and duration of practice.

Altogether, the study consisted of 4 measurement points: During the first pretest (T1), reading fluency was assessed by asking each child to read a story aloud (consisting of target words from the first four comic strips). Furthermore, for the assessment of vocabulary pronunciation, the children had to read aloud each of the 48 target words. The results of both tasks were audio-recorded and rated by the teacher, one of the authors and a research assistant who was not involved in the study using a predefined rating system. Both variables were assessed again in a post-test after the first phase (T2). In the second phase of the study, EG and CG changed their roles, and four new comic strips were presented. Again, reading fluency and pronunciation were assessed by using 48 new target words from the new comic strips within a pre- and a posttest (T3 / T4).

3.1.3 Results

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Paired t test		
			t value	df	sig. (2-tailed)
<i>Phase 1</i>					
EXP.GROUP					
Fluency Pre	21.69	15.58	4.62	15	.00
Fluency Post	39.13	23.08			
Pronunciation Pre	16.92	8.75	9.69	12	.00
Pronunciation Post	27.54	11.22			
CONTROL GROUP					
Fluency Pre	26.53	19.55	8.89	16	.00
Fluency Post	45.11	22.71			
Pronunciation Pre	21.82	12.64	6.95	15	.00
Pronunciation Post	30.44	10.32			
<i>Phase 2</i>					
EXP.GROUP					
Fluency Pre	40.41	21.43	4.61	16	.00
Fluency Post	51.59				
Pronunciation Pre	24.82	9.71	4.88	16	.00
Pronunciation Post	30.76				
CONTROL GROUP					
Fluency Pre	34.56	21.97	3.54	15	.00
Fluency Post	42.75	23.11			
Pronunciation Pre	20.06	9.65	5.78	14	.00
Pronunciation Post	27.93	9.59			

Note. Exp-Group= Experimental Group. Experimental and Control Group changed after Phase 1

Table 1. Increase in fluency and pronunciation within groups (phase 1 and 2, t-tests for dependent groups)

With regard to group differences, several two-tailed t-Tests were conducted. Since groups did not differ regarding age and teacher-estimated abilities in EFL, control variables were not included. T-Tests for dependent groups were used to analyse the increase regarding fluency and pronunciation within the two groups.

Results for both phases of the study show a significant increase regarding fluency and pronunciation for both groups (Table 1). Therefore, both language models seem to fine-hone such foreign language skills. However, descriptive statistics also show a group difference with regard to language abilities (Fluency and Pronunciation) within the pre-test with an advantage for the same group in both phases (advantage for CG in Phase 1, KG in Phase 2), although they did not differ with respect to teacher-estimated overall EFL competencies. Therefore, t-tests for independent groups were conducted for phase one as well as phase 2 (Table 2).

	Exp-Group		Cont.Group		t-value	df	sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std.Dev	Mean	Std.Dev			
<i>Phase 1</i>							
Fluency pre	21.69	15.58	26.53	19.55	0.78	31	.44
Pronun.pre	26.53	19.55	21.82	12.64	1.17	29	.25
Fluency post	39.12	23.08	45.12	11.22	0.75	31	.44
Pronun.post	24.73	11.22	30.44	10.32	1.47	29	.15
<i>Phase 2</i>							
Fluency pre	40.41	21.43	34.56	21.97	0.79	31	.44
Pronun.pre	24.82	9.71	20.06	9.65	1.44	31	.17
Fluency post	51.59	26.44	42.75	23.11	1.02	31	.32
Pronun.post	30.76	10.17	27.93	9.59	0.81	30	.43

Note. Std.Dev = Standard Deviation Exp-Group= Experimental Group. Cont.Group = Control Group; Experimental and Control Group changed after Phase 1

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and group differences (t-test for independent groups) phase 1 and 2

No significant group differences could be found regarding variance (levene-tests: p=.08-97). However, overall standard deviations are relatively large. This shows that there is a large spectrum of foreign language abilities within the groups. T-Tests for independent groups showed no significant group differences, neither for pre- nor for post-test scores (Table 2). However, this might be due to small sample sizes. Therefore, those results should be interpreted very carefully.

	Exp-Group		Cont.Group		t-value	df	sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std.Dev	Mean	Std.Dev			
<i>Phase 1</i>							
Reading Frequency	29.50	13.18	14.00	8.25	4.08	31	.00
<i>Phase 2</i>							
Reading Frequency	30.00	24.47	23.38	8.79	1.05	31	.31

Note. Std._Dev = Standard Deviation Exp-Group= Experimental Group (practicing reading with pen). Cont.Group = Control Group (practicing reading without pen); Experimental and Control Group changed after Phase 1

Table 3. Differences in reading Frequency / Motivation

As a measure for reading aloud-motivation, children were asked to write down how frequent they practiced reading aloud at home. To find out whether EG and KG differed with regard to reading motivation, further t-tests for independent groups were conducted (table 3).

Results show that in phase one, the experimental group read significantly more often at home (table 3), which indicates a motivating effect of the reading pens; however, in phase two, observed differences were not statistically significant. Whether this is due to the small sample size, to an effect of the stories or to class effects, remains unclear.

Overall, the results of both phases seem to be comparable: a) within this first study, at least no significant group differences could be found with regard to fluency and pronunciation correctness, b) both groups significantly improved their fluency and pronunciation skills in both phases, no matter if they worked with the teacher or the reading pen as their input provider. Therefore, teacher as well as reading pen seem to be suitable language models, at least with regard to pronunciation and reading aloud fluency. Furthermore, at least in phase one, the experimental group also read significantly more often at home. Those results indicate that reading pens seem to motivate children to practice reading and might be a tool to provide additional “time on task” and opportunities for practice. However, it remains unclear whether the effect will remain stable over a longer period of time. Furthermore, the sample was very small, therefore results should be interpreted very carefully, and further studies should be conducted using larger samples.

3.2. Study 2

The second study focused on the effect of using a reading pen on English vocabulary, specifically on vocabulary pronunciation, knowledge of word meaning and spelling.

3.2.1. Method and Design

The second study took place approximately 2 years later, using a different sample of children. Again, the sample of the second study consisted of two small groups of third-grade children (n1=21, n2=21, f=24 (n1); f = 22 (n2); M (age) = 8, 54 years). All children went to the same school and were taught by the same teacher. Several control variables were assessed: The Raven Coloured Progressive Matrices (Raven et al. / German: Bullhacker & Hacker, 2001) as a relatively short measure for non-verbal cognitive skills, and the family affluence scale (e.g. Currie et al., 2008) as a measure for socio-economic status. Due to time-based and economic reasons, it was decided for this second study to use a self-assessment scale as an approximation of English language proficiency (word knowledge, pronunciation, spelling, and writing). No statistically significant group differences were found (Table 4).

	Class 1 (EG-KG)		Class 2 (KG-EG)		F	sig.	Eta ²
	Mean	Std.Dev	Mean	Std.Dev			
Age	9.23	0.36	9.12	0.42	0.71	.41	.02
Raven CPM	29.35	4.32	29.44	5.33	0.04	.95	.00
SES	10.56	2.99	11.00	2.52	0.22	.64	.01
EFL (Self)	9.36	2.30	9.11	3.70	0.07	.80	.00

Note. Class 1: Experimental Group (EG) in Phase 1, Control Group (CG) in Phase 2; SES = Socio-Economic Status Index (Computer at home, musical instruments, own room, number of cars, traveling, books at home) ; Std.Dev. = Standard Deviation; EFL (Self) = Self-Assessment of English as a foreign language

Table 4. Differences in reading Frequency / Motivation

Again, a quasi-experimental pre-post-cross-sectional design was chosen: the experimental group used the reading pen for practicing their knowledge and pronunciation of vocabulary, the control group practiced with their teacher. In both groups the vocabulary had been introduced once by the teacher (written and spoken form, pronunciation and meaning). Similar to study one, study two also consisted of two phases: after six weeks, the groups alternated, i.e., the experimental group became the control group working with the reading pen and vice versa.

First, two different topics children had not yet learned during instruction were identified: transport and shopping. Then, twenty target words were chosen for each of the two topics (n=40 target words). These words included cognates as well as words that differ significantly from the German language with regard to pronunciation. Furthermore, different parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs) were chosen. Examples for the topic “shopping” are “supermarket”, “first floor”, “to change” or “cheap”; examples for “transport” are “pedestrian”, “to drive”, or “slow”.

At the beginning of the study, in a pre-test (T1), trained test administrators assessed students’ vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, as well as spelling for both topics in individual testing sessions. Then, during the next six weeks, children were asked to practice the new vocabulary for the first topic, “transport”, at the beginning of each English lesson (i.e., two times per week) for about ten minutes. They used an English dictionary for primary school (Brune et al., 2017), which includes the two chosen topics, and which can be used either with or without the reading pen. The experimental group exclusively used the reading pen, while the control group only practiced with their teacher. 2-3 new words were introduced per lesson. After 6 weeks, children were tested again (T2) regarding vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation and spelling for the 20 “transport”-words. The two groups then changed their roles, and practiced the 20 new words for the topic “shopping” during the next six weeks. They were tested again regarding vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation and spelling for the “shopping” vocabulary after six weeks (T3).

4. Results

Again, with regard to group differences concerning control variables, Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted. Since groups did not differ regarding the above-mentioned control variables, those were not included in the analyses. T-Tests for dependent groups were used to analyse the increase regarding vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation and spelling within the two groups (table 5).

In the pre-tests (T1), the two groups did not differ significantly with regard to previous knowledge about the 40 words (table 6); therefore, effects due to previous knowledge were less likely. Also, in some cases, overall standard deviations are relatively large. This shows that there is a large spectrum of foreign language abilities within the groups.

In the post-tests, only two significant group differences could be observed (table 6) with regard to vocabulary knowledge for “shopping”, and spelling for “transport”. For both variables, class two scored higher. However, no clear conclusions can be drawn from these results: in the case of “spelling transport”, class 2 scored higher in the role of the control group, in the case of “knowledge shopping” children in class two were the experimental group. Furthermore, those group differences refer to different topics as well as different vocabulary-related proficiencies. Therefore, it remains unclear whether the students of class 2 were able to benefit more from certain learning environments or language models, whether there are other class effects responsible for the higher increase in scores or whether effects are due to the small sample size. Those questions should be investigated in further studies with larger sample sizes.

To sum up, both groups were able to significantly increase their vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation and spelling, regardless of the respective language model and topic. Therefore, the conclusion might be drawn that, also with regard to vocabulary-related proficiencies, reading pens provide learning opportunities and a decent alternative to teacher-centred practice, which might especially be helpful during autonomous phases of learning and in-home study contexts.

	Mean	Std Dev	Paired t test	
			t value	df
<i>Phase 1</i>				
EXP.GROUP				
Voc.Transport pre	0.40	0.82	6.53	.00
Voc.Transport post	5.50	3.46		
Pron.Transport pre	7.20	5.16	6.22	.00
Pron.Transport post	18.85	10.67		
Spell.Transport pre	0.60	0.75	2.65	.02
Spell.Transport post	1.55	1.81		
CONTROL GROUP				
Voc.Transport pre	0.63	0.76	5.57	.00
Voc.Transport post	5.90	4.31		
Pron.Transport pre	10.79	8.23	8.03	.00
Pron.Transport post	18.85	10.47		
Spell.Transport pre	1.42	1.80	3.56	.00
Spell.Transport post	3.90	3.29		
<i>Phase 2</i>				
EXP.GROUP				
Voc.Shopping pre	1.42	1.13	6.71	.00
Voc.Shopping post	8.63	5.45		
Pron.Shopping pre	12.95	6.33	9.74	.00
Pron.Shopping post	26.95	6.98		
Spell.Shopping pre	1.53	1.02	5.10	.00
Spell.Shopping post	3.30	2.43		
CONTROL GROUP				
Voc.Shopping pre	1.30	1.46	4.35	.00
Voc.Shopping post	5.30	4.80		
Pron.Shopping pre	8.30	8.93	14.47	.00
Pron.Shopping post	25.85	7.79		
Spell.Shopping pre	0.90	1.47	4.67	.00
Spell.Shopping post	3.24	2.45		

Note. Std.Dev. = Standard Deviation Exp-Group= Experimental Group; Cont.Group = Control Group; Experimental and Control Group changed after Phase 1; Pron.Transport = Pronunciation “Transport” Vocabulary; Spell.Transport = Spelling “Transport” Vocabulary; Voc.Transport= Vocabulary Knowledge “Transport”. The same applies to “Shopping”. Both groups increased their knowledge significantly in both phases and for both topics, no matter which source of input, i.e. language model, they used. Therefore, both language role models seemed to foster an increase of language abilities.

Table 5. Increase in fluency and pronunciation within groups (phase 1 and 2; t-tests for dependent groups)

	Exp-Group		Cont.Group		t-value	df	sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std.Dev	Mean	Std.Dev			
<i>Phase 1</i>							
Voc. Transport pre	0.40	0.82	0.63	0.76	0.91	37	.37
Pron. Transport pre	7.20	5.16	10.79	8.23	1.62	37	.12
Spell. Transport pre	0.60	0.75	1.42	1.80	1.84	37	.08
Voc. Transport post	5.52	3.46	5.95	4.80	0.356	40	.72
Pron.Transport post	18.85	10.67	25.11	7.79	1.85	40	.07
Spell.Transport post	1.52	1.81	3.71	3.29	2.68	40	.01
<i>Phase 2</i>							
Voc. Shopping pre	1.30	1.13	1.42	1.46	0.29	37	.77
Pron. Shopping pre	8.30	6.33	12.95	8.93	1.88	37	.07
Spell. Shopping pre	0.90	1.02	1.53	1.47	1.55	37	.13
Voc. Shopping post	8.95	5.45	5.53	4.80	2.14	37	.04
Pron.Shopping post	26.95	6.98	25.85	7.79	0.46	39	.65
Spell.Shopping post	3.30	2.43	3.24	2.45	0.081	39	.94

Note. Std.Dev. = Standard Deviation Exp-Group= Experimental Group; Experimental and Control Group changed after Phase 1; Pron.Transport = Pronunciation "Transport" Vocabulary; Spell.Transport = Spelling "Transport" Vocabulary; Voc.Transport= Vocabulary Knowledge "Transport". The same applies to "shopping".

Table 6. Descriptive statistics and group differences (t-test for independent groups) phase 1 and 2

5. Summary & Discussion

In German primary schools, foreign language instruction time is limited to a few (two to three) hours per week. Yet, curricular guidelines aim at the achievement of an A1 level of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018) (at least) by the end of grade four. The aim of the project described in this paper was to find out whether digital reading pens provide additional, motivating and, with regard to language development, supportive autonomous language learning opportunities for students, inside and outside the classroom. Second, our research aimed to find out whether the use of digital reading pens can lead to comparable outcomes with regard to vocabulary learning (meaning and pronunciation) and reading aloud practice as the rather common "teacher-as-input-provider".

Two different explorative studies were conducted, both using a quasi-experimental pre-post-cross-sectional design. The investigation focused on different aspects: a. reading aloud competences (fluency and pronunciation; study one) b. vocabulary-related knowledge and skills (word meaning, pronunciation and spelling; study two). Results of the two studies pointed into the same direction: Both groups in both phases of both studies showed significant increases regarding all assessed aspects. Furthermore, with only two exceptions, groups did not differ significantly with regard to post-test-scores. Although, during the intervention phases of both studies, reading pens were used as the only language model by the experimental group, results in both conditions (reading pen/teacher) show no group differences in study 1, and only very few differences (in different directions and with no clear pattern) in study 2. Based on these results, we conclude that digital reading pens are suitable tools for vocabulary learning as they provide students with a reliable "language model". Reading pens may particularly be suitable during study periods in which no "analogue" language model is at students' disposal, such as during homework or self-directed study phases within the classroom. This way input and practice time (time on task) can be increased.

Furthermore, we assume that reading pens may even increase students' motivation to make use of such autonomous (and additional) learning opportunities. Especially the results of study one support

this assumption: In one phase of the study, children of the experimental group (with reading pens) read more often at home. However, it is important to emphasize that the study cannot give any answer to the questions whether such effects will remain stable over a longer period of time. Additionally, since the sample was very small, results should be interpreted very carefully, further studies should be conducted to verify our results in larger samples.

For now, based on our results, we suggest balanced combination of a teacher-related and a digital device-related approach. Reading pens can be used for practicing reading texts at home that include familiar words or vocabulary that has been introduced at school. They may also be helpful in autonomous study phases, as the teacher is no longer the only answer to student-typical questions such as “how is this word pronounced in English?”. Doing so, valuable teacher capacities can be released for tasks whose success in terms of language progress, depends more on the teacher, e.g. activities that focus on spontaneous, unplanned discursive speech, free writing etc. Moreover, reading pens may simply be used to increase practice time (time on task) outside the classroom. Young learners are obviously motivated to make use of the tools, which at the end of the day, can lead to more input time for each student, if they are allowed to take them home and use them there.

Furthermore, especially when autonomously working on a task whose desired outcome is an oral presentation, learners can use the digital pen to reassure and practice the right pronunciation.

In a nutshell, we propose that digital reading pens may be seen as valuable digital “helpers” in terms of vocabulary and reading practice in Early Language Classrooms. One clear limitation of the project is the fact that both studies used relatively small samples, and are therefore small-scale studies. However, the fact that the results of both studies point into the same direction (although slightly different abilities were assessed), is a first indicator that results might be generalizable beyond the samples. Still, results must be interpreted very carefully.

References

- Bernert-Rehaber, S. & Schlemminger, G. (2013). Immersive 3D-Technologie optimieren das Fremdsprachenlernen: „Eveil-3D-Lernen in virtuellen Welten“. *Babylonia* 03(13), 44-49.
- BITKOM (Bundesverband Informationswirtschaft, Telekommunikation und Neue Medien). (2015). *Digitale Schule – vernetztes Lernen. Ergebnisse repräsentativer Schüler- und Lehrerbefragungen zum Einsatz digitaler Medien im Schulunterricht*. Berlin: Bitkom e.V. <https://www.bitkom.org/Bitkom/Publikationen/Digitale-Schule-und-vernetztes-Lernen.html>, accessed 10.03.2019.
- Buendgens-Kosten, J. & Elsner, D. (2018). *Multilingual Computer Assisted Language Learning*. Multilingual Matters.
- Brune, J., Elsner, D., Gleixner-Weyrauch, S., Lugauer, M., & Schwerz, S. (2017). *Sally's Dictionary. Wörterbuch für die Grundschule*. Oldenbourg Schulbuch Verlag.
- Carroll, J. B. (1973). Ein Modell schulischen Lernens. In W. Edelstein & D. Hopf (Eds.), *Bedingungen des Bildungsprozesses. Psychologische und pädagogische Forschungen zum Lehren und Lernen in der Schule* (pp. 234–250). Klett.
- Chen, C.-M., Chen, K.-W., Chen, Z.-X. (2015). The Effects of DigitalPen-Supported Picture Books on Improving Children's Reading Motivations, Emotions, Attention and Comprehension. *Journal of Library and Information Science*. 41(1). 38-56. DOI: [10.6245/JLIS.2015.411/649](https://doi.org/10.6245/JLIS.2015.411/649)
- Council of Europe (2018). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume with New Descriptors*. <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>, accessed 03 January 2020

- Currie, C., Molcho, M., Boyce, W., Holstein, B., Torsheim, T. & Richter, M. (2008). Researching health inequalities in adolescents: The development of the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) Family Affluence Scale. *Social Science & Medicine*, 66, 1429-1436.
- Cutrim-Schmid, E. (2018). Developing Plurilingual Competence in the EFL Primary Classroom through Telecollaboration. In J. Buendgens-Kosten & D. Elsner (Eds.), *Multilingual Computer Assisted Language Learning* (pp.171-190). Multilingual Matters.
- Dausend, H. (2018). This is How I Say It! Discourse with Tablets among Multilingual Learners. In J. Buendgens-Kosten & D. Elsner (Eds.), *Multilingual Computer Assisted Language Learning* (pp. 78-94). Multilingual Matters.
- Derakshan, A., Salehi, D. & Mahboubeb, R. (2015). Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL): Pedagogical Pros and Cons. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies* 4(3), 111-120.
- Droll, H. & Staiger, M. (2015). Vorlesen! Mitlesen. Selbst lesen? Erkundungen zum lesedidaktischen Potenzial von digitalen Audiostiften. *kjl&m – forschung.schule.bibliothek*, 67(1), 79-87.
- Drossel, K., Eickelmann, B. & Lorenz, R. (2018). Determinanten der unterrichtlichen Computernutzungshäufigkeit und der medienbezogenen Kooperation: Eine Analyse auf Grundlage des Länderindikators 2016. *Unterrichtswissenschaft*, 46, 481-498. DOI: 10.1007/s42010-018-0017-9
- Elsner, D. (2015). *Kompetenzorientiert unterrichten in der Grundschule. Englisch 1-4*. Oldenbourg Verlag.
- Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning. Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*. Heinemann.
- Glaser, Karen. (2018). Digitaler Mehrwert im Englischunterricht der Grundschule: Wortschatzerwerb mit dem TING-Hörstift. In H. Dausend & B. Brandt (Eds.), *Lernen digital: Fachliche Lernprozesse im Elementar- und Primarbereich anregen* (pp. 151-178). Waxmann.
- Gleich, B., Reindl, I., Schmidt, K. & Schöpe, B. (2013). *Englisch-Stars 3. Comics TING-Ausgabe*. Oldenbourg Schulbuch Verlag.
- Hasbrouk, J. & Tindal, G. A. (2006). Oral reading fluency norms: A valuable assessment tool for reading teachers. *International Reading Association* (pp. 636–644). doi:10.1598/RT.59.7.3
- Heinen, R. & Kerres, M. (2015). *Individuelle Förderung mit digitalen Medien. Handlungsfelder für die systematische, lernförderliche Integration digitaler Medien in Schule und Unterricht*. Bertelsmann Stiftung. https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BSt/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Studie_IB_iFoerderung_digitale_Medien_2015.pdf, accessed 20 November 2018.
- Hopf, D. (2005). Zweisprachigkeit und Schulleistung bei Migrantenkindern. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 51(2), 236–251.
- Keaveney, S. & Lundberg, G. (2014). *Early Language Learning and Teaching: A1-A2*. Studentliteratur.
- Legutke, M. K., Müller-Hartmann, A. & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, M. (2017). *Teaching English in the Primary School*. Klett.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2012). On the roles of repetition in language teaching and learning. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 3(2), 195-210., Doi: 10.1515/applirev-2012-0009, accessed 9 January 2020
- National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College (2012). *Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8. Position Statement*, at https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/topics/PS_technology_WEB.pdf, accessed 01 January 2020
- Priboschek, A. (2017) (Ed.). ‘Warum lässt die digitale Revolution an Deutschlands Schulen immer noch auf sich warten?’ *News for Teachers Online*, at <https://www.news4teachers.de/2017/09/warum-laesst-die-digitale-revolution-an-deutschlands-schulen-immer-noch-auf-sich-warten-inhalte-fehlen/>, accessed 01 January 2020

- Raven, J.C., Raven, J & Court, J.H. (Deutsche Bearbeitung / Normierung: Bullhacker, S. & Häcker, H.O.) (2001). *CPM Raven's Progressive Matrices and Scales. Coloured Progressive Matrices*. Pearson.
- Rechlitz, M. (2017). 'tiptoi, TING und Co. – zwischen Spielzeug und Lernmedium. Studie zu digitalen Audiostiften'. *Medien & Erziehung: Merz: Zeitschrift für Medienpädagogik*, 61(1), 53-59.
- Rechlitz, M. & Lampert, C. (2016). 'Digitale Audiostifte in der Familie – eine explorative Studie'. *Arbeitspapiere des Hans-Bredow-Instituts Nr. 37*.
- Rothstein, B. (2015). 'Wenn der Stift nicht schreibt, sondern vorliest. Tiptoi-Bücher linguistisch und didaktisch betrachtet'. *Wirkendes Wort*, 65 (3), 447-465.
- Rymarczyk, J. (2014). 'Aussprachekompetenz im Schriftspracherwerb mit TING-Stiften und Bildwörterbücher'. *FFF – Fortschritte im Frühen Fremdsprachenlernen. Tagungsband zur 4. FFF-Konferenz 2014 in Leipzig*. Bildungshaus Schulbuchverlage.
- Schwanenberg, J., Klein, E. D. & Walpuski, M. (2018). Wie erfolgreich fühlen sich Schulleitungen und welche Unterstützungsbedürfnisse haben sie? Ergebnisse aus dem Projekt Schulleitungsmonitor. *SHIP Working Paper Reihe*, Nr. 3. Arbeitsgruppe Bildungsforschung der Universität Duisburg-Essen. DOI: 10.17185/dupublico/47202
- Smith, M. W. & Wilhelm, J. D. (2004). 't's just like being good at it: The importance of competence in the literate lives of young men. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 47(4), 454-461.
- WDR (Westdeutscher Rundfunk) (2019). *Drei minus“ für die digitale Ausstattung an deutschen Schulen*. WDR-Umfrage im Rahmen der ARD-Themenwoche „Zukunft Bildung“. https://presse.wdr.de/ploungue/wdr/programm/2019/11/pdf/PM_Digitalisierung_an_Schulen.pdf, accessed 08 January 2020.

Daniela Elsner (elsner@em.uni-frankfurt.de) is Professor of TEFL pedagogy at Goethe University Frankfurt Main, Germany, where she is also Director of the Academy for Teacher Education and Research. In her research, she focuses on early foreign language learning and teaching, bi- and plurilingualism, CLIL and Immersion, multilingual technology assisted language learning and teaching processes, and the quality of higher education teaching. Daniela Elsner is co-author of *Sally* (Cornelsen Publishers), the number one textbook for English in Primary Schools in Germany.

Astrid Jurecka (jurecka@em.uni-frankfurt.de) presently works as a researcher and teacher at Goethe-University Frankfurt. Before, she worked at the Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education (DIPF). Former language-related research concerned the explanation of differential item functions within different countries, the assessment of young learners' oral foreign language skills as well as vocabulary knowledge (breadth and depth) of children in kindergarten; current research concerns the use of digital tools for foreign language teaching in primary school.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 150-158

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Young learners, Maths, EFL and Chess: With CLIL they all progress

Thomas ZAPOUNIDIS

Although the benefits of CLIL methodology (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols, 2008) as well as chess instruction in general (Aciego, Garcia, & Betancort, 2012) are well acknowledged and widely documented in the literature, only a few countries widely use CLIL in most of their schools and even fewer have included chess in their main curriculum. To this end, this paper enriches the current literature with reference to CLIL and chess by describing the innovative incorporation of chess in the mainstream syllabus of a primary school with a double focus in mind. On the one hand, this article aims at underlining the multiple benefits of chess on young learners and, on the other hand, it attempts to promote the idea of teaching chess in a foreign language in accordance to the CLIL methodology.

Key words: CLIL, chess, young learners, EFL

1. Introduction: Why chess?

The role of games in the cognitive development of children is well documented (Alexiou, 2005). According to Fissler, Kolassa and Schrader (2015), cognitively demanding games (e.g., digital, board or card games) develop cognitive abilities, including among others “lower-order abilities such as visual perception and higher-order abilities such as selective visual attention, switching ability, sustained attention, short-term and working memory, executive control, reasoning, and spatial abilities” (pp.2-3) (see also Karasimos in this volume). In this light, the use of games in educational settings is more than welcome and chess is but one such example.

Chess is, by all means, a cognitively demanding game. It involves a number of cognitive skills such as attention, concentration, perception, information processing, logical reasoning, memory, problem solving, strategic decision making (Jankovic & Novak, 2019; Jerrim, et al., 2018; Rosholm, Mikkelsen & Gumede, 2017) and non-cognitive skills such as patience, discipline, self-control and social skills (Rosholm, Mikkelsen & Gumede, 2017). Indeed, evidence shows that “chess masters and professional musicians—possess, on average, superior overall cognitive ability” (Sala & Gobet 2017a, p.515). It should be noted, though, that the hypothesis that chess “makes kids smarter” (Meyers,

2016, p.3) is not widely accepted. Some researchers (Gobet & Campitelli, 2006) have critically questioned the impact of chess on cognitive and general academic ability. Still, the benefits of chess from a cognitive, at least, point of view should be viewed from the *transfer of learning* viewpoint.

Transfer of learning, initially conceived as transfer of practice (Woodworth & Thorndike, 1901), is a broad term that reflects “the ability to extend what has been learned in one context to new contexts” (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999, p.51). Although there is a wider classification of transfer of learning types that include (among others terms) positive/negative transfer, low/far road transfer, forward/backward reaching transfer and so on, the most commonly used one is far/near transfer (Alexander & Murphy, 1999; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999; Mestre, 2005; Perkins & Salomon, 1992; Sala & Gobet, 2017a). According to Sala and Gobet (2017a, p.515) far transfer “occurs when a set of skills generalizes across two (or more) domains that are only loosely related to each other” while the near transfer refers to “the transfer of skills between strictly related domains” (Sala & Gobet, 2017b, p.671).

In this light, while some of the cognitive benefits of chess might not explicitly lead to general academic achievement (Gobet & Campitelli, 2006) by virtue of far transfer, chess may still have academic impact in fields that are more closely related to chess (near transfer). A good example are mathematics. A number of studies (Barrett & Fish, 2011; Berkman, 2014; Ho, 2006; Ho & Buky, 2008; Scholz et al., 2008; Subia et al., 2019-just to mention a few) have underscored the contribution of chess to increased performance in mathematics. More specifically, chess may facilitate the learning of a number of mathematical notions such as adding and subtracting, division, multiplication, introduction to numbers, counting, categorizing as well as algebraic concepts and pre-concepts such as spatial orientation/directions and graph reading and coordinates (Jankovic & Novak, 2019, p.431). Still, hardly any of the available research refers to longitudinal studies with very young learners in mind as most of them aim at ages 9 and above which is unfortunate considering that during childhood “cognitive training is more likely to be effective than in adulthood” (Sala & Gobet 2017a, p.515).

What is more, it may be argued that chess is not only beneficial to mathematics but to other subjects of the educational curriculum. One such example is the language subject in general and the reading ability in particular. Research in the correlation of reading and chess (Ferguson 2000; Liptrap 1998; Margulies 1993) is limited compared to that of chess and mathematics. Still, one cannot ignore the fact that chess players use sub skills used in reading. Indeed, reading is a complex process of decoding that involves the use of working memory, visual processing, speed of procession, short time memory, and attention (Sheppard, 2017). If chess exercises memory, practises and enhances the visual processing of combinations of moves on the chessboard, promotes fast procession (due to time limitation) and requires from players increased attention and concentration levels, then one might assume that learners who play chess are better equipped compared to other learners who do not. What is more, if faster and more efficient reading is associated with eye fixation, then learners who play chess should be more competent given that chess players’ eye movements have been associated with rapid recognition of complex visual patterns (Sheridan & Reingold, 2017).

Furthermore, chess instruction may also prove beneficial in the field of foreign language learning. Memory components (whether in terms of general vocabulary or larger chunks of language) that influence foreign language learning include short-term immediate memory for pictures and associative short-term memory (Alexiou, 2009). In the same light, analytic skills such as inductive learning, visual perception, reasoning ability, spatial ability are also involved in the learning of the foreign vocabulary (ibid). As a result, young learners who are already initiated in chess, should be more competent compared to those who have not played chess, as a game of chess: (a) uses mental

images as pictures of chess positions, (b) involves constant reasoning and deductive thinking, (c) exercises visual spatial abilities.

Besides its cognitive value, chess is also pedagogically valuable (Aciego, Garcia & Betancort, 2012) as it may develop social competencies (e.g. socializing, patience, perseverance, respect of the opponent, self-control). Some of these competences are presented in more detail in Table 1.

<i>Social competencies (the ability to respect and apply socio-cultural and educational values)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to create good relationships with peers, understanding the situation and opinions of other students - ability to accept and respect set of values, beliefs and personality of other people - ability to create environment in which they feel accepted and successful - ability to effectively handle emotions - self-confidence and trust in personal abilities - organizational capability: planning and setting goals, managing and solving problems - ability to collaborate in learning and communication, solving problems through discussion and conversation - ability to be responsible and independent in decision-making - ability to responsibly carry out undertaken tasks - ability to recognize the consequences of their own and other views and actions - skills for solidarity and polite behavior, mutual help and acceptance of diversity - ability to perform in public and speak to others.
<i>Work competencies</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to define the project and set goals - skills to perform complex tasks requiring careful planning, realization, analysis and evaluation of work results - ability to determine priority objectives and their development - ability to use the resources needed to achieve multiple goals - ability to steadily and patiently fulfill undertaken tasks - ability to monitor and evaluate project progress and adaptation to new circumstances during work - ability to consistently carry out their own ideas
<i>Competencies for communicating, learning and solving problems</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to interactively use languages, symbols and technology - ability to interactively use knowledge and information - ability to understand spatial relationships, correct perception and clear idea of object position in the space, and predicting changes of position - developed mathematical skills (identify and define unknown, organize knowledge and information)

*Table 1. Competencies which students can acquire through chess training
(Adapted from (Jankovic & Novak, 2019, p.436)*

The inclusion of so many skills and competencies in a single board game renders chess an excellent choice for educational settings. Given a number of studies (Glukhova, 2017; Meyers, 2016; Stefurak, 2013) that support such a statement, the instruction of chess was willingly adopted in the educational context described below as an innovative integration in the existing educational curriculum.

2. Educational setting and chess in CLIL attire

The broader educational context in which chess instruction took place was the 3rd experimental primary school of Evosmos, which is situated in the western part of Thessaloniki, Greece and is a unique school for a number of reasons.

First, because, compared to the rest of the public schools, it possesses highly qualified personnel. The selection of the personnel for experimental schools is dictated by a different law that prioritizes high qualifications and all the staff undergoes a number of evaluations before it is selected. Therefore, the personnel are well experienced and hold at least an MA while a considerable number of English and Greek teachers in these schools hold a PhD.

Furthermore, this experimental school is supervised by the School of English of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. This privilege entails creative and productive monitoring of the educational curriculum by the department's academic staff in cooperation with the school's administration and quality teaching of English as a foreign language. The University also benefits from this cooperation as it sends students to observe experienced teachers who become their mentors.

What is more, due to its experimental nature, the school implements a number of innovative and different trends, compared to the other public schools, in early foreign language learning and teaching. In this light, the teaching of English to young learners follows an experiential and grammar free instruction. Young learners are exposed to extensive and qualitative English language input as the teachers there use the English language exclusively focusing their language on lexical chunks and teach for 5 hours per week in grades 1 and 2 compared to 1 hour per week in the rest of the public schools. The results of this innovative English language curriculum are impressive taking into consideration that learners at this school have consistently participated in the KPG exams earning a B2 level of certification in the English language by the age of 12 (grade 6) without any private tuition outside school (a rare phenomenon in Greece).

Finally, the 3rd experimental primary school of Evosmos is unique because it is the only school in Greece that implements the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method in the teaching of other subjects. CLIL has long been established as a valuable method (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Mehisto, Marsh & Frigols, 2008) and proven to aid in a number of areas such as language (Loranc-Paszylk, 2009; Merino, & Lasagabaster, 2018) and vocabulary (Heras, & Lasagabaster, 2015; Pérez-Cañado, 2018; Xanthou, 2011). The four language skills are also affected as in speaking (Gallardo del Puerto & Gómez-Lacabex, 2013), writing (Gené-Gil, Juan-Garau, & Salazar-Noguera, 2015; Ruiz de Zarobe, 2010), reading (Varkuti 2010), and listening (Aguilar & Rodriguez, 2012; Dallinger, Jonkmann, Hollm, & Fiege, 2016). Finally, CLIL was also found to include motivational outcomes (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Pérez-Cañado, 2012). Given the beneficial results of the CLIL method, the school has initially implemented it in subjects such as Geography, Science, Environmental Studies, and History with the exclusive use of the English language instead of Greek. Since 2014, the CLIL method has been extended periodically (depending on the school's schedule) to subjects such as Physical Education and last but not least Chess.

Under the CLIL mantle, chess has increased its contribution to the school's innovative approaches and maintained the tradition of good trends in the teaching of foreign languages to young learners. It was no longer just a board game of so many cognitive and non-cognitive benefits but became a dual focused approach unfolding its true power to young learners. In this light, it contributed to the school in two ways. First, it covered a gap, as up to that point CLIL was only offered to grades 3 to 6, leaving the very young learners of grades 1 and 2 CLILless. Second, it further increased the exposure

of young learners to the English language for one extra hour per week and did so in a playful way, for, after all, chess is a game.

3. Implementation of chess

Having defined the setting and the further enhancement of chess with the dual focused approach of CLIL, we now proceed to the implementation of chess in the CLIL of the 3rd Experimental primary school of Evosmos. In particular, the content of the lessons and the tools used in unfolding its true potential will be accounted for in the following paragraphs.

As far as the content of chess is concerned, it fully complies with the school's priorities that, among others, aims at using diverse and motivating material that is delivered via experiential learning, is context-based and assisted by Information Computer Technology (henceforth ICT).

As Kolb (1984, p.41) mentions “knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. In this light, children generally learn better by doing things rather than being told what to do and learn (Moore, 2010). Therefore, in chess learners implicitly (via entertaining and motivating activities) acquire the terminology associated with the game. Taking their young age into consideration, these activities might include guessing (e.g., what chess piece is in my hand), miming (e.g., the moves of the chess piece on a big chessboard), drawing/colouring (e.g., the black and white squares of the chessboard), bingo or memory games (naming chess pieces) and so on. Their young age also necessitates activities that include physical movement and therefore chess playing on a big chessboard, frequent getting up and pointing at the target piece, showing the solution of a chess puzzle and so on, are also used and encouraged. Young learners also like to create things, which are then displayed not only to boost their sense of personal involvement in the teaching process but also in order to provide further visual-haptic stimuli that may aid learning (Broadbent, Osborne, Kirkham & Mareschal, 2019). Therefore, learners also use black and white plaster for the creation of self-made chessboards, they create pictures or posters with their favourite chess pieces, chessboard, or even an imaginary chess picture story. Learners are also engaged in building Lego chessboards and chess pieces. All crafts and creations are then displayed in a specially reserved ‘chess area’ in the classroom. As their vocabulary increases with time, we also encourage spoken production so we organize chess puppet playing sessions which encourage recycling of chess vocabulary and English chunks (e.g. *Hello, What is your name? I am a bishop, What's the weather like bishop? etc*).

All the daily topics (e.g., chessboard, chess pieces and their movement, chess values, basic strategy and tactics, chess openings and endings, and so on), writing and the associated vocabulary (e.g., squares, horizontal, vertical, diagonal, move, take, castle, bishop, rook, knight etc) are context-based given that young learners have not yet fully mastered abstract thinking and their short term memory as well as concentration skills are limited. Thus, we use YouTube cartoons (Petit Nicola learning chess) or other videos (Geri's game, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMnUuKr88XU>), fairy tales (Chessboard fugitives by Evgenios Trivizas, Once upon a time there was chess by Giouvantsoudis Kostas and Mousiadou Irini), and even comic character based chess course books (Karvin in the chess forest by Barsky and Kasatina) that aid young learners grasp chess theory and tactics in a playful and child-friendly way. The translated version of the mentioned course book is accompanied by an activity book and is the result of the cooperation of the Kasparov Chess Foundation in Europe with the Association of Chess Players of Thessaloniki.

Eventually, ICT assumes a significant role in our chess lessons. The unique ability of computer technology to combine visual with audio elements renders it a valuable tool for learning the chess terminology (by seeing and listening to its English pronunciation) as well as for demonstrating complex chess notions. However, ICT is not only used for demonstration purposes but also for its interactive ability. Young learners love to interact with the computer, and, to this end, it is used for a

number of chess games (digital memory games, digital colouring, 3d puzzles, and other flash or HTML based material). Finally yet importantly, a special chess software (Chessmaster) is used for practising chess movements on funny and entertaining cartoon like chessboards as well as in organizing challenging chess tournaments. The chess software is also used for evaluative purposes. First, it is used in formative evaluation as the teacher records each learner's choices (chess moves), and this way it keeps a detailed record of the learners' comprehension of the content of chess. What is more, the chess software may also serve the purpose of a summative evaluation, as it depicts the level of each learner in terms of ELO points (chess rating points awarded based on the players' opponent level).

All the content of chess was delivered via the CLIL methodology. Still, given the young age of the learners and the fact that this was their first exposure to both English and CLIL as a method, it was considered proper to start with a light form of CLIL. Therefore, in grade 1 chess was introduced in the form of CLIL showers while from grade 2 and onwards, chess was offered in its full form with the English language being the dominant and unique (at least on the part of the teacher) form of delivery.

4. Conclusion

This paper has described the pioneering attempt of teaching chess to young learners in the English language and provided its readers with a number of reasons that explain why chess should be incorporated in the general curriculum of schools. Apart from its general cognitive benefits, chess is a pedagogical tool in the hands of educators that may contribute positively to a number of areas such as the learners': (a) social skills (learners exposed to chess improved their behaviour), (b) emotional-motivational skills (chess is viewed as a game by the learners and this, compared to other school subjects makes them feel more relaxed and motivated), (c) better performance in mathematics (learners exposed to chess demonstrate better results in mathematics because of the near transfer of learning that chess skills have in relation to mathematics), (d) better performance in English (when chess is delivered via the CLIL method). Unfortunately, chess has not yet been included in the main curriculum in many countries but hopefully the usefulness and necessity of such an educational intervention will be made clearer with the necessary research within school premises through well-focused empirical studies. For chess may not be a solution to all educators' problems, as there are a number of other variables that affect teaching and learning and much is also dependent on the way of the delivery, but it is still a magic wand that educators should value. All that is left then is the right spell!

References

- Aciego R., Garcia L., & Betancort, M. (2012). The benefits of chess for the intellectual and social-emotional enrichment in schoolchildren. *Span. J. Psychol.* 15, pp.551–559.
- Aguilar, M., & Rodríguez, R. (2012). Lecturer and student perceptions on CLIL at a Spanish university. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 15(2), pp.183-197.
- Alexander P.A., & Murphy P.K. (1999). Nurturing the seeds of transfer: A domain-specific perspective. *International journal of educational research*, 31(7), pp.561–576.
- Alexiou, T. (2009). Young learners' cognitive skills and their role in foreign language vocabulary learning. In M. Nikolov (Ed.) *Second Language Acquisition: Early learning of Modern Foreign Languages*. Processes and Outcomes (pp. 46-61). Bristol: Multilingual Matters

- Alexiou, T. (2005) *Cognitive development, aptitude and language learning in Greek young learners*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Swansea.
- Barrett D., & Fish W. (2011). Our move: using chess to improve math achievement for students who receive special education services. *Int. J. Spec. Educ.* 26, pp.181–193.
- Berkman R. M. (2004). The Chess and Mathematics Connection: More than Just a Game. *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School*, 9, pp.246–250.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.). (1999). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. National Academy Press.
- Broadbent, H., Osborne, T., Kirkham, N., Mareschal, D. (2019). Touch and look: The role of visual-haptic cues for categorical learning in primary school children. *Infant and Child Development*. 10.1002/icd.2168.
- Coyle, D., Hood, P., & Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dallinger, S., Jonkmann, K., Hollm, J, & Fiege, C. (2016). The effect of content and language integrated learning on students' English and history competences: Killing two birds with one stone? *Learning and Instruction* 41, pp. 23–31.
- Dalton-Puffer, C. (2011). Content-and-language integrated learning: From practice to principles? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 31, pp.182–204.
- Ferguson, R. (2000). *The Use and Impact of CHESS*. Section B, USA Junior Chess Olympics Curriculum. 53.
- Fissler P, Kolassa I-T, & Schrader C (2015). Educational games for brain health: revealing their unexplored potential through a neurocognitive approach. *Front. Psychol.* 6, p.1056. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01056.
- Gallardo del Puerto, F., & Gómez-Lacabex, E. (2013). The impact of additional CLIL exposure on oral English production. *Journal of English Studies* 11, pp.113-131.
- Gené-Gil, M, Juan-Garau, M., & Salazar-Noguera, J. (2015). Development of EFL writing over three years in secondary education: CLIL and non-CLIL settings. *Language Learning Journal* 43(3), pp. 1–18.
- Glukhova, O.V.(2017). The Need for Chess in School and Its Role in the Dynamics of Child Development *Revue Internationale du CRIRES: innover dans la tradition de Vygotsky*, 4(1), pp.161-168.
- Gobet, F., & Campitelli, G.(2006). Educational benefits of chess instruction. A critical review. In T.Redman (Ed.), *Chess and Education. Selected essays from Koltanowski Conference* (pp. 124-143). Dallas, TX: University of Texas at Dallas.
- Heras, A., & Lasagabaster, D. (2015). The impact of CLIL on affective factors and vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(1), pp.70–88.
- Ho, F. (2006). Enriching math using chess. *Journal of the British Columbia Association of Mathematics Teachers*, 47(2), pp.44-60.
- Ho, F., & Buky, J. (2008). *The Effect of Math and Chess Integrated Instruction on Math Scores*. Chicago: The Chess Academy.
- Jankovic, A., & Novak, I. (2019). Chess as a Powerful Educational Tool for Successful People, In Tipurić, Darko Hruška, Domagoj (Ed.): *7th International OFEL Conference on Governance, Management and Entrepreneurship: Embracing Diversity in Organisations*. April 5th - 6th, 2019, Dubrovnik, Croatia, Governance Research and Development Centre (CIRU), Zagreb, pp. 425-441
- Jerrim, J.P., Macmillan, L., Micklewright, J., Sawtell, M., & Wiggins, M. (2018). Does teaching children how to play cognitively demanding games improve their educational attainment? Evidence from a Randomised Controlled Trial of chess instruction in England. *Journal of Human Resources*, 53 (4), pp. 993-1021.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Liptrap, J. (1998). *Chess and Standard Test Scores*, Chess Life 1998, pp.41-43. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu>
- Loranc-Paszylk, B. (2009). Integrating Reading and Writing into the Context of CLIL Classroom: Some Practical Solutions. *International CLIL Research Journal* 1 (2), pp. 47-53.
- Margulies, S. (1993). *The effect of chess on reading scores: District nine chess program, second year report*. New York: The American Chess Foundation.
- Mehisto, P., Marsh, D., & Frigols, M.-J. (2008). *Uncovering CLIL*. Oxford: Macmillan.
- Merino, J.A., & Lasagabaster, D. (2018). The effect of content and language integrated learning programmes' intensity on English proficiency: A longitudinal study. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 28(1), pp. 18–30.
- Mestre, J. P. (ed.) (2005). *Transfer of Learning From a Modern Multidisciplinary Perspective*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Meyers, J. (2016). Why offer chess in schools? In Kasparov Chess Foundation Europe, *The Benefits of Chess in Education: Examples of Research and Papers on Chess and Education*, pp. 3-5. Available from www.academiadesah.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/research_kcfe.pdf
- Moore, D. T. (2010). Forms and issues in experiential learning. In D. M. Qualters (Ed.) *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* (pp. 3-13). New York City, NY: Wiley.
- Pérez Cañado, M. (2018). CLIL and Educational Level: A Longitudinal Study on the Impact of CLIL on Language Outcomes. *Porta Linguarum*, 29, pp.51-70.
- Perkins, D.N., & Salomon, G. (1992). *Transfer of learning*. *International Encyclopedia of Education*, Second Edition. Oxford, England: Pergamon Press.
- Rosholm, M., Mikkelsen, M.B., & Gumedé, K. (2017). Your move: The effect of chess on mathematics test scores. *PLoS ONE* 12(5), e0177257.
- Ruiz de Zarobe, Y. (2010). Written production and CLIL: An empirical study. In C. Dalton Puffer, T. Nikula & U. Smit (Eds.) *Language Use in CLIL*. Berlin: John Benjamins
- Sala, G., & Gobet, E. (2017a). Does far transfer exist? Negative evidence from chess, music, and working memory training. *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 26(6), pp.512-520.
- Sala, G., & Gobet, F. (2017b). Working memory training in typically developing children: A meta-analysis of the available evidence. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(4), pp.671–685.
- Scholz, M., Niesch, H., Steffen, O., Ernst, B., Loeffler, M., Witruk, E., & Schwarz, H. (2008). Impact of chess training on mathematics performance and concentration ability of children with learning disabilities. *International Journal of Special Education*, 23(3), pp.131-141.
- Sheppard, S.M. (2017). *Making Learning Personal for All: Supporting research-based personalization for reading success*. Washington, DC: Digital Promise Global.
- Sheridan H, & Reingold E.M. (2017). Chess players' eye movements reveal rapid recognition of complex visual patterns: Evidence from a chess-related visual search task. *Journal of Vision*. 17(4).
- Stefurak, L. (2003). *Why chess in elementary school education?* Retrieved from <http://www.misd.wednet.edu/IPWebPage/IPChess//why.html>.
- Subia, G., Amaranto, J., Amaranto, J., Bustamante, J., & Damaso, I. (2019). Chess and Mathematics Performance of College Players: An Exploratory Analysis. *Open Access Library Journal*, 6, pp.1-7.
- Woodworth, R. S., & Thorndike, E. L. (1901). The influence of improvement in one mental function upon the efficiency of other functions.(I). *Psychological review*, 8(3), pp. 247–261.
- Várkuti, A. (2010). Linguistic Benefits of the CLIL Approach: Measuring Linguistic Competences. *International CLIL Research Journal*, 1(3), pp.67-79.
- Xanthou, M. (2011). The impact of CLIL on L2 vocabulary development and content knowledge. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* 10(4), pp.116-126.

Thomas Zapounidis (thomaszapounidis@gmail.com) graduated from the English Department of Language and Literature of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He was awarded a Master's degree and a PhD in Applied Linguistics, which produced a unique learner corpus that includes transcribed material of classroom input and output for a whole school (totalling about 4.750 single spaced pages and about 1,5 million word- types). His main interests lie in teaching young learners and the use of ICT while his special field of research focuses on corpus linguistics and particularly the use of corpus software in the production and evaluation of coursebook/ language material.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 159-172

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Validating Pic-Lex for pre-primary and primary school age children

Chloe MILLS & James MILTON

Vocabulary assessments are widely used by researchers, teachers, and clinicians, and it is vital that any assessment used in practice is informed by research. This study trials Pic-Lex (Alexiou, 2019), a new picture-based receptive vocabulary test for children speaking English to establish whether the results it produces appear reliable and valid. The participants were 40 schoolchildren aged from 3 years and 2 months to 7 years and 9 months. Validation was assessed using an argument-based framework. Pic-Lex was trialled alongside the British Picture Vocabulary Test (BPVS) and a high correlation was found between Pic-Lex and raw BPVS scores ($r = 0.79$, $p = <.01$). The receptive vocabulary sizes of this sample averaged around 4000–5000 words, which is similar to other figures from the literature. The development of this new research-based receptive vocabulary test can have positive implications for vocabulary interventions in several contexts.

Key words: vocabulary, receptive size, children, EFL, test, assessment, Pic-lex

1. Background

Vocabulary is a key aspect of children's language development. Low levels of vocabulary can lead to educational struggles in school (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001; Milton & Treffers-Daller, 2013) while also impacting wellbeing and mental health (Oxford University Press, 2018). These factors, along with the discourse surrounding the idea of a vocabulary "gap" (Quigley, 2018), show that there is a pressing need to be able to accurately evaluate a child's vocabulary size. However, previously obtained vocabulary size estimates for children vary greatly due to the different methodologies employed by researchers and the relative lack of a reliable measure of vocabulary *size* for children.

The aim of this study is to trial a new receptive vocabulary size test on a small sample of British children. This new test, called Pic-Lex (Alexiou, 2019; for a review of the test see Alexiou & Milton, 2020), is designed to model the vocabulary acquisition process of young, pre-literate learners. In performing this preliminary piece of validation research and bearing in mind the recent call for greater rigour for the field of vocabulary assessment (Schmitt, Nation, & Kremmel, 2020), Pic-Lex will

be assessed in several areas of validity in order to discover (1) whether it is working as expected and (2) whether the results are meaningful.

1.1. Vocabulary size and the word gap

Vocabulary size and growth in children has been a topic of interest for researchers for decades. Despite this, vocabulary size estimates vary due to differing methodologies, from audio recordings (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Seltzer, & Lyons, 1991) to vocabulary estimation through the use of bespoke vocabulary tests (Anglin, 1993; Biemiller, 2005; Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). On average, the literature suggests that children acquire anywhere between 800–3000 words per year. There is a rule of thumb that a rough vocabulary size can be calculated with the formula $(age - 2) \times 1000$ (Nation & Anthony, 2016). Conservative estimates of children's vocabulary size appear to confirm this, suggesting that eight-year-old children may know an average of 5000 root word meanings (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). Based on an examination of school books, Anderson and Nagy (1993) suggest that children acquire 2000–3000 words per year. Anglin (1993) suggests that children in first grade (7–8 years old) know an average of 3000 root word meanings, but that this grows to 40,000 when you include inflected words, derived words, or idioms. Unfortunately, these studies all use different methodologies, ranging from unique vocabulary tests to extrapolation from educational materials—and these figures do not include the many studies examining vocabulary size via oral input. This variation means that even when promising results are obtained, they are not directly comparable to one other. For example, some of the variation in the vocabulary size figures might be explained by whether a researcher has chosen to present the test words in writing or orally, or both, and the degree to which the test words are contextualised.

While a difference of 1000–2000 words on either side of the average may be expected, concerns have been raised over the so-called vocabulary “gap” that may exist between children of different proficiencies in vocabulary. The “word gap” describes the difference in vocabulary between children who enter school with an expected vocabulary for their age and those who enter school with a vocabulary lower than expected for their age. This gap may be due to different socioeconomic backgrounds (Hart & Risley, 1995) and while some of this research may be methodologically flawed, a wealth of research supports the idea of individual differences affecting vocabulary size (Hoff, 2003). The word gap may affect progress in all school subjects and also impacts behaviour (Oxford University Press, 2018). In the UK, 21.2% of primary school pupils speak a language other than English in their home (Department for Education, 2019). The word gap may be particularly pronounced in these students who speak an additional or different language at home.

Vocabulary sizes need to be assessed if we are to investigate any potential word gap or if we want to track vocabulary development over time. The easiest way to do this is with a vocabulary size test. However, despite an increased focus on the importance of vocabulary, the proliferation of longitudinal vocabulary studies, and the increase in EAL pupils, there is still a lack of vocabulary measures that can be used with very young native English speakers (Nation & Coxhead, 2014). This is because designing a vocabulary test is complicated, especially for pre-literate children. It is vitally important to consider the methodology behind a vocabulary test yet many pieces of research do not seem to take this into account, resulting in the wide variety of vocabulary sizes reported in the literature. The issues that need to be addressed include how to define a word, the corpus and word lists used, how to test, what is the underlying construct, and test format and design (Nation, 2016; Schmitt, 2010). These choices have to be made in a principled, transparent manner and justifications should be given for the decisions made (Schmitt et al., 2020).

1.2. Current vocabulary size tests

The most common measure of receptive vocabulary size of children is the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (Dunn & Dunn, 2007). The PPVT can be used to examine whether a child struggles with receptive vocabulary (i.e., understanding words), rather than productive vocabulary (Groth-Marnat & Wright, 2009). The PPVT compares an individual child to standardised, normed figures. The norms are based on a large sample (over 6000 people), which is representative of the population of the United States. It is relatively easy and quick to use, but some level of training is required in order to administer and interpret the results effectively. Studies have shown the reliability and validity of results from the PPVT (Bracken & Murray, 1984; Stockman, 2000). The disadvantage of the PPVT is that the test items are based on *perceived* difficulty, rather than being linked to a model of children's language development. It also does not provide a vocabulary size estimate and only allows a researcher to compare an individual to generalised norms. Due to this, we cannot use the PPVT to model the learning process of vocabulary in children or investigate when particular words are learned. Furthermore, the PPVT has been criticised for a lack of ability to accurately judge the vocabulary knowledge of different demographic group, and it has been validated against standardised tests of intelligence and academic achievement but not in relation to aspects of semantic knowledge (Stockman, 2000). Therefore, the PPVT is unsuitable for gathering vocabulary size scores.

One test that may be the most suitable for younger children, with a principled and evidence-based design, is the Picture Vocabulary Size Test (Nation & Anthony, 2016). This is a multiple-choice test designed for young pre-literate speakers up to eight years old. In trials, it has shown itself to be suitable for children between six and eight years old; it presents a ceiling effect with children older than eight, yet is too difficult for those younger than six. Thus, there is still a lack of a test that can begin to measure the vocabularies of pre-literate children younger than six; Pic-Lex intends to fill this gap.

1.3. Test validation

Test validation is a complicated area, and a call for more thorough test validation procedures in vocabulary research has recently been made (Schmitt et al., 2020). It is vitally important to clearly define the purpose of the test and specify the proposed interpretations and use of test scores, as well as ensure the validation process is evidence-based (Schmitt et al., 2020). Historically, validation has been dominated by views that multiple types of evidence should support score interpretation. Now, more recent frameworks have been adopted that attempt to provide explicit guidance on framing validity arguments (Chapelle, 2012; Chapelle, Enright, & Jamieson, 2010; Kane, 2013). Thus, this research will follow an argument-based framework, incorporating evidence from several areas of validity in order to support the validity argument. The framework begins with a specification and identification of the interpretations and use of the scores, followed by an evaluation of the overall plausibility of these interpretations. The argument will be framed using the following six areas of evidence, or inferences defined by Chapelle, Enright and Jamieson (2010): domain definition/description, evaluation, generalisation, explanation, extrapolation, and utilisation.

Construct validity is the evidential basis for score interpretation (Messick, 1995). In this framework, it is represented by the 'explanation' area of evidence. It is difficult to measure due to the amount of variables that may be impacting this measure of validity. All information gathered on a test can contribute to understanding the scores, but a test becomes more valid if the score interpretations align with a theoretical rationale (Messick, 1995, p.743); in other terms, a test is only as valid as the conclusions that can be justifiably drawn from its results (Read, 2000). Pic-Lex is only valid therefore if the scores can be reliably extrapolated into sensible vocabulary sizes.

Therefore, as well as expecting a vocabulary test to accurately assess the construct being tested (i.e. receptive vocabulary size), a ‘good’ vocabulary test will also provide scores that correlate with other vocabulary size tests, show acceptable measures of internal reliability (i.e. Cronbach’s alpha score), and demonstrate a visible frequency effect. If these criteria are met, then reliable conclusions can be drawn from the results.

1.4. Summary, aims, and objectives

The lack of good vocabulary size tests is due to the difficulty of designing and administering vocabulary assessments that can measure a child’s vocabulary size. Most researchers, then, resort to using either a test such as the PPVT, which cannot provide detailed information on the *size* of a child’s vocabulary, or they design their own particular test, which does not enable comparison with other research. This paper describes the validation of a computerised test designed to be suitable for very young children that gives a receptive vocabulary size measure. Using an argument-based validity framework, this study attempts to provide evidence for its use as an instrument that can be used to measure receptive vocabulary sizes of native speakers. Based on the overarching aim of providing validity evidence for this new picture-based vocabulary test, the specific aims of this research are as follows:

- 1) Does Pic-Lex provide us with a good Cronbach’s alpha score, demonstrating reliability?
- 2) Does Pic-Lex produce correlations with another measure of receptive vocabulary, namely the British Picture Vocabulary Scale?
- 3) What does this test tell us about the receptive vocabulary sizes of a small sample of British children, and do these numbers align with previous research?

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The participants in this study were pre-primary and primary school age children. A total of five-year groups were tested, with around half the children from each class undergoing testing for a total of 40 children. The sample size of 40 children sufficient for a pilot study and enables statistical testing to be carried out. The oldest child was 7 years and 9 months and the youngest was 3 years and 2 months. Table 1 shows the distribution of age and sex across the classes. Three children spoke a language other than English at home (Chinese, Bengali, and Arabic).

Class	<i>n</i>	Male	Female	Age range (years; months)
Rising Threes	7	4	3	3;2–3;9
Nursery	7	4	3	4;1–4;9
Reception	9	4	5	4;10–5;9
Year 1	8	5	3	5;11–6;8
Year 2	9	5	4	6;10–7;9
Total	40	22	18	3;2–7;9

Table 1. Participant characteristics.

2.2. Instruments

2.2.1. Pic-Lex

As already discussed, test development must be based on critical analysis and justifiable decisions. A detailed description of the development process for Pic-Lex can be found in Alexiou and Milton (2020). In summary, Pic-Lex is a computer-delivered test, which is intended for use as a measure of receptive vocabulary size. It measures knowledge of English vocabulary from the first five 1000-word frequency bands (Kilgarriff, 1995). From each band, 20 words are chosen to form a 100-item test. The test is comprised solely of nouns. Pic-Lex, like several other picture-based vocabulary tests, asks the respondent to choose a picture that matches a spoken word. Pic-Lex is easy to administer to children and is suitable for younger learners, even those who are pre-literate. Key to the development of Pic-Lex was ensuring that a vocabulary size could be calculated. A score of 100 suggests that the subject may know up to 5000 words in English, so the calculation required to generate a vocabulary size is to multiply the child's score by 50. Figure 1 presents a screenshot of Pic-Lex. It shows the four picture options and the audio file that reads out the test item (the test administrator may also read the word out loud). The test can be completed in 15 minutes.



Figure 1. Pic-Lex.

The cognitive processes behind word knowledge are complex and not yet fully understood. Therefore, the theoretical rationale behind a vocabulary assessment needs to be carefully considered. The mechanisms that guide task performance in Pic-Lex are related to what we know about how children learn words and what word knowledge comprises. To align a test with findings from the literature, we can break it down into its component processes (Messick, 1995). For Pic-Lex, these are:

- a respondent first hears and parses a spoken word;
- they have to consider and process four visual representations of words;
- then they have to try and link these to semantic knowledge in the brain;
- finally, they must try and correctly match their understanding of the test word to one of the picture options.

These steps should align with the underlying cognitive processes behind this type of vocabulary assessment: establishing a form–meaning link. The form–meaning link is a well-established aspect of vocabulary learning (Nation, 2013) and so Pic-Lex taps into a fundamental component of word knowledge. The form–meaning link correlates well with other aspects of word knowledge, at least in adults (Milton & Fitzpatrick, 2013); it is important to note that Pic-Lex does not intend to assess productive vocabulary or vocabulary depth (e.g. knowledge of word parts, synonyms, or collocations).

2.2.2. BPVS

The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (third edition) is based on the fourth edition of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn and Dunn, 2007). It is a test of receptive vocabulary suitable for children from 3 years to 16 years 11 months, and is norm-referenced and measured individually. The BPVS is arranged so that test items become progressively more difficult as participants progress, and consists of 14 sets of 12 test items each. The BPVS produces a raw score and standardised scores can be calculated using a provided table. As stated by the BPVS manual, the standardised scores can be considered as more useful as they allow a person’s attainment to be placed on a scale and compared to other tests that have the same mean (100) and standard deviation (15). The limitations of the PPVT, and thus the BPVS, have been discussed in Section 1.2.

2.3. Procedure

The children in this study were tested with both instruments with a gap of at least an hour in between to minimise interference and fatigue. Both the raw and standardised scores from the BPVS were recorded. Scores from Pic-Lex were recorded as raw scores out of 100 (e.g. a score of 95 means the child made 5 errors) and then converted into vocabulary size measures (multiplied by 50). Data were recorded in Excel imported into SPSS Version 22 for statistical analysis.

3. Results

The argument will be framed using the following six areas of evidence: domain description, evaluation, generalisation, explanation, extrapolation, and utilisation (Chapelle et al., 2010), as recommended by Schmitt et al. (2020). A brief description of each domain precedes the evidence for that area.

3.1. Domain Definition

This inference refers to the rationale for the test design, and requires a description of the domain from which the vocabulary items have been sampled and whether the test will be representative of what we want to find out. A description of Pic-Lex is provided in Section 2.2.1, and its purpose is clearly stated as a “bespoke testing tool that tests vocabulary knowledge in a simple, easy, fast and appropriate way for the specific age group of very young, pre-school learners” (Alexiou & Milton, 2020, p. 111). The domain from which the vocabulary items have been sampled is representative of

what the children will be expected to know. The scores from Pic-Lex will be used for a) measuring the vocabulary sizes of young learners, and b) identifying learners with lower-than-expected vocabularies, who may be experiencing the word gap and thus need intervention.

The test format is appropriate for what the study is aiming to investigate. The use of a multiple choice test can have some limitations, such as guesswork, and the use of pictures also has to be carefully considered. However, for the purposes of its use, Pic-Lex is an adequate test of passive vocabulary knowledge, and the benefits of time and ease of use outweigh its limitations. The multiple choice format allows test developers to simplify a task and cover a large sample of words (Read, 2000). Furthermore, the pictures are useful and necessary when testing pre-literate children.

3.2. Evaluation

This inference requires an analysis of the test scores and scoring procedure. Table 2 presents some descriptive statistics for Pic-Lex, showing an overall mean of 87.8 and a slightly large standard deviation. Figure 2 presents the mean Pic-Lex score by year group. The scores were not normally distributed for every class. A significant finding was that Pic-Lex had a readily apparent ceiling effect with the older children. All the participants in the Year 2, Year 1 and Reception groups were able to complete Pic-Lex. The older groups scored very highly; the mean score for all the participants in the Year 2 and Year 1 groups ($n = 17$) was 98. Only one child in the upper years scored below 95. There was more variability in the Reception group but the scores still remained high (mean of 96.5, $n = 9$). The mean dropped to 86 in the Nursery group ($n = 7$).

	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Score	40	10	100	87.8	23.1

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Pic-Lex scores.

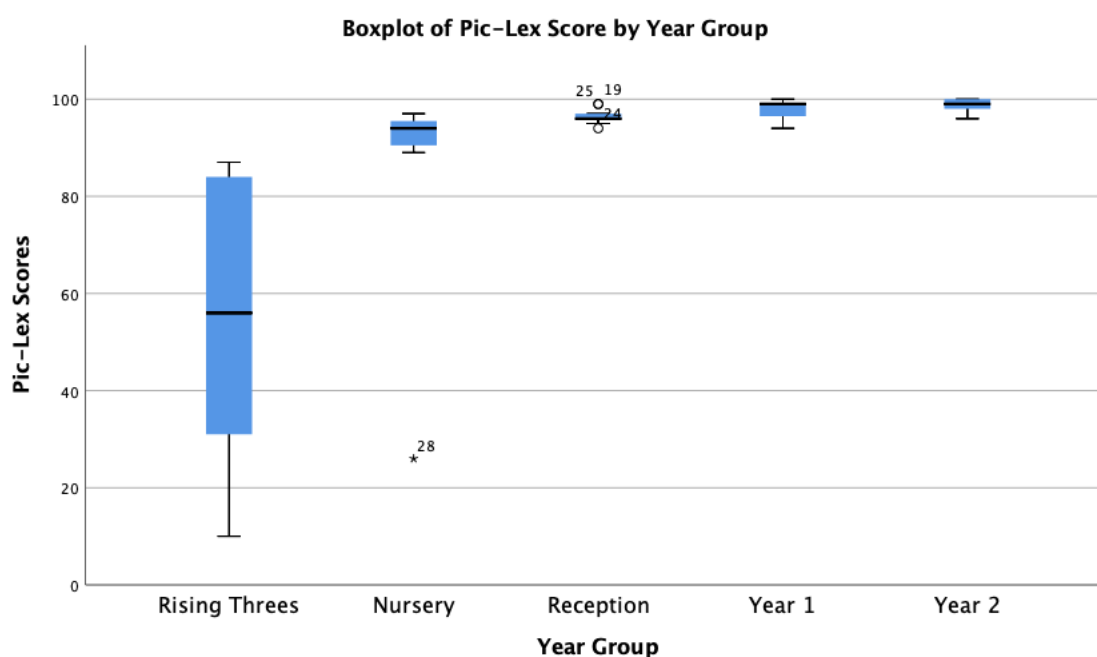


Figure 2. Boxplot showing Pic-Lex scores by year group.

The high scores achieved by the older children show a ceiling effect and demonstrate that the sensitivity of Pic-Lex is low for these age groups. Corroborating this is the fact that over half the test items were answered correctly across all levels. These results indicate that the items included in Pic-Lex may need adjustment if the test is to be administered to older children, as the ceiling effect will affect results and limits accurate evaluation of the children's lexicons.

The scores from the Rising Threes group present a different picture with much more variability. Four children in this group ($n = 7$) were unable to complete Pic-Lex. However, Pic-Lex is aimed at assessing the vocabulary of young, pre-literate children and so it must be accessible for this group. These results may suggest that Pic-Lex is unsuitable for this age group, as almost half the sample could not complete it; however, the sample is very small so no generalisation can be made. In contrast, the majority (6 out of 7) of participants in Rising Threes were able to complete the BPVS, which has a similar number of items depending on how far participants progress. This may raise the question: what are the differences between Pic-Lex and the BPVS and why can the youngest children complete the latter but not the former? Observation of the test participants suggested that as the BPVS increases in difficulty as participants progress, it holds the attention of the children for longer as it provides increasing challenge. On the other hand, in Pic-Lex the difficulty does not extend beyond the first 5000 words in English and so there is less challenge and the participants may lose interest. Other reasons could include the different interfaces of the test, or other design parameters such as the computerised nature of Pic-Lex versus the "offline" BPVS, or the pictures chosen. Further investigation is needed in this area and once again we can not draw conclusions based on this small sample.

The next aspect to consider is whether the results are related to frequency. The words in Pic-Lex are drawn from frequency bands (Kilgarriff, 1995), a decision that aligns with the literature guiding researchers to use an appropriate sampling procedure from different frequency bands when designing vocabulary tests (Read, 2000). Theoretically, people should know more words in the first 1000 words of English in comparison to later frequency bands as the first 1000 words are more common. The number of correct answers for each individual item in Pic-Lex was evaluated in order to determine the effect of frequency. The questions were combined into frequency bands, i.e. questions 1 to 20 are the first frequency band (1k) and so on. The average scores for each frequency band were then calculated. Table 3 shows the results for each frequency band as well as their mean rank.

Frequency band	Average % correct answers	Mean rank
1k	92.588	2.85
2k	94.999	2.87
3k	95.1	2.73
4k	95.141	3.13
5k	96.165	3.42

Table 3. Frequency data

The frequency profile was unexpected, as we would expect to see a decrease in average % correct answers as the frequency bands increase but instead we see an increase. The reasons for this may be that Pic-Lex only includes simple nouns. It is known that English-speaking children learn and use nouns before verbs (Saxton, 2017) and so a test that only includes nouns should assess a large proportion of the child's lexicon, but the restriction also means that Pic-Lex will not assess the entirety of a child's vocabulary knowledge (although this is difficult anyway). The inclusion of more parts of speech such as verbs or adverbs may improve the item and sampling validity and may potentially change the frequency results. But there was a clear rationale behind choosing only nouns. The small sample size may also have impacted the frequency results. The test needs further examination and adjustment in order to discover why this experiment did not present the intended frequency profile.

3.3. Generalisation

This section deals with the reliability and generalisability of the test scores. Cronbach's alpha is typically used to determine internal consistency; however, it may be ineffective in a vocabulary assessment situation, where each item may be considered its own separate construct (Schmitt et al., 2020). Despite this limitation, Cronbach's alpha is still a widely used concept of internal reliability. The Cronbach's alpha score of 0.789 demonstrates acceptable reliability. However, the hypothesis that participants would score higher on more common words (first frequency band) compared to less common words (later frequency bands) was not reflected in the results (see Table 3), which means that the internal consistency of Pic-Lex needs to be further investigated and a larger sample is needed to do this.

A one-way ANOVA was run (due to the nonparametric nature of the data) in order to determine the effect of age on Pic-Lex scores and see whether the test can differentiate between levels. This revealed a statistically significant difference between groups ($F(4,35) = 8.61, p < 0.05$). A Tukey post-hoc test showed that the difference in means between the Rising Threes year group and the others was statistically significant ($54.71 \pm 32.67, p < 0.05$), but there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the other groups ($p = .473$).

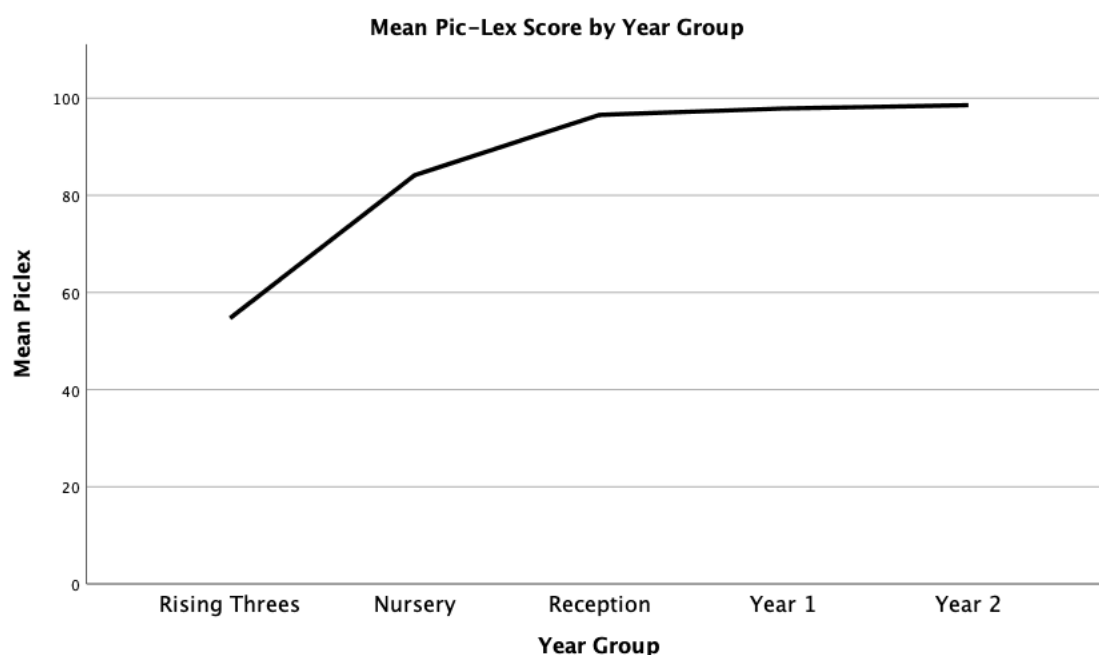


Figure 3. Means plot of Pic-Lex score by year group.

The best establishment of reliability would be a test-retest procedure. However, this was not possible within the constraints of this study. Thus, an important piece of future validation will be a further assessment of whether scores remain the same in a test-retest scenario, and further investigation into whether test-takers' scores can reliably distinguish between different groups.

3.4. Explanation

This inference involves linking the items and scores to the construct being tested which, in this study, is vocabulary knowledge. Here, we can attempt to quantify whether or not the scores can be converted into reasonable estimates of vocabulary size. We can also consider whether these sizes align with previous literature.

Table 4 and Figure 3 present the average vocabulary sizes for all the children who took part in Pic-Lex, including those who could not finish the test ($n = 40$). The error bars demonstrate the

Class	Age range (years; months)	<i>n</i>	Mean vocabulary size score
Rising Threes	3;2–3;9	7	2736
Nursery	4;1–4;9	7	4207
Reception	4;10–5;9	9	4828
Year 1	5;11–6;8	8	4894
Year 2	6;10–7;9	9	4928

Table 4. Mean vocabulary sizes, all children.

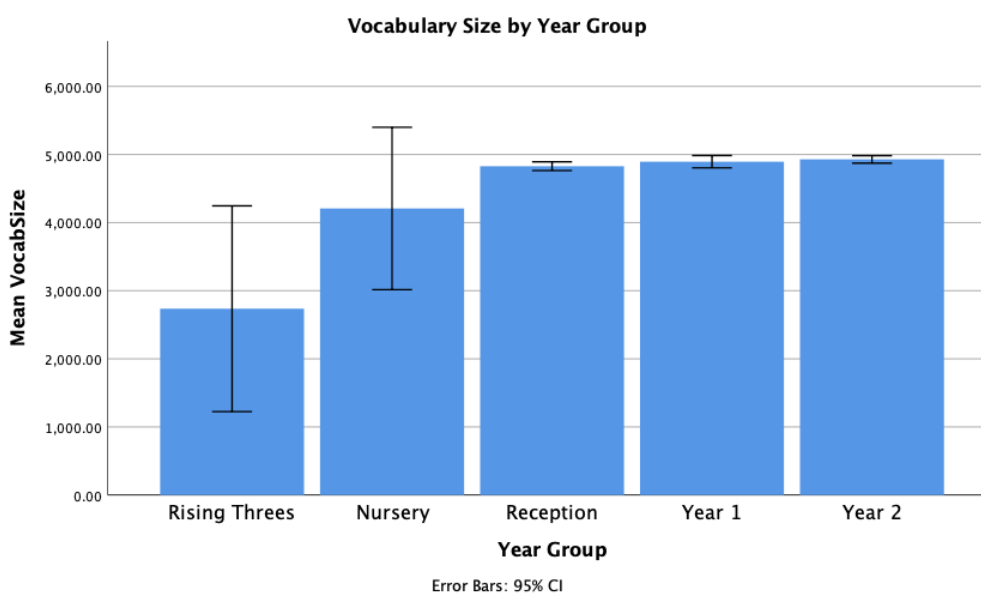


Figure 3. Mean vocabulary sizes including all children.

This figure also shows a ceiling effect, shown by the oldest year groups achieving close to the maximum score of 5000. As previously mentioned, the vocabulary of these groups is likely underestimated and not an accurate representation of their lexical knowledge. However, the numbers do broadly align with data from two previous studies (Anglin, 1993; Biemiller & Slonim, 2001) presented in Section 1.2. As this ceiling effect negates the estimation of vocabulary size in older children, if Pic-Lex is to be used with older age groups, the test developers could extend the frequency bands chosen and include more low-frequency words, in effect making the test “harder” and reducing the ceiling effect. However, this may not be necessary if Pic-Lex is only to be used with younger children.

The explanation area of validity also includes correlation of the test to another that tests the same construct. In Table 5, correlations between BPVS and Pic-Lex are displayed for all children ($n = 40$). The Pic-Lex scores and the standardised BPVS scores showed a moderate correlation ($r = 0.56$, $p = <.01$ two-tailed) and the Pic-Lex scores and the raw BPVS scores showed a high correlation ($r = 0.79$, $p = <.01$, two-tailed).

Paired Samples		Correlation	Sig.
BPVS Raw & Pic-Lex	0	.785**	.000
BPVS Standardised & Pic-Lex	0	.564**	.000

Table 5. Correlations between BPVS and Pic-Lex.

Concurrent validity determines the extent to which scores from different test instruments relate to each other. Pic-Lex shows a correlation with the British Picture Vocabulary Scale and in particular, the raw BPVS scores show a higher correlation to Pic-Lex scores than the standardised BPVS scores. This is most likely due to the fact that Pic-Lex is not a standardised test. Future research comparing Pic-Lex to other validated vocabulary tests would gather further evidence for concurrent validity.

Factors that may influence the score interpretations can also be considered here, such as test-taking behaviour. A large amount of guesswork was not observed in this trial. However, as in any multiple choice test, guessing on some questions is likely and may lead to influencing scores. However, research has shown that blind guessing is actually used as a last resort and that most participants know the meaning of the words, or have partial knowledge and use strategies that indicate this (Gyllstad, Vilkaitė, & Schmitt, 2015).

Finally, we can note that the pictures in Pic-Lex were recycled, i.e. used more than once, and so this may have influenced results due to children remembering that a picture has already matched with a previous word. This could be remedied very simply by gathering more pictures and ensuring they are only used once throughout the test.

3.5. Extrapolation

This step links test scores to a candidate’s knowledge *outside* of the test-taking situation. This step does not have any evidence, as Pic-Lex was only run alongside the BPVS. While the above step provided evidence for knowledge of the same construct, in order to provide more a more complete

picture surrounding the candidate's ability outside of the test situation, future validation studies may run Pic-Lex alongside, for example, reading comprehension tests, in order to determine whether Pic-Lex is assessing the correct construct (Schmitt et al., 2020).

3.6. Utility and Impact

Finally, the utility and impact of the test scores must be discussed. As this is only a preliminary study, the full impact cannot be addressed, but the potential utilisation and impact can be considered. For example, if Pic-Lex is further improved and rolled out, and documentation is provided on the meaning of scores based on evidence gathered over several validation studies (e.g. a score < 60 means a child may need interventions), then Pic-Lex has the potential to be used for its intended use, i.e. in classroom settings in order to identify children who may need additional help in their English.

4. Conclusions

If we are to achieve the rigour that is needed in the field of vocabulary assessment, it is important to transparently present the facts regarding new vocabulary tests. In carrying out this research, it has become clear that so far the validation of Pic-Lex in its current form, presents a mixed argument. Pic-Lex has several strengths, including its ease-of-use, its format, its principled word selection, its reliability (as show by the Cronbach's alpha score), and its correlation with the BPVS. It provides most validation evidence in the area of explanation, and there is some evidence for validity in the areas of domain definition, evaluation and generalisation. This evidence allows us to be reasonably confident in the interpretation of generated scores.

Therefore, we can say that Pic-Lex was able to assess the receptive vocabulary sizes of young learners, working particularly well for 4- and 5-year-olds. The first two aims (a good Cronbach's alpha score, and correlations with another test of receptive vocabulary) have both been met. For the latter aim, we can provide general vocabulary size measures of around 4800 words for children aged 5–7; a higher sample size and some evaluation of test items is needed if more specific and accurate numbers are to be gathered. Finally, detailed SES data were not able to be collected in this research. We can only make some general observations, in that the school was in an affluent area and there were few children receiving free school meals (a marker of low-SES in the United Kingdom). Therefore, the vocabulary sizes collected can be said to be representative of a high-SES area of the United Kingdom.

However, the current Pic-Lex test has some weaknesses. The limitations lie mainly in its item selection, which led to a ceiling effect (if administered to older learners) and an effect on frequency scores. These weaknesses will need to be addressed in future research (see for more on this the updated version of Pic-lex in Alexiou, this volume). Also, because validation is an ongoing process (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007), it will not be possible to demonstrate a final validity argument, therefore, future studies will aim to provide ongoing validation evidence for Pic-Lex. Upcoming pilots and trials in different contexts (e.g. multilingual environments, EAL learners, low-SES groups) will identify further refinements to Pic-Lex before its eventual release into the public domain.

References

Alexiou, T. (2019) *Pic-lex: Picture Vocabulary size test*. <http://gp.enl.auth.gr/piclex/>

- Alexiou, T. & Milton, J. (2020) Pic-Lex: A new tool of measuring receptive vocabulary for very young learners. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing ELT Education* (pp.103-113). Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2020/AELE_Book_ALLT_ZU_Web_V02.pdf
- Anderson, R. C., & Nagy, W. E. (1993). The vocabulary conundrum. *Center for the Study of Reading Technical Report, no. 570*.
- Anglin, J. M. (1993). Vocabulary development: A morphological analysis. *Monographs of the society for research in child development*, i-186.
- Biemiller, A. (2005). Size and sequence in vocabulary development: Implications for choosing words for primary grade vocabulary instruction. In A. Hiebert & M. Kamil, (Eds.). *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice* (pp. 223-242). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Biemiller, A., & Slonim, N. (2001). Estimating root word vocabulary growth in normative and advantaged populations: Evidence for a common sequence of vocabulary acquisition. *Journal of educational psychology*, 93(3), 498.
- Bracken, B. A., & Murray, A. M. (1984). Stability and predictive validity of the PPVT-R over an eleven month interval. *Educational & Psychological Research*.
- Chapelle, C. A. (2012). Validity argument for language assessment: The framework is simple.... *Language testing*, 29(1), 19-27.
- Chapelle, C. A., Enright, M. K., & Jamieson, J. (2010). Does an argument-based approach to validity make a difference? *Educational measurement: Issues and practice*, 29(1), 3-13.
- Department for Education. (2019). *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2019*. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812539/Schools_Pupils_and_their_Characteristics_2019_Main_Text.pdf
- Dunn, L., & Dunn, D. (2007). *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Fourth Edition (PPVT-4)*. Minneapolis, MN: NCS Pearson Psychcorp.
- Fulcher, G., & Davidson, F. (2007). *Language testing and assessment*: Routledge New York.
- Groth-Marnat, G., & Wright, A. (2009). *Handbook of personality assessment*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Gyllstad, H., Vilkaite, L., & Schmitt, N. (2015). Assessing vocabulary size through multiple-choice formats: Issues with guessing and sampling rates. *ITL-International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 166(2), 278-306.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*: Paul H Brookes Publishing.
- Hoff, E. (2003). The specificity of environmental influence: Socioeconomic status affects early vocabulary development via maternal speech. *Child development*, 74(5), 1368-1378.
- Huttenlocher, J., Haight, W., Bryk, A., Seltzer, M., & Lyons, T. (1991). Early vocabulary growth: relation to language input and gender. *Developmental psychology*, 27(2), 236.
- Kane, M. (2013). The argument-based approach to validation. *School Psychology Review*, 42(4), 448-457.
- Kilgarriff, A. (1995). BNC database and word frequency lists. Retrieved from <http://www.kilgarriff.co.uk/bnc-readme.html>
- Messick, S. (1995). Validity of psychological assessment: Validation of inferences from persons' responses and performances as scientific inquiry into score meaning. *American psychologist*, 50(9), 741.
- Milton, J., & Fitzpatrick, T. (2013). *Dimensions of vocabulary knowledge*: Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Milton, J., & Treffers-Daller, J. (2013). Vocabulary size revisited: the link between vocabulary size and academic achievement. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 4(1), 151-172.
- Nation, P. (2013). *Teaching & learning vocabulary*: Boston: Heinle Cengage Learning.
- Nation, P. (2016). *Making and using word lists for language learning and testing*: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Nation, P., & Anthony, L. (2016). Measuring vocabulary size. *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, 3, 355-368.
- Nation, P., & Coxhead, A. (2014). Vocabulary size research at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. *Language Teaching*, 47(3), 398-403.
- Oxford University Press. (2018). *Why Closing The Word Gap Matters: Oxford Language Report*.
- Quigley, A. (2018). *Closing the vocabulary gap*. Routledge.
- Read, J. (2000). *Assessing Vocabulary*: Cambridge University Press.
- Saxton, M. (2017). *Child language: Acquisition and development*. Sage.
- Schmitt, N. (2010). *Researching vocabulary: A vocabulary research manual*. Springer.
- Schmitt, N., Nation, P., & Kremmel, B. (2020). Moving the field of vocabulary assessment forward: The need for more rigorous test development and validation. *Language Teaching*, 53(1), 109-120.
- Stockman, I. J. (2000). The new Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—III: an illusion of unbiased assessment? *Language, speech, and hearing services in schools*, 31(4), 340-353.
-

Chloe Mills (822645@swansea.ac.uk) is a PhD student of Applied Linguistics at Swansea University studying first language vocabulary development in school children.

James Milton (email2@email.com) is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Swansea University, UK. A long-term interest in measuring lexical breadth, and establishing normative data for learning and progress, has led to extensive publications including *Measuring Second Language Vocabulary Acquisition* (Multilingual Matters, 2009).



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 173-184

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Raising Intercultural Awareness in Teaching Young Learners in EFL Classes

Ioannis KARRAS

This paper discusses the importance of raising intercultural awareness in teaching young learners in EFL classes. More specifically, it provides a theoretical framework within which the notions of intercultural education, culture teaching, intercultural awareness, empathy, and intercultural sensitivity are positioned. Furthermore, the impact of intercultural awareness on both teachers' and learners' social identity, as well the multiple implications for the greater vicinity of foreign language pedagogy, are thoroughly discussed. The article concludes with some practical suggestions for EFL teachers who are seeking to promote culture teaching and intercultural awareness, and to integrate an intercultural approach in their young learners' classrooms.

Key words: Young learners, Culture teaching, Intercultural awareness, TEFL, Intercultural education, Intercultural communication, Intercultural competence

1. Introduction

Although considered a cliché, it is a fact that globalization makes it increasingly important to understand, accept and respect *diversity*. Recognizing that each person is different and unique in terms of race, ethnic or cultural background, gender, socio-economic background, religious beliefs, sexual orientation is a sine qua non. *Diversity* is a broad umbrella term, but because of the influx of migration, refugees, workforce mobility, and leisure traveling, being more culturally aware and developing appropriate and effective communication skills have become more important than ever before. Obviously, understanding, acceptance, and respect are not gained through an automatic process or through some kind of osmosis, but are cultivated and developed throughout one's lifetime, starting at home with the immediate family and then at school and other socialization institutions. This global interconnectedness offers new possibilities but also arguably challenges of unparalleled magnitude. Coping with these challenges requires skills, knowledge, and predispositions, as Banks (2004) points out. To this end, Oxfam (2015) talks about various skills that need to be developed, such as effective and appropriate communication, critical thinking, knowledge, and understanding of global issues. The responsibility of helping people acquire and develop these skills falls mainly within the purview of education. Schools can and should play a very

important role in this process, especially during the early formative years of education (i.e., first years of primary school) in a concerted effort to instill the values of global citizenship in the youngest members of society. Consequently, and in this line of thought, foreign language teaching, due to its nature, can take center stage in pursuing the above outlined aims and goals. This has become even more feasible since foreign languages have become part of primary school curricula in many countries. For example, in most countries of the European Union, English as a foreign/international language is taught from the first grade of primary school while in others even from preschool age (Alexiou, 2020).

In this respect, this article sets out to explore the role that English as a foreign language (EFL) classes and teachers can play in cultivating not only language awareness and communicative competence in young learners, but also in breeding a spirit of embracement of *cultural pluralism* within any given educational context. More specifically, this article provides theoretical scaffolding pertaining to the importance of intercultural education and considers how this theoretical framework can translate into concrete pedagogical practices. EFL teachers can approach intercultural education in an age- and level-appropriate way. It should be noted that the focus is specific to EFL teaching (TEFL) for purposes of a more restricted breadth, but also because TEFL classes serve as ideal incubators for helping students become more culturally aware through their exposure not only to Anglophone cultures, but to other cultures as well.

2. Why is Intercultural Education important?

Until a few decades ago, foreign language teaching and learning primarily focused on *linguistic or language competence*. Such a narrow focus was deemed inadequate, as mere knowledge of the grammatical rules and learning of the vocabulary of a foreign language are not enough to understand the conditions of their use in communication, let alone in an intercultural context. Later, the focus shifted towards *communicative competence*. The definitional nuances of this term slightly change its use in linguistics and language teaching. In the area of sociolinguistics, *communicative competence* refers to what a speaker needs to know (social knowledge), so as to communicate appropriately in a given speech community (Hymes, 1986). *Communicative competence* moves beyond the strict knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and the ability to create utterances into knowledge of rules necessary to communicate appropriately and to be able to interpret linguistic messages. *Communicative competence* is one of the components of *intercultural communicative competence*, which denotes the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across cultures or within culturally diverse contexts. The component of *intercultural competence* refers to the development of a reflective and also a critical understanding of the influence of culture on all aspects of one's life (e.g., behaviours, values, belief systems, etc.).

Before proceeding, it is important to delineate some fundamental terms often used in the literature either interchangeably or as complementing terms when referring to education. Therefore, we see terms like *international education*, *global education*, and *intercultural education*. However, each of these terms denotes a slightly different meaning, so they should not be used interchangeably. Instead, they should be used to complement each other. To better understand the differences among these terms, I refer to Knight (2004, p. 11) who unequivocally states:

International is used in the sense of relationships between and among nations, cultures, or countries. However, we know that internationalization is also about relating to the diversity of cultures that exists within countries, communities, and institutions, and so *intercultural* is used to address the aspects of internationalization at home. Finally, *global*, a very controversial and value-laden term these days, is included to provide the sense of worldwide scope. These three terms

complement each other and together give richness both in breadth and depth to the process of internationalization.

Learning about foreign cultures and people from around the world is a key aim of intercultural education, and thus this is the preferred term used in the context this paper is addressing. Becker (1982) espouses the view that students develop a competence in perceiving their involvement in a global society. Becker (1982, as cited in Lickteig and Danielson, 1995, p. 2) continues to claim that this “includes recognizing that (a) all individuals are members of a single species sharing a common biological status; (b) people have differing perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about a global society and its components; and (c) all human beings are a part of the earth's biosphere”. Cushner (1988) referred to this as *international socialization* and suggested that it requires a certain stage of development. Being able to understand and interact with people from another culture requires not only “the ability to project oneself into the other's mind” (empathy), but also “the ability to think, perceive, communicate, and behave in [...] new and different ways” (p. 160). This has to be seen in the light of age-appropriate instruction, which is, according to Cushner, a critical period that exists for this international socialization in children. Referring to Piaget's four stages of cognitive development (i.e., sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operational), Cushner suggested that children around seven and eight years old begin to move away from a self-centered, self absorbed perspective to one where they see other people's viewpoints. Children of this age have an increased ability to communicate with others by comprehending another's perspective. Children from the abovementioned ages and beyond are in a position to develop a global and intercultural perspective (see also Papadopoulos & Shin in this volume). Hence, concerted efforts have to be made on the part of educators (and in this case EFL teachers) to create a stimulating context within which students will be able to develop their intercultural perspective. But how can we help students develop an intercultural perspective during the first few years of schooling?

3. Empathy and intercultural sensitivity: a pathway to intercultural awareness

A first step in the direction of answering the above question is helping students develop their *empathy* and *intercultural sensitivity (IS)*. Both of these notions are addressed below in the light of *intercultural awareness*.

Before exploring *intercultural sensitivity* and *empathy*, let us first look at the term *intercultural awareness* conceptually to understand its nature and function. Chen and Starosta (1998, p. 28) view intercultural awareness as the “cognitive aspect of intercultural communication competence that refers to the understanding of cultural conventions that affect how we think and behave” and distinguishes it from, for example, IS. *Intercultural awareness* is also distinct from knowledge and one of the dominant views in the literature is viewing *intercultural awareness* as a component in its own right. This knowledge-awareness distinction is highlighted by Fantini (2005, p. 2) in that the latter “is always about the ‘self’ vis-à-vis all else in the world (other things, other people, other thoughts, etc.) and ultimately helps to clarify what is deepest and most relevant to one’s identity” However, Baker (2015) uses awareness as a more “all-inclusive term” which encompasses knowledge, behavior, and skills. Despite this polysemy, one could claim with confidence that intercultural awareness is essential in developing *intercultural communicative competence* (Korzilius, Hooft, & Planken (2007), i.e., the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts.

Now let us move on to *intercultural sensitivity*. In defining IS, Bhawuk and Brislin (1992, p. 416) argue “to be effective in other cultures, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences and also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect

for people of other cultures. A reasonable term that summarizes these qualities of people is intercultural sensitivity". Research has shown (see Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Zhao, 2002) that IS is connected to *intercultural competence*. In fact, this research reveals that IS is a precondition for the development of *intercultural competence*. *Intercultural sensitivity* is both a predictive and determinant factor for intercultural effectiveness to transpire. Put differently, the more intercultural sensitivity a person demonstrates, the more intercultural competent he/she can potentially be (Bennet, 1993; Chen, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1998). Bennett also points out that there is an underlying constructivist assumption with regard to IS in that as one experiences more cultural difference in a more complex and sophisticated manner, his/her potential for intercultural competence increases. IS is not static but a dynamic process or a process of development. Taking these facts into account (i.e., the developmental process of IS and its positive correlation with cultural experience), EFL teachers should strive for the creation of an environment rich in *cultural diversity*. Helping students gain meaningful and diverse cultural experiences will likely help them develop their *intercultural sensitivity*.

Moving on to *empathy*, let us look at Bennett's (2001, p. 7) definition. Bennett defines *empathy* as "a mode of relating in which one person comes to know the mental content of another, both affectively and cognitively, at a particular moment in time and as a product of the relationship that exists between them." Bennett's definitional conceptualization of *empathy* includes both affective/emotional and cognitive/intellectual components. Similarly, Gerdes et al. (2010, p. 2338) posit "empathy is an automatic, affective reaction and a cluster of cognitive abilities". Calloway-Thomas (2010, p. 8) adds a behavioral aspect in his definition in that "empathy is the ability to imaginatively enter into and participate in the world of the cultural other cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally". More simply, empathy is "the ability to treat someone as they would wish to be treated" (Olson & Kroeger, 2001, p. 118). *Empathy* is also an essential ingredient in being intercultural competent (Bennett, 2001). If we take the supposition that empathy is a competence, then, it can be developed. Therefore, teachers can create the conditions in which they can help their students nurture *empathy*. This will help students move away from their own often-strict boundaries towards understanding, appreciating, and embracing those of others.

4. Intercultural awareness: Benefits for both teachers and learners

The existing literature (e.g., Banks, 2004; Oxfam, 2015) points out that intercultural education has positive effects in that it helps students develop *social identity*, it promotes human rights and citizenship, it lowers racial prejudice and it helps students become more open to diversity. I believe that it is important to establish the need for intercultural education orientation at the onset regardless of educational context, even in cases which have been historically culturally homogenous.

If we take Greece (the author's native country) as an example (although historically schools in Greece had a monolingual and monocultural student body), most schools today enjoy cultural diversity because of the recent surge of migration and refugee waves (Kiose, Alexiou, & Iliopoulou, 2019). However, there are still cases in remote areas of Greece, where schools still tend to be made up of student populations, which share the same language and cultural background (Greek). Taking the latter into account and having taught on a Master's of Education (in Teaching English as a Foreign/International Language) program and more specifically a module on intercultural approaches to the teaching of English, it is not rare that an in-service teacher and student of this program will express his/her view that he/she works in one of these schools. They will argue that they do not have a culturally and linguistically diverse student population and wonder why and how intercultural approaches in teaching are of any use to them. Of course, this is an opportunity to unequivocally reply that such a module is even more important for them in that in such an educational context, their goal is even more heightened. The EFL class can become one of the few

resources students have to develop their intercultural awareness. These students will not be living in isolation and at some point in their lives will find themselves in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts and thus will need a mindset to be able to “survive” and also develop mechanisms that will help them cope. In cases where teachers work with diverse student populations, their need to foster an interculturally enriched environment is more obvious. Both contexts mentioned above are further explored.

We talk about developing students’ intercultural awareness, but often neglect the presupposition that it is important to help students develop awareness of themselves first. Nonetheless, taking this one step further, I would argue that it is even more important for teachers to address and challenge their own identity. Teachers, like all professionals, have not developed in a vacuum. They are human beings, each with their own history and experiences, which have shaped who they are today. Therefore, it is natural and inevitable that they carry their own sets of values, beliefs, ideologies, stereotypes, and prejudices, which may be expressed consciously or unconsciously. Students -no matter how young they are- can internalize remarks a teacher may make (regarding, e.g., derogatory comments about a custom that they come across during a lesson). One must remember that young students are individuals and carry their own set of beliefs and values, which have been mostly formed by family influence. Hence, the idea is not to put them in “preconceived molds”, but to support them in becoming aware, understanding, accepting, and in celebrating their own individuality. Teachers and students need to accept the premise that differences are to be valued and respected even if they do not agree with them.

Moreover, children at the early years of primary education are not able to refrain from asking questions on any issue, and often these questions can be on sensitive topics such as race or gender. These are opportunities that should be seized and explored to help students break down, for example, stereotypes or prejudices. EFL course books are good sources and photos and texts of other places, cultures, photos of people of other racial backgrounds can become tinder for discussion. Teachers can discuss similarities and differences among people, as long as it is done with respect and in an age-appropriate way.

At this age, a cognitive-only approach will not suffice in bringing about change (Cushner, 1988). Teachers need to also engage students behaviourally/actively and affectively/emotionally. Engaging students on all these levels will likely have a bigger impact. When EFL teachers work in multicultural schools, they are dealing with students who are experiencing their national culture, the culture of the host country, the regional culture, the school culture, and the classroom culture. In such culturally rich, but often culturally conflicting milieus, young students try to navigate through the “cultural waters” to make sense of this cultural interplay, find connections and develop a sense of self. Even in culturally homogeneous classes, students still face challenges despite having a shared national culture in their immediate environment (e.g., family, school, and neighborhood) they are still receiving cultural input from the media. In the first case, the teacher can draw opportunities from the existing multiculturalism, whereas in the second case the teacher can create the conditions through which he/she will expose his/her students to cultural contexts that will serve as a springboard for cultural discovery and a context for reflection.

Whatever the context, the common denominator is to guide and support children in recognizing, respecting, and valuing cultural differences and similarities. In any case, the overall aim for culture teaching is obviously not assimilation but to help students develop insights into a culture(s). This will likely help them understand their own culture better and at the same time develop the abovementioned traits.

Teachers must not forget that the main aim should not be the acquisition of knowledge about a specific culture per se. The main criticism behind this stance is that such learning is superficial and does not involve reflection of new cultural knowledge (Damen, 1987). In the case of young learners, nonetheless, it is cognitively difficult to critically reflect at deeper levels on cultural issues and thus maintaining a more superficial approach will suffice in creating the foundation for cultural exposure. Such an approach will in turn support the development of shared basic values of understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of diversity.

Another point that needs to be addressed, and as Álvarez (2014, p. 234) states (although in reference to a slightly different concept), is a move from “culture-centered approach to the intercultural approach”. This transition will help move away from simply looking at culture(s) in isolation or the cultural aspect of language use in EFL, as it is embedded or framed within a national conception of culture. As English has transitioned from a foreign language into becoming an international language, a *cultural approach* is rather restrictive. This has been very much the case of the BANA (British/Australian/North American) cultural models in connection to culture teaching (Pennycook, 1999; Widdowson, 1994). Again, this model provides a restrictive lens through which to view culture. An *intercultural approach* takes a more ‘non-essentialist’ view of culture and better depicts the dynamic and dialogic relationship between culture and language.

5. Suggestions for incorporating an Intercultural Approach in early primary school EFL Classes

Raising young learners’ intercultural awareness and helping them become more interculturally sensitive should be done in a systematic way and not left as a by-product or dealt with incidentally. At this age, young learners are naturally curious and inquisitive. EFL teachers should take advantage of this and further promote this curiosity and sense of discovery as it will likely lead to young learners embracing and celebrating cultural, and other, forms of diversity. This, combined with the fact that children have not yet developed many inhibitions and stereotypical images of the “other”, further lends itself to unique opportunities to cultivate understanding and appreciation. There are various age-appropriate strategies and methods EFL teachers can employ and use to help develop a toolkit for culture teaching and promoting overall intercultural education. In this section, suggestions are presented as to how a teacher can promote intercultural awareness. It should be noted that much of what follows is based not only on research but also on anecdotal evidence (personal teaching experience and several reports I have received from my M.Ed. in-service teachers employing such approaches in their own classes). As such, what I am suggesting is the result of both literature review and personal reflection.

5.1. Taking Stock of One’s Own Classroom

Ideally, culturally diverse societies should adopt culturally responsive curricula. As this may not always be the case, schools should acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of their student population. Teachers need to foster intercultural awareness in their classroom. In cases where one’s student makeup is culturally and linguistically diverse, a teacher’s first step is to express interest in his/her students’ ethnic/cultural background as a starting point in creating a culturally responsive classroom. In preparation of such a stance, teachers need to adequately prepare by informing themselves about basic cultural elements of their students’ background culture, appropriately pronouncing names and even doing some background research as to the meaning/etymology of the names, so as to use this as an opportunity to help students become aware of basic elements of his/her identity, (i.e., their name). These first approaches will likely help students feel more integrated and validated.

Cultural differences should be celebrated, but I would argue in a subtle way. Helping students feel proud of their cultural heritage is important, but at the same time, efforts should be made to integrate these students without constantly underscoring their cultural difference, as this may lead to stigmatization and marginalization, especially when dealing with students at younger ages. However, simple ideas, such as encouraging students to bring in reading material whose theme is based in their culture or bring in other realia and present them to their class can empower them, as it provides them with an opportunity to interact with their classmates and share thoughts and ideas that are important to their cultural perspective. At the same time, their classmates are provided with an opportunity to reflect upon their own culture and learn more about another culture and thus cultivate their intercultural awareness.

5.2. Course books – prescribed instructional materials

In several schools, the teaching material used is prescribed by local or national educational authorities (the latter being the case in Greece, for example). Newer material (i.e., course books) usually has a focus on culture (implicit or explicit). This focus on culture is often integrated in either the reading texts or listening activities, usually followed by visuals, for example, photos of festivals and celebrations, etc. However, in other cases, culture is separated from language and there are still course books, which deal with culture in isolation and in entirely different sections of the book, as something self-contained. Of course, the amount and complexity of cultural references will vary according to the age and level of students. Hence, in the first few years of primary schools these are usually basic and perhaps more superficial and key elements of cultural knowledge are overtly omitted (e.g., underlying value systems). These materials take a more static view of culture (Liddicoat, 2002). The static view of culture refers to the more obvious or visible elements of culture (e.g., facts, artifacts). At these levels and ages of EFL teaching, the focus is more on learning about cultural facts, festivals, celebrations, people, dress, habits, daily life, music, and fairytales/stories connected to the target language, but also of other cultures around the world. However, all this should be taught in relation to the target language and not as a separate element, as the cultural component should not be seen as something independent of language but as complementary and hence weaved into it.

Another point that should be raised is that teachers can supplement their existing material, which is often outdated, with fresh ideas and material, which fortunately now is easily accessed through media and the Internet.

5.3. Time capsules

Time capsules are used as a means to represent objects and ideas that have shaped one's national culture. The idea is for students to bring drawings, objects, photos, music etc that they feel represent their own culture and which they can send into "space" to be opened by "aliens" so the latter can learn more about the students' culture. Alternatively, the scenario can involve a cooperating school from another country where the capsule will be sent to (physically or virtually). Time capsules help students become more aware of objects and other main characteristics of their contemporary culture. If it is a monocultural class, students can focus on their home culture, but if it is a multicultural class, students can draw examples from their individual cultures.

5.4. Films, TV-series, & cartoons

Aspect of cultural diversity and multiculturalism are being addressed and subsequently promoted in various programmes on television. Carefully selected films, TV-series and cartoons can be used in the EFL classroom to facilitate intercultural learning. As Karras (2020) claims, films stimulate multi-

sensor and cognitive channels and thus are a great source of intercultural information that can appeal to both the viewer's senses and cognition, if of course approached in a systematic way. Watching films, cartoons, etc. provides ample opportunities for the teacher and the students to engage in meaningful discussions, reflection, and in certain cases, debriefing. Roell (2010, pp. 3-5) delineates the various types of films depending on how they can be used with the aim of promoting intercultural teaching and learning. More specifically, these categories refer to:

- Films that foster empathy with foreigners
- Films that illustrate intercultural conflict
- Films that deal with racism
- Films that contain stereotypes
- Films about cultural traditions and intergenerational conflict
- Films that deal with different patterns of behavior

A well-known example is the community portrayed in the cartoon series "Dora the Explorer", which is an idealistic "happy multiculturalism" (Chappell, 2010, as cited in Alexiou & Kokla, 2018). In their study, Alexiou & Kokla (2018) also concluded that the popular Peppa Pig cartoon series promotes multilingualism.

5.5. Children's literature

Children's literature can introduce aspects of the local and foreign cultures, as they often draw links between cultures. There is a wide variety of English language literature (abridged or simplified/adapted to suit the students of these levels and age), which depict children (children can identify better with other children) of different races, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, religions, physical ability, and cultures. Children's books help students understand their own identity and also expose them to different cultural aspects –as noted above- and thus help them learn about those who are different in terms of race, family composition, religious beliefs, and ability. Literature can advocate cross-cultural understanding (Harper & Brand, 2010) and increase children's capacity to understand the world (Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007). Having established the importance of using literature books in the classroom, it is important to encourage teachers to prompt students to become critically aware of different cultural backgrounds by engaging them in observation, reflection, and through questions, create the context for fruitful discussion.

5.6. Creating an international school network

Young learners like to learn about other schools around the world. Students can see what other classrooms look like, physical characteristics of other students as well as the things these students are taught. Teachers can easily establish such virtual connections through existing platforms. Once the network is established, a specified time can be arranged in order to virtually connect these classrooms so that there is image and sound in real time. Students can engage in common activities, sing songs (e.g., same song that has been translated in another language), be presented with students' artwork, learn about customs and traditions, etc. Especially with regard to celebrations, students can be encouraged to learn more about these celebrations and even prepare a small project if feasible. Students can introduce linguistic elements of their mother tongue to other students such as providing the words for different objects in the classroom. Students usually find it fascinating that the words used for "mother" and "father" are similar across many languages, which further highlights the universality of language and culture. Overall, this can help students understand the existence of many languages and that each language is unique and valued. At the same time, the use of English as the "common language" or lingua franca solidifies in the students' conscience the role of English and its importance globally.

5.7. International food festival

Food is an important, but also a very tangible aspect of culture. It is something young learners can relate to. EFL teachers can prepare a unit on food and eating habits of Anglophone and other countries. Children's parents (especially those of a different cultural background) can also be encouraged to prepare and bring traditional dishes to class. It should be noted here that parent involvement is also important since their influence on their children is formative. Children can gain insight into the culture through sampling food they are not familiar with. They can then compare food and discuss what they like and do not like about it, unfamiliar ingredients used, etc.

5.8. Physical appearance of the classroom

The physical appearance of the classroom should foster and reflect diversity. Posters, pictures, maps, signs, and realia, or even playing background music from different cultures can play an important role in helping children develop mental and auditory images. In conjunction to this, assigning children foreign names from time to time is also something they enjoy, as it gives them another identity, which in turn they can use to role-play. Through role-play, children can experience intercultural awareness in an amusing and non-threatening way.

5.9. Round-the-world trip

EFL teachers can help their students become "virtual world travelers". At regular intervals, teachers can focus on a particular country. Young learners can learn about simple concepts such as the flag (colors), animals, food, traditions, dances, music, folklore stories or fairy tales. The use of prompts, photos and videos can serve as visual stimulation and engage and motivate students. Students can create their own "passports" and the teacher can "stamp" each country children "enter/visit".

All the above suggestions will have an impact on young learners when they are done in a meaningful way. This also presupposes that teachers serve as role models. Children become culturally sensitive when they see adults displaying cultural sensitivity and respectfulness. EFL teachers should introspect and notice their own biases and set of values. EFL teachers need to take a stand against stereotypes, racism, bias, and prejudices that are often depicted in books, media, etc. or even expressed by their own learners. It is important that these issues be acknowledged and addressed when an opportunity arises instead of downgrading the situation. Teachers need to take a perspective that focuses on difference as something positive and that these differences are what make our world a better and more interesting place to live in.

5.10. Preparing EFL teachers to meet the challenge

Teachers are or should be viewed as dynamic agents of change. Foreign language teachers especially have the added advantage of having studied in depth at least one foreign language and culture. This is definitely a comparative advantage, but will not suffice if teachers have not had the necessary education and training to support their young learners on their journey to developing their intercultural awareness. Teacher education programs, both pre-service and in-service, need to have a significant component of their curriculum dedicated to the theory and practice of intercultural education through formal lectures, seminars, workshops, practicums/internships. Education and training will first help teachers identify and come to terms with their own deeply rooted biases and prejudices. Later, their education and training will help them become more competent in the way they handle intercultural communication. Moreover, through the process of education and training, teachers will also learn various methods and techniques to implement in their teaching and adopt an intercultural education orientation in their classes. As a result, teachers will be in a position to help

create a classroom culture that fosters knowledge of acceptance and openness towards cultural and linguistic diversity. Equipped with knowledge and some experience, teachers will be empowered to meet the challenges outlined above, but they will also be able to bring change to the often inadequate existing curricula, syllabi, and guidelines with regard to EFL, intercultural awareness, and intercultural communication competence building, as these are often prescribed by the bodies responsible for curriculum design.

6. Concluding remarks

I vehemently support the stance that one of the main aims of EFL teaching to young learners is to maintain foreign language teaching practices that acknowledge and that are respectful of differences. Being a culturally responsive EFL teacher means aiming for inclusivity. This ensures that all students feel included and that those who are from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds have a voice. Exposing students to cultural diversity, engaging them in experiential learning, and evoking their affective, behavioral, and cognitive sides can help them move beyond the strict confines of superficial knowledge of a culture into a deeper understanding of its people, artifacts, beliefs, and value systems (albeit at an elementary level).

As a final note, it should be underscored that all stakeholders of education need to recognize the importance of initiatives to infuse an intercultural dimension that permeates school curricula. This should be a curriculum that provides students with the opportunity to understand and embrace diversity. EFL teachers too have a shared responsibility to prepare their learners to be responsible, open-minded, and non-judgmental citizens of the world. And while teaching syllabi and methods change constantly, developing intercultural awareness should always remain an essential component of one's teaching agenda.

In essence, developing a community of young learners based on the premise of promoting intercultural awareness and valuing themselves and others regardless of ethnic or cultural background in a non-threatening, supportive, and engaging environment should become a priority in EFL teaching –and all teaching for that matter. After all, we must instill in our students the belief that despite differences among people, there are also many common threads that connect us all.

References

- Alexiou, T. (2020). *Introducing EFL in preschools: Facts and Fictions*. In Zoghbor, W. & Alexiou, T. *Advancing ELT Education*. Dubai, UAE: Zayed University publications.
- Alexiou, T. & Kokla, N. (2019). Teaching Cultural Elements and Pro-social Behaviour to Preschoolers through Peppa Pig. In Tsichouridis et al (eds). *Conference Proceedings from the 4th International Conference for the Promotion of Educational Innovation*, (pp. 299-305), Larisa, University of Thessaly, Greece.
- Álvarez, J. A. (2014). Developing the intercultural perspective in foreign language teaching in Colombia: A review of six journals. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(2), 226-244.
- Baker, W. (2015). *Culture and identity through English as a lingua franca: Rethinking concepts and goals in intercultural communication*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Banks, J. (2004). Teaching for social justice, diversity and citizenship in a global world. *The Educational Forum*, 68, 289-298.
- Becker, J. M. (1982). Goals for global education. *Theory Into Practice*, 21(3), 228–233.

- Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience (2nd ed.)*, (pp. 21-71). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Bennett, M. J. (2001). *The empathic healer: An endangered species*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Bhawuk, D. P. S. & Brislin, R. W. (1992). The measurement of intercultural sensitivity using the concepts of individualism and collectivism. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16, 413-436.
- Calloway-Thomas, C. (2010). *Empathy in the global world: an intercultural perspective*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. G. (1998). A review of the concept of intercultural awareness. *Human Communication*, 2, 27-54.
- Cushner, K. (1988). Achieving intercultural effectiveness: Current knowledge, goals and practices. *Education and Urban Society*, 20, 129-176.
- Damen, L. (1987). *Culture Learning: The Fifth Dimension in the Language Classroom*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fantini, A. E. (2005). *About intercultural communicative competence: A construct*. School for international training. Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.
- Gerdes, K. E., Segal, E. A., & Lietz, C. (2010). Conceptualising and measuring empathy: The need for clarity and consistency. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40, 2326-2343.
- Harper, L. J., & Brand, S. T. (2010). More alike than different: Promoting respect through multicultural books and literacy strategies. *Childhood Education*, 86(4), 224-233.
- Holliday, A. (1999). Small cultures. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(2), 237-264.
- Hymes, D. H. (1986). Discourse: Scope without depth. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 57, 49-89.
- Karras, I. (2020). *The Culture and Communication Interface*. Athens: Diavlos Publications.
- Kiose E., Alexiou, T. & Iliopoulou, K. (2019). Sketching the profile of the intercultural competent teacher: Greek teachers' beliefs and perceptions in intercultural Junior High Schools. In Zoghbor, W., Al Alami, S., Alexiou, T. & Kasem, M. *Teaching in a globalized world. Proceedings of the Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching Conference (ALLT) 2018*, pp. 215-240, Zayed Univerity, Dubai, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/books_reports/2018/ALLT2018Proceedings.pdf
- Korzilius, H., Hooft, A., & Planken, B. (2007). A longitudinal study on intercultural awareness and foreign language acquisition in the Netherlands. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 15. Retrieved from <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr15/planken.htm>
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definitions, rationales, and approaches. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 27-37.
- Lickteig, M. J., and Danielson, K. E. (1995). Using storybooks to acquaint children with the continent of Africa. *Soc. Stud*, 86, 248-252.
- Liddicoat, A.J. (2002). Static and dynamic views of culture and intercultural language acquisition. *Babel*, 36(3), 4-11.
- Lowery, R., & Sabis-Burns, D. (2007). From borders to bridges: Making cross-cultural connections through multicultural literature (Promising practices). *Multicultural Education*, 14(4), 50-54.
- Olson, C. L. & Kroeger, K. R. (2001). Global competency and intercultural sensitivity. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 5, 116-137.
- Oxfam. (2015). *Education for Global Citizenship: A Guide for Schools*. Oxfam GB, London.
- Pennycook, A. (1999). Introduction: Critical approaches to TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 329-348.
- Roell, C. (2010). Intercultural Training with Films. *English Teaching Forum*, 48(2), 2-15.
- Widdowson, H. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 377-389.

Zhao, C. M. (2002). *Intercultural Competence: A Quantitative Study of Significance of Intercultural Competence and the Influence of College Experiences on Students' Intercultural Competence Development*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-05152002-135459/unrestricted/01ZhaoCover.pdf>, accessed 14 January 2020.

Ioannis Karras (karrasid@gmail.com) holds two B.As. (English and Linguistics, University of Calgary, Canada); an M.Ed. (TEFL, the HOU, Greece), an M.Sc. (Intercultural Communication, the University of Warwick, UK) and a PhD (Applied Linguistics, University of Athens, Greece). He is a tenured Assistant Professor at Ionian University, Greece, and a module coordinator and tutor in Intercultural Education on the TESOL M.Ed. programme of the HOU. He has lectured as a visiting professor/invited speaker at various universities abroad. He has delivered numerous talks at international conferences and has conducted seminars/workshops with international audiences. Finally, his published work includes a book, edited book chapters, and articles in journals and conference proceedings in applied linguistics, TEFL, and intercultural studies.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 185-202

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Developing young foreign language learners' persuasive strategies through intercultural folktales

Isaak PAPADOPOULOS & Joan Kang SHIN

This paper describes an educational programme aiming to develop young foreign language learners' persuasive strategies, through their familiarization with aspects of culture from the South-Eastern European countries. More specifically, we designed a topic-based mini-syllabus of eight units on intercultural folktales coming from South-Eastern European countries. The project lasted for six school months (School Year: 2018-2019), and two two-hour sessions were carried out every week. The project was implemented with 30 nine-year-old students learning English as a foreign language. The implementation of each thematic unit moved through three phases. In the pre-phase, students were introduced to each country that the folktale belonged to while they familiarized themselves with the specific vocabulary related to each topic. In the main-phase, they were introduced to the target persuasive strategies through multimodal materials demonstrating the use of persuasive strategies and discussing their use and the interlocutors' actions. In the post-phase, the students were involved in communicative activities based on the plot of the folktales. To investigate the impact of the project, we used of three research tools: a) Pre/post-investigatory assessment, b) the teachers' journal, and c) students' portfolios throughout the intervention. Analysis of multiple data sources showed an increase in both quantity and quality of persuasive strategies used as well as increased multicultural awareness.

Key words: persuasion, folktales, young learners, foreign language, Greek education

1. Introduction

Persuasive discourse is considered an advanced language skill that may seem too advanced for children, particularly young learners of English as a foreign language. We see evidence of persuasive discourse in the highest level of language proficiency as proposed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). For example, functions like developing an argument, defending a point of view persuasively, and responding to counterarguments are considered advanced level competences (Council of Europe, 2018). However, even young learners of English with lower levels of language proficiency can build their language skills toward persuasive discourse.

This six-month study of 30 nine-year-old children learning English as a foreign language showed evidence of the development of persuasive strategies using intercultural folktales.

2. What is Persuasion?

Persuasion dates back to the ancient times when Plato and Aristotle (Greece) and then Cicero (Italy) practiced it, and rhetorical studies focused on fostering a good orator in political assemblies. It is worth mentioning that after the fall of the Roman Empire in 275 BC, the attention to rhetoric went into decline until the 16th century with the advent of the argumentation studies as an independent field of study. Certainly, since the latter half of the 19th century, universities in North America and Europe commonly provide courses on debating and argumentation that are based on classical rhetoric (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004) as well as courses on persuasive writing and speaking inspired by rhetoric (Metsämäki, 2012).

Although “persuasion” has been variously used in different eras and contexts (Simons, 1976; Lakoff, 1982; Hardin, 2010; Mintz et al., 2012), scholars seem to agree that persuasion is “*the attempt or intention of one party to change the beliefs, attitudes, values, feelings and intentions, of another by communicative means*” (Papadopoulos & Ypsilandis, 2017, p. 62). Indeed, speakers/writers are engaged in continuous attempts to convey not only organized but also persuasive messages, as people tend to influence each other on daily basis (Lustig & Koester, 2010).

2.1. Persuasion as a Communicative Skill

Skills for persuasion can be seen as important “tools” that can be used by people to effectively function in everyday life (Crowhurst, 1990) as they are considered fundamental social interaction skills (Felton and Kuhn, 2001; Bartsch, London & Campbell, 2007) that people develop throughout their lives. According to Nippold, Ward-Lonergan, and Fanning (2005) and Crowhurst (1990) persuading requires a number of language-based skills. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) emphasized the importance of the 4Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (Battelle for Kids, 2019). Learning outcomes for communication for K-12 includes a range of purposes, such as informing, instructing, motivating, and persuading (Scott, 2017).

In foreign language classrooms, the incorporation of persuasive strategies should be examined based on students’ language proficiency. It is worth distinguishing persuasion skills of students with low-language level and upper-language level with the aim of outlining these competences. However, delving into persuasion skills across language levels can provide a clear view of the persuasive discourse and can be of great benefit for educators who wish to be engaged in developing persuasion skills to low and upper language level students.

Low-language level students can exhibit various persuasive efforts with particular characteristics (Knudson, 1992; Crowhurst, 1990). More specifically, they inform the addressees rather than persuade them, mainly through brief texts and short sentences. According to the CEFR, students of A1 language level can produce simple isolated phrases and sentences and a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘because’, respectively (Council of Europe, 2018).

Thus, in low-language level students’ output, we can observe little elaboration on topics or even unelaborated reasons that read like a list. It is also important to place special emphasis on the fact that students of this category can produce written discourse and thus persuasive discourse, only with reference to familiar topics and events that may take place in their daily routine, as they have a basic range of simple everyday vocabulary.

As students are progressing through to higher language levels, the production of persuasive discourse can include arguments and more diversified messages, which will result in persuaders that are more competent. Indeed, according to the CEFR, people at the C2 level “can effectively employ, both orally and in writing, a wide variety of sophisticated language to command, argue, persuade, dissuade, negotiate and counsel” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 138). It is at B levels and higher that people begin to develop arguments systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points, inclusion of relevant supporting detail, and effective use of persuasive language. This is in accordance with Mason & Cramer (2008), Martens (2007) and Hutson-Nechkash (2004) who place such skills into the ones of successful persuasive discourse “producers”.

2.2. Persuasive Strategies

Persuasive communication has been an integral part of people’s daily social interaction. People make attempts every day to convey persuasive messages that will lead influence and potential change. Moreover, people persuading others tend to use various means or a variety of communication strategies intentionally employed with the aim of achieving the communicative goal of persuasion (Papadopoulos & Ypsilandis, 2017).

Consequently, persuasive strategies are part of the wide umbrella-category of “communication strategies”. This aligns with communication learning outcomes based on the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) as well as sociolinguistic competence based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2018). These communication strategies are crucial to prepare our students for real life communication and are the focus of this study.

One of the most known and influential systems/taxonomies of persuasion is the one proposed by Connor & Lauer (1985). More specifically, Connor and Lauer’s taxonomy was based on Aristotle’s principles of persuasion on “*logos*”, “*pathos*” and “*ethos*”. Their work was also influenced by research of a wide range of rhetoricians, communication theorists, and psychologists on ethical and emotional appeals in modern discourse, which led them to the creation of three persuasive appeals (persuasive modes) that correspond to the Aristotelian ones and their key-appeals (persuasive strategies) have been widely used for ages (Connor & Lauer, 1985).

The first appeal category “rational appeal” reflecting the current methodological use for persuasiveness through logic, can be applied through the use of many rational mechanisms (Connor & Lauer, 1985) such as: *descriptive example, descriptive narration, classification, definition, comparison-contrast, degree, authority, cause/effect, model, stage in process, means/end, consequences, ideal or principle, and information.*

The “affective appeal” refers to the emotional connection of the sender and the recipient of the message. This mode of persuasion is generated through certain affective mechanisms such as: *audience’s empathy, audience’s values, vivid picture, charged language and emotion in audience’s situation* and it is associated with the Aristotelian “*pathos*.” (Connor & Lauer, 1985; Papadopoulos, 2018).

Last, the “credibility appeal” refers to the trustworthiness and the authority of the persuader. There is one-to-one mapping with the Aristotelian “*ethos*,” but Connor and Lauer (1985) have also included strategies that are in line with this persuasive mode, such as: *writer’s good character and/or judgment, writer-audience shared interests and points of view, writer’s respect for audience’s interest and points of view, and firsthand experience.*

As shown above, there is a great variety of persuasive mechanisms that people can employ in their attempt to persuade their addressees in an effective way.

3. Intercultural Folktales in Young Learner Classrooms

Folktales have been commonly used in young learner classrooms for decades with the purpose of contributing to target language development of learners as well as to raising multicultural awareness of the learners.

Many studies have underlined the advantageous impact of folktales on learners' language learning. More specifically, through familiarizing young learners with folktales, they can cultivate language and communication skills, while developing knowledge and skills related to the subject of history, knowledge of geography in the area of origin of the fairy tale, enhancing culture-based knowledge (Papadopoulos, 2020; Lwin, 2015). Within such a context, the learners have a pleasant experience, while according to Quinn (2005) "*learning can, and should, be a lot of fun*" (p. 11). In parallel, they develop the target language holistically, as they listen to the narration/presentation of the tale in the target language, they may read the story using printed or online material, they participate in discussions or creative activities that encourage them to speak and write about the story, the heroes, the actions etc. (Mantra & Kumara, 2018). Indeed, learners enjoy being engaged in such creative activities that offer them a context, open to imitation, exploration, engagement with sounds and songs (Sayeef, 2019; Lefever, 2007).

Apart from the language- and communication- oriented benefits, folktales and more specifically, intercultural folktales have been proven to facilitate learners' multicultural awareness development. In particular, at the national level intercultural folktales have been used (Lwin, 2016; Papadopoulos & Theologou, 2017) to develop primary education students' language skills in a foreign language and intercultural awareness. Within the context of learning Greek as a second language, folktales of Greece have been used to raise young immigrant students' cultural awareness with regard to Greek culture (Papadopoulos & Griva, 2014). Folktales' use in the classroom facilitates the connection of diverse peoples. The universality of the tales can also lead to a cultivation of world citizenship (Anagnostopoulos, 1987) by bringing people closer together, encouraging them to constructively find similarities and differences, and building mutual understanding (Nhung, 2016; Meraklis, 1999). Within such a context, learners communicate with each, express themselves in creative ways, and attempt to understand each other as well as other peoples and cultures. In other words, language is promoted as a means of global, intercultural communication. The main question is whether such a context could serve beneficially for the promotion and development of young learners' persuasive communication efforts and their multicultural awareness.

4. The Educational Programme

4.1. Rationale and Objectives of the Programme

Given that persuasive communication and the various means people use to persuade are of high importance (Connor & Lauer, 1988; Psaltou-Joyce & Ypsilandis, 2001; Theodoropoulou, 2009; Triantari, 2016), this paper describes an educational programme aiming to develop young foreign language learners' persuasive strategies, through their familiarization with aspects of culture from the South-Eastern European countries.

The reason for targeting persuasive strategies stemmed from the fact that within the Greek education context, an attempt is made towards integrating rhetoric/persuasion in the school curriculum. Meanwhile according to the new Curriculum for the teaching of English to young

learners in Greece (New School, 2014), students are expected to develop such competencies (e.g., describe an event/person, ask for/give information, express feelings, compare or contradict, etc.), which are aligned with the prerequisites for employing persuasive strategies.

This program focused on using intercultural folktales, which is a recommended strategy when teaching English as a global language. As Shin and Crandall (2014, p. 329) suggest, English teachers of young learners “*have to take every opportunity to include information about other countries and cultures*” in order to help children build a global perspective. Moreover, Greece has been an immigrant/refugee receiving country for more than the last two decades. Thus, there is an emerging need for raising students’ intercultural sensitivity, awareness and communication, as schools are filled with students with migration/refugee biography (see also Karras in this volume). Intercultural folktales were chosen, as they are loaded with all the necessary cultural background that can facilitate students acquiring an awareness of the neighbouring countries.

4.2. The Sample

This project was implemented with 30 nine-year-old students learning English as a foreign language in a private primary school in Larissa (Central Greece). As for the sample distribution regarding gender, 40% of the students were boys (12 students) and 60% of the students were girls (18 students). Students have been learning English for three years and are at the A1 language level according to CEFR. All of the students in this class were of Greek origin. However, the city of Larissa has been characterized by great cultural and linguistic diversity because of agricultural migrant workers as well as the recent immigration of Syrian refugees near Larissa.

This educational project lasted for six school months (School Year: 2018-2019), and two two-hour sessions were carried out every week.

4.3. Aim of the project and research questions

As stated, this particular educational programme was designed and implemented with the purpose of helping young foreign language learners develop persuasive strategies through intercultural folktales from the South-Eastern European countries. More specifically, the implementation of this programme aimed at investigating the following:

- *Research Question 1: Does systematic training of young foreign language learners (YFLLs) on the use of persuasive strategies through participation in a programme based on intercultural folktales contribute to differentiations in the use of strategies?*
- *Research Question 2: Does systematic training of YFLLs on the use of persuasive strategies through participation in a programme based on intercultural folktales contribute to raising multicultural awareness to young learners?*

Given that both “multiculturalism” and “persuasion” are important and obvious components of students’ daily school and social life, this programme aspired to shed light into a potential context that could be fostered for their empowerment, appreciating that they are going to have both short- and long-term impact on children’s lives.

4.4. Design and Implementation Procedures

The researchers designed a topic-based mini-syllabus of eight units on intercultural folktales coming from South-Eastern European countries (i.e., Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia).

The implementation of each thematic unit moved through three phases.

a) *Pre-Phase: Introduction to the Intercultural Folktale*

In the first phase, learners were introduced to a folktale from each country, and the teacher raised their awareness of the target culture through the use of digital and print material with cultural and geographical characteristics of the country along with the story.

With regard to the folktales, it was in this phase that the teacher facilitated learners' comprehension by providing help and instruction for unknown words. The learners underlined the unknown words, phrases or parts of the tales that were difficult for them and, through their teachers' guidance and explanation; they were encouraged to understand the story.

Within the context of this project, the researchers made use of the following folktales (for full references, please see the references at the end of the paper):

- Greece – *John and the Fairy*
- Cyprus – *Kalomoira*
- Romania – *The Princess and the Dress-Maker*
- Serbia – *The King with the Big Ears*
- Bulgaria – *The Golden Bird*
- Albania – *Why Do Mosquitos Say Zzzzz?*
- Bosnia and Herzegovina – *The Golden Fish*
- Croatia – *The Daughter of the King of the Vilas*

b) *Main-Phase: Persuasive Strategies Awareness*

In the second phase, learners were introduced to the target persuasive strategies. In particular, learners were introduced to the strategies proposed by Connor and Lauer (1988) focusing on three persuasive modes – rational, credibility and affective – with corresponding persuasive strategies.

With regard to the way the students were introduced to the persuasive strategies, they acquired an awareness of a great variety of persuasive strategies such as rational strategies (e.g., degree, model, descriptive example), affective strategies (e.g., empathy, charged language) and credibility strategies (e.g., first-hand experience, shared interest and points of view), through their exposure to educational materials delineating indicative examples of the strategies' use.

Using activities like watching videos in which people used persuasive strategies in their daily life and discussing the strategy use and the interlocutors' actions, learners were able to understand the context and key-points of use of the persuasive strategies. For example, the learners watched the video of a young musician and violin player at (...). The teacher then drew their attention to two incidents in the video: when the young musician stated that he was merely a street violinist, the people around him showed very little interest in his work. However, when he added that he also played at the city's music hall, they began to respect him even more. This prompted a class discussion on various aspects of "credibility" and its role in persuasion.

c) *Post-Phase: Interaction and Persuasive Communication*

In the last phase, learners were involved in a variety of communicative and interactive games and activities (e.g., role plays, creative writing, creative spoken continuation of the story, etc.) that were

based on the plot of various folktales as well as the heroes and the places mentioned in each story (Picture 1).



Picture 1. Creative Craft Activities

They were encouraged to develop awareness of the target cultures by activating prior knowledge and experience, comparing the target cultures and identifying some common and different elements (Picture 2).



Picture 2. Comparing Traditional Costumes

Moreover, the goal was also to help children to appreciate the importance of persuasive messages while using English as a means of communication with their classmates. Thus, learners were engaged in various reflective discussions in which they examined used phrases and words in order to understand the persuasive strategy employed by the sender of the message, while seeking multiple interpretations from different viewpoints.

4.5. Research Instruments

To investigate the impact of this project, the researchers made use of various research instruments in order to carry out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the students' development.

4.6. Pre- and Post- Investigatory Assessment

Pre- and a post-investigatory assessment was used by the researchers to investigate potential differentiations in the use of persuasive strategies employed by the students. In particular, children were urged to produce a short letter to their pen friends in which they would persuade them to taste their favourite food.

Within this context, the researchers analysed the discourse (see Appendix I) of the students and investigated the persuasive strategies employed by them prior to the implementation of the project and after its completion.

In order to identify the persuasive strategies, the researchers made use of record protocols based on the system of persuasion developed by Connor and Lauer (1988).

4.7. The Teachers' Journal

The teachers' journal was also chosen as a research tool. It was kept by the researcher throughout the educational project, as it has been proven to be effective in educational interventions (Feldman, Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 2018).

With regard to the structure of the journal, it was based on "questions to guide the reflection journal entries" of Richards & Lockhart (1994, pp.16 -17). The journal questions revolved around three areas (see Appendix II): a) questions related to the teaching process (i.e., goals set, the teaching aids, the forms of communication between the students and between the students and the teacher), b) questions related to the students (their attitudes and their participation in the educational activities), and c) questions on a general evaluation of the teaching sessions (i.e., things that went well and not and potential differentiations).

4.8. Students' Portfolios

Students' portfolios were also used as supplementary research instruments, as portfolios are a continuous cumulative record of language development and a holistic view of student learning (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Students can demonstrate their progress and improvement through their collected work (e.g., essays, art, journal entries, and so on) in a portfolio (Stiggins, 1994). According to Papadopoulos & Bisiri (2020), portfolios are a very important tool of assessment that can also promote an awareness of students' development and encourage them to discuss their work and communicate their ideas to their fellow classmates.

5. Findings

Analysis of multiple data sources showed an increase in both quantity and quality of persuasive strategies used as well as increased multicultural awareness.

5.1. Findings against the first research question

Research Question 1: Does systematic training of YFLL on the use of persuasive strategies through participation in a programme based on intercultural folktales contribute to quantitative differentiations in the use of strategies?

1. Pre- and Post- Investigatory Assessment

Based on the pre- and post- investigatory assessment of strategies used (see Table 1), it was revealed that students employed more persuasive strategies upon the completion of the programme ($M = 12$, $SD: 0.4$) in comparison to the pre-assessment results ($M = 4$, $SD: 0.5$) while the one-way ANOVA test indicated that there were statistically significant differentiations between the pre- and the post- investigatory performance of the learners ($F(30) = 6.846$, $p < 0.05$).

	Pre-Investigatory Assessment	Post-Investigatory Assessment
Mean	4.00	12.00
Std. Deviation	0.5	0.4

Table 1. Mean Scores and Std. Deviation

More specifically, students seemed to make more use of strategies such as a) descriptive example (48%), b) degree (42%) and c) cause/result (32%) and comparison (29%) prior to the implementation of the project. They appeared to make use of more strategies after their participation in the programme, using strategies such as a) charged language, b) first-hand experience, c) degree, d) empathy, e) descriptive narration, f) model, g) shared interests with the addressee, h) vivid picture, i) consequences, j) comparison.

	Persuasive Strategies	Percentages of Use
Pre-Investigatory Assessment	Descriptive example	48%
	Degree	42%
	Cause/Result	32%
	Comparison	29%
Post-Investigatory Assessment	Charged language	57%
	First-hand experience	51%
	Degree	51%
	Empathy	48%
	Descriptive narration	43%
	Model	43%
	Shared interests with the Addressee	41%
	Vivid picture	39%
	Consequences	35%
	Comparison	34%
	Cause/Effect	32%
	Persuasion in process	31%

Table 2. Strategies Used before and after the project

5.2. Findings against the second research question

Research Question 2: Does systematic training of YFL on the use of persuasive strategies through participation in a programme based on intercultural folktales contribute to raising multicultural awareness in young learners?

Teachers' Journal

In general, as shown in the following figure (Figure 1), the teachers' journals showed that the teachers implemented various creative and multimodal activities in order to foster both multiculturalism and persuasiveness to young learners. This included developing a translanguaging context where both the native language (or mother tongue) and the target language English could be used.

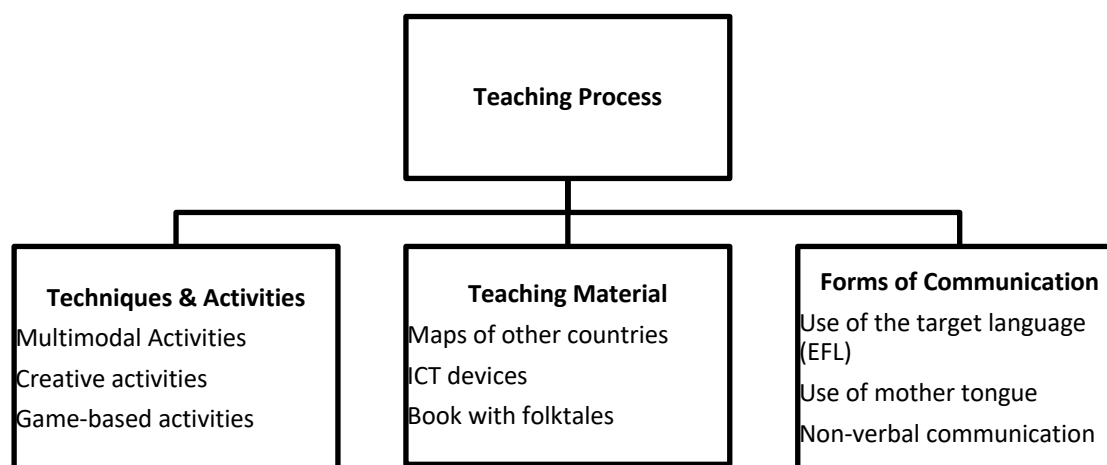


Figure 1. Teaching Process

The journal notes were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively in order to trace the learners' behaviours and attitudes as well as the frequency of exhibiting these aspects of behaviour throughout the programme.

Through the journal notes, it was revealed that the learners showed flexibility very often while participating in various activities of the programme (Frequency of exhibiting this behaviour: 74%). They showed a great interest in learning about other cultures and in participating in role-play games based on the folktales, while being encouraged to employ persuasive strategies (Frequency of exhibiting this behaviour: 69%). It was also revealed that learners felt more motivated to use persuasive strategies (Frequency of exhibiting this behaviour: 57%) while they showed great willingness to collaborate with others (Frequency of exhibiting this behaviour: 46%). Indicative passage from the journal: *[Last week, I saw that students were more willing to participate in role-play games. Today, I had prepared two games that encouraged them to be involved in activities that simulated real-life situations. I was impressed. They appeared to freely express themselves with a dynamic attempt to persuade their classmates in a way that made me feel really satisfied]*

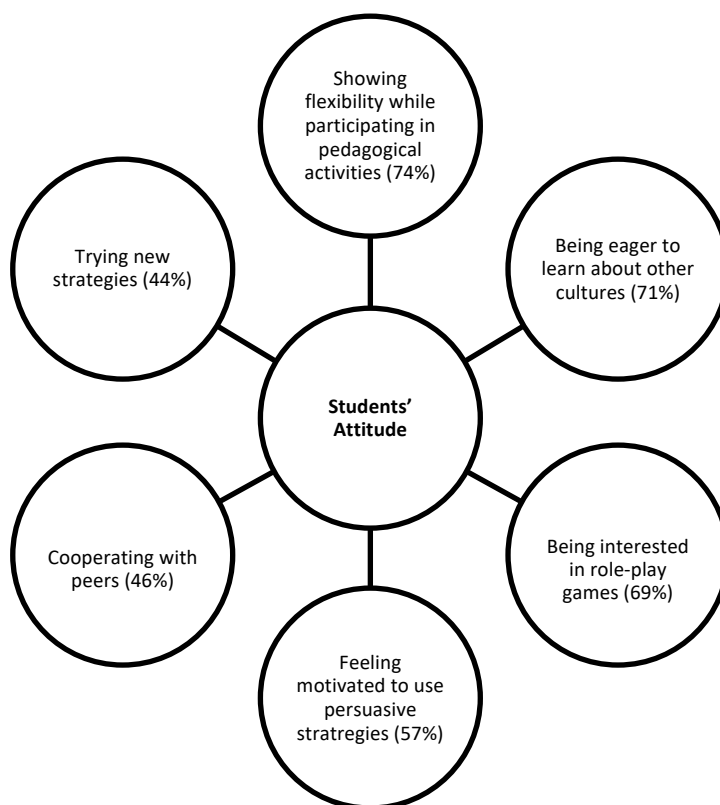


Figure 2. Students' Attitudes

The last area of focus of the teachers' journal was the general evaluation of the teaching sessions. According to following figure, young learners had difficulties using specific vocabulary especially related to the terms of other countries. They also had difficulties using some target-persuasive strategies both in their spoken and written discourse. Indicative passage: [*Today, I noticed that some of the students had difficulty in pronouncing some words from the folk-tale. I decided to allow them to make use of their mother tongue but it was very surprising as just after that, they were motivated by their classmates to use the English word too.*]

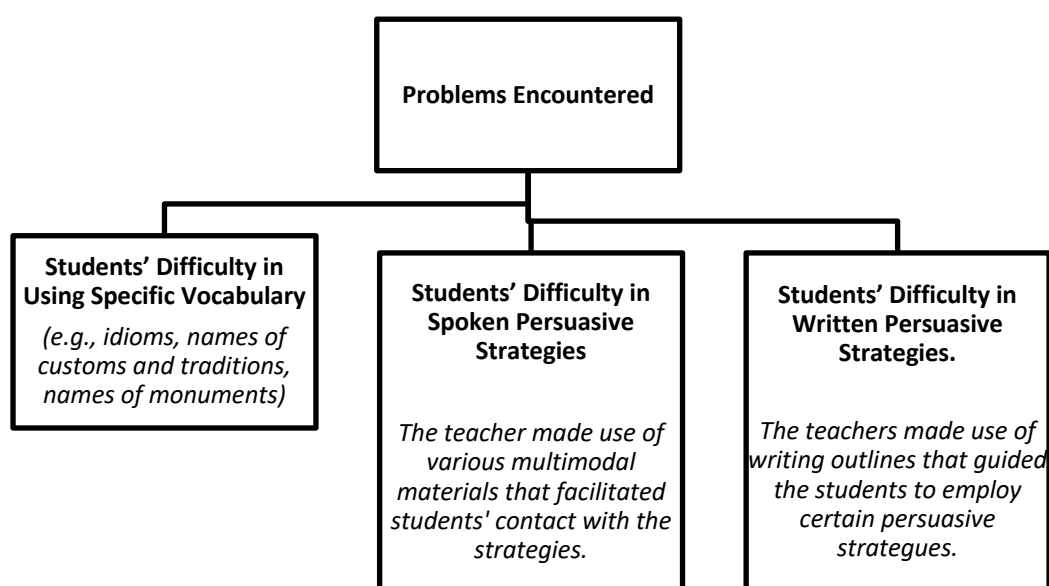


Figure 3. General Evaluation of the Teaching Sessions

Therefore, it was revealed that a multimodal learning and teaching environment was fostered and used towards encouraging learners to develop both their multicultural awareness and their persuasive strategies. It also delineated various techniques/materials used by the teacher in order to achieve the goal of the programme as well as the learners' eagerness to be involved.

Research Question 2: Does systematic training of YFLL on the use of persuasive strategies through participation in a programme based on intercultural folktales contribute to raising multicultural awareness to young learners?

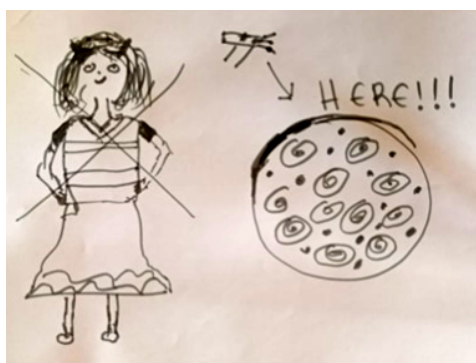
2. Students' Portfolios

The students' portfolio demonstrated students' proactive collection of their work, including posters, tales, paintings, etc. Content analysis of portfolios revealed student products used to persuade their classmates also displayed increased multicultural awareness.

Indicative Students' Drawings

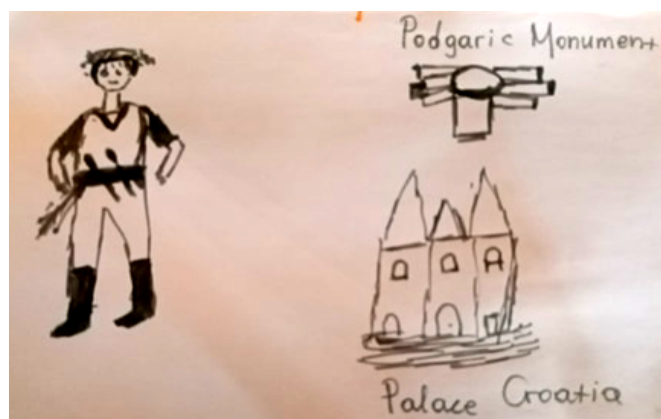
Drawing 1. Which animal to sting?

Children were encouraged to think about how to persuade the mosquito of Albania not to sting any of the animals in the folktale. Within this context, two students in a pair, decided to draw this particular output, focusing on persuading the mosquito not to sting any of the animals by offering it delicious food. What kind of food? Traditional Albanian pie.



Drawing 2. Which travel agent to trust?

Students were encouraged to assume the role of a travel agent who would persuade the entire class of the travel agency's professionalism. One of the students decided to design this particular drawing and narrate a fictional story about a Cypriot dancer who was travelling to Croatia for a dance festival and who trusted the students' travel agency.



Drawing 3. How to persuade the fairy to marry John?

The students were encouraged to persuade the fairy to marry John (according to the Greek folktale). Therefore, two students searched for information about Greek customs related to weddings, and they created this poster to persuade the fairy.



Thus, it is evident that students acquired awareness of other cultures by dealing with intercultural folktales and using information from the tales to persuade others. They were proactive as they looked for information about other cultures, which was used to bring their message across to others. Overall, they seemed to enjoy the entire process of communicating with other people.

6. Conclusion

This paper presented the design, implementation, and a preliminary investigation into the impact of an educational project, which aimed to develop young EFL learners' persuasive strategies using intercultural folktales from South-Eastern Europe. The findings showed that it had a beneficial impact on students' persuasive repertoire as well as in their multicultural awareness.

More specifically, the teachers developed a multimodal learning environment that encouraged students to employ persuasive strategies and learn about other cultures. In particular, they made use of engaging cooperative and inquiry activities, which facilitated students' communicative skills development, especially when it came to persuasive communication skills in daily interactions. Children participated in various activities that encouraged their persuasive discourse production while using all their linguistic resources for effective communication and interaction.

As intercultural folktales constituted the basis for the design and implementation of this project, they proved beneficial in the development of persuasive strategies in English as well as in the development of students' multicultural awareness. Folktales from other countries appeared to enhance students' curiosity as they listen to and read an unknown story, as opposed to familiar tales from classical Greek literature (Papadopoulos & Theologou, 2017). Through the activities developed in accordance with the content of each tale, young learners seemed to develop their empathy – a factor, which is of high importance, as it constitutes part of affective persuasive strategies. They identified with both the stories' heroes and the people from the target country or culture; thus, achieving a better understanding of the current complex world. Moreover, both the teacher journal notes and the student portfolios showed that students were motivated to search for information about others and to communicate and collaborate on joint tasks related to the tales.

Students were engaged in various educational activities that helped them to acquire an awareness of other cultures and countries. In fact, children were introduced to a target country through its folktale, including information about the cultural, social, and historical background of the country where the story originated. It is important to state that folktales provided students with cultural wealth and led them to greater understanding of other people and different perspectives (Koki, 1998; Stoyale, 2003). Because English is the world's lingua franca, this use of folktales from various countries helps young learners build a global perspective, which is necessary to prepare them for using English with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Shin & Crandall, 2014).

Designing and launching such an educational project on a wider scale and for a longer period could enhance the students' persuasion repertoire development as well as their sensitivity towards cultural diversity. Promoting such educational practices within this very diverse world is necessary in order to educate multicultural competent speakers, who are able to convey persuasive messages, understand the world and be understood.

References

- Anagnostopoulos, V. (1987). *Issues of Children's Literature, Investigations A'*. Athens: Kastaniotis
- Bartsch, K., London, K., & Campbell, M. D. (2007). Children's attention to beliefs in interactive persuasion tasks. *Developmental Psychology*, 43, 111–120.
- Battelle for Kids. (2019). *Partnership for 21st century learning: Framework for 21st century learning*.
- Connor, U., & Lauer J. (1988). Cross-cultural variation in persuasive student writing. In A. C. Purves (Ed.), *Contrastive rhetoric* (pp. 138-159). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Connor, U., & Lauer, J. (1985). Understanding persuasive essay writing: Linguistic/ rhetorical approach. *Text*, 5, 309–326.
- Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume with new descriptors*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Crowhurst, M. (1990). Teaching and learning the writing of persuasive/argumentative discourse. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 15(4), 348-359.
- Feldman, A., Altrichter, H., Posch, P., & Somekh, B. (2018). *Teachers investigate their work: An introduction to action research across the professions*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Felton, M., & Kuhn, D. (2001). The development of argumentative discourse skills. *Discourse Processes*, 32, 135-153.

- Hardin, K. (2010). Trying to persuade: Speech acts in the persuasive discourse of intermediate Spanish learners. In Kenneth A. Mcelhanon and Gerreesink (Eds.), *A mosaic of languages and cultures* (pp. 155-179). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hutson-Nechkash, P. (2004). *Help me write: frames and rubrics for classroom writing success*. Eau Claire, WI: Thinking Publications.
- Knudson, R. E. (1992). The development of written argumentation: An analysis and comparison of argumentative writing at four grade levels. *Child Study Journal*, 22(3), 167-185.
- Koki, S. (1998). *Storytelling the heart and soul of education*. Honolulu Hawaii: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning.
- Lakoff, R. (1982). Persuasive discourse and ordinary conversation, with examples from advertising. In Deborah Tannen, ed., *Analyzing discourse: text and talk*. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press.
- Lefever, S. (2007). Putting the cart before the horse – English instruction in grades 1–4. *Málfríður*, 23(2), 24–28.
- Lustig, M. W., & Koester, J. (2010). *Intercultural competence: Interpersonal communication across cultures (6th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson
- Lwin, S. M. (2015). Using Folktales for Language Teaching. *The English Teacher*, 44(2), 74-83.
- Martens, E. A. (2007). The instructional use of argument across the curriculum. *Middle School Journal*, 38(5), 4-13.
- Mantra, I. B. N., & Kumara D. G. A. G. (2018). Folktales as meaningful cultural and linguistic resources to improve students' reading skills. *Lingua Scientia*. 25(2), 82-87.
- Mason, L. H., & Cramer, A. M. (2008). Rarely had the words poured: Teaching persuasive writing. *Learning Disabilities Worldwide*, 5(2), 25–39
- Meraklis, G. (1999). *The folk-tale. Passages of paramythologia*. Athens: Ellinika Grammata
- Metsämäki, M. (2012). Persuasive discourse in EFL debate. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(2), 205-213.
- Mintz, J., & Aagaard, M. (2012). The application of persuasive technology to educational settings. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 60(3), 483–499.
- Nhung, T.H. (2016). Folktales as a Valuable Rich Cultural and Linguistic Resource to Teach a Foreign Language to Young Learners. *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society*, 1(1), 23-28.
- Nippold, M. A., Hesketh, L. J., Duthie, J. K., & Mansfield, T. C. (2005). Conversational versus expository discourse: A study of syntactic development in children, adolescents, and adults. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 48, 1048–1064.
- O'Malley, J. M., & Pierce, L. V. (1996). *Authentic assessment for English language learners: Practical approaches for teachers*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
- Papadopoulos, I., & Bisiri, E. (2020). Fostering critical thinking skills in preschool education: designing, implementing and assessing a multiliteracies-oriented programme based on intercultural tales. *Multilingual Academic Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 9(2), 1-19
- Papadopoulos I. & Griva, E. (2014). "Learning in the traces of Greek culture": A CLIL Project for raising cultural awareness and developing L2 skills, *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 8(1), 76-92.
- Papadopoulos, I. & Theologou, E. (2017). "Living together in a culturally diverse world": designing and implementing a CLIL project in primary education in Griva, E. & Zorbas, V. (Eds.) *Multicultural and citizenship awareness through language: Cross thematic practices in language pedagogy*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Papadopoulos, I. (2020). *From Pedagogy of Translanguaging, to pedagogy of the classroom*. Thessaloniki: Disigma Publications
- Papadopoulos, I. (2018). Investigating persuasive strategies in Greek EFL learners' discourse. PhD Thesis. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Greece
- Papadopoulos, I., & Ypsilandis, G. (2017). Towards an understanding of the persuasive profile of teenaged Greek EFL learners. *Journal of Applied Languages and Linguistics*, 1(1), 61-75.

- Psaltou-Joyce, A., and Ypsilandis, G. (2001). Contrastive discourse in Greek application letters. In *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of Greek Linguistics*. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press.
- Quinn, J. (2005). Asian studies in Australian education. (Doctoral dissertation). Accessed from University of Melbourne Research Collections
- Sayeeff, A. (2019). Teaching English Language using popular folk tales in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Literature, Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 1(1), 1-8.
- Scott, L. A. (2017). *21st century skills early learning framework*. Partnership for 21st Century Learning. Retrieved from http://static.battelleforkids.org/documents/p21/P21_ELF_Framework_Final_20pgs.pdf
- Shin, J. K., & Crandall, J. A. (2014). *Teaching young learners English: From theory to practice*. Boston, MA: National Geographic Learning/Cengage Learning.
- Simons, H. W. (1976). *Persuasion: Understanding, practice, and analysis*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub.
- Stiggins, R. J. (1994). *Student-centered classroom assessment*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Theodoropoulou, I. (2009). Speech Style as Persuasion Mechanism. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Greek Linguistics*, 489-502.
- Triantari, S. (2016). *Rhetoric, the art of communication from antiquity to Byzantium: Updating rhetoric and its evolution*. Thessaloniki: Stamoulis Publications.
- van Eemeren, F. H., & Grootendorst, R. (2004). *A systematic theory of argumentation: The pragma-dialectical approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

References for folktales

- Greece – John and the Fairy, Romania – The Princess and the Dress-Maker, Serbia – The King with the Big Ears, Bulgaria – The Golden Bird: the tales are included in Papadopoulos, I. (2015). *Sophronius and Helen in the traces of Greek culture. Thematic units for foreign language learners*. Grammi Publication
- Cyprus – Kalomoira, <http://www.diakonima.gr/2011/09/16/>
- Albania – Why Do Mosquitos Say Zzzzz? – The tale is included in Papadopoulos, I. (2020). *From Pedagogy of Translanguaging, to pedagogy of the classroom*. Thessaloniki: Disigma Publications
- Bosnia and Herzegovina – The Golden Fish, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-jun-07-mn-57500-story.html>
- Croatia – The Daughter of the King of the Vilas, <https://fairytalez.com/daughter-king-vilas/>

Appendix I: Sample of Students' Discourse

Hi, Maria...

Souvlaki is good. Eat everyday and it is yamy.

Food souvlaki and like the souvlaki. My mum cooking, my daddy is good.

I am happy for souvlaki the night.

Say you like the souvlaki

Love

Billys

Appendix II: Questions – Journal Notes

Journal Questions based on Richards & Lockhart (1994, pp.16 -17)

a) questions related to the teaching instructions

1. What objectives did I set? To what extent did I achieve them?
2. What teaching material did I use? How effective were the teaching aids?
3. What forms of communication among students and the teacher were used?

b) questions related to students

1. Which was the students' attitude at the beginning, middle and at the end of each activity?
How did I react?

c) questions about the general evaluation of the instructions

- 1) What went well and what did not? Why?
- 2) What could I change? Why?

Isaak Papadopoulos, Ph.D. (isaakpapad1@gmail.com) is a Post-Doctoral Researcher of Translanguaging at the Department of Primary Education (University of Ioannina, Greece) as well as teaching staff member at the Center of Greek Education. His research interests are related to teaching young learners, multilingualism and translanguaging. He has published two books the one titled “Teaching Young Foreign Language Learners in SE Europe” along with Vera Savic and the second one (monograph) entitled “From translanguaging pedagogy to classroom pedagogy”.

Joan Kang Shin, Ph.D. (jshin23@gmu.edu) is an Associate Professor of Education at George Mason University and the Academic Coordinator of the Teaching Culturally & Linguistically Diverse & Exceptional Learners (TCLDEL) program. Dr. Shin specializes in teaching ESL/EFL to young learners and teenagers and is an expert in online TESOL education and professional development. She is also an award-winning author and series editor for National Geographic Learning. Her titles include *Teaching Young Learners English: From Theory to Practice*, *Our World, Welcome to Our World*, and *Impact*.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 203-219

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Interactive whiteboards in EFL from the Teachers' and students' perspective

Christina Nicole GIANNIKAS

Recent disseminated research findings have shown that ELT can be enhanced by effective uses of new technologies; the present paper examines the current use of Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) in English Language Teaching (ELT) and learning of children aged nine to sixteen years old in South-western Greece. The small-scale study concentrates on both teachers' and children's perceptions regarding the use of the technology in question. The data referred to in the current paper derives from five teachers' interviews. The teachers who participated had not undertaken any form of training on the use of IWBs. There were 55 students who completed questionnaires and evaluation forms. The study revealed that there were pedagogical limitations in the effective application and use of the software. Due to lack of professional training on its use, and reluctance of moving away from a teacher-centred approach practitioners were familiar with, IWBs were not used to their full potential. The teachers' main setback was that they had difficulty managing and combining the use of technology and pedagogy in order to create an environment where students could actively participate and interact in the classroom. The present research suggests that with appropriate teacher training, feedback and time for professional development, YL teachers will be more equipped to apply the benefits and interactive nature of the IWB in the language classroom.

Key words: Interactive Whiteboards, Young Learners, socio-constructive approach, new technologies, L2 development

1. Background

In recent years there has been much research on the use of Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) in the language classroom, including the effects they have had on language teaching, professional development, and students' L2 development. Ministries of Education around the world have invested a great amount of capital recognising the significance of technology and its potential to influence major changes in education; therefore, action has been taken to supplement schools with the needed equipment (EACEA, 2009; Ramanair & UyuSagat, 2007).

The global interest of IWBs is justified as they have tampered with the concept of the classroom and have replaced a number of its aids, such as the chalkboard, the whiteboard, the overhead projector, the CD player and the computer (Hall & Higgins, 2005). Even though steps have been taken to include IWBs in language education, the evidence on whether they enhance students' attainment is vague (Hockly, 2013). Within the last decade, there has been much debate on whether the digital board is used efficiently in language learning (Yáñez & Coyle, 2011). Cutrim Schmid and Whyte (2012) have argued that new technologies in the language classroom is a complicated factor, where teachers are under pressure to use new equipment and software, such as IWBs, and to do so within a constructivist framework, considered to be ideal for language teaching and technology and emphasises the role of language and culture in cognitive development. Constructivist and social constructivist learning are evident in the use of IWBs, which allow for the learning environment to flourish as students are provided with opportunities to interact and learn in a student-centred environment. Constructivism supports that learning is an active process in the sense that, with the teacher's help, learners select and transform information, and make decisions (Chrenka, 2001).

One could argue that this pressure of integrating technology in class could be one of the reasons language teachers are reluctant to adopt technology in their practice (Papadima-Sophocleous, Kakoulli-Constantinou & Giannikas, 2015). In order to investigate the matter, data from students and their teachers is essential as educational technology has not only changed the role of the language teacher, but the learners' as well (Delatolas-Saveris, 2015). Furthermore, Young Learners' (YLS) insights as 'digital natives', a term defined by Prensky (2001), is more than valuable in such research studies, yet YLS have been a neglected source in the literature.

The present small-scale contribution concentrates on the teachers' and the learners' perspective of the integration of IWBs and the effects they have on language teaching and learning. More specifically, the study focuses on the use of IWBs in EFL for YLS in a Greek private language school setting. The teachers of the specific context use IWBs, however, they do not receive any professional training, which creates pedagogical limitations in the effective application and use of the software. The Greek setting and reality can be a situation from which other contexts around the world can take useful lessons from, as professional development has been overlooked in various settings when it comes to technology in the language classroom (Kessler, 2018; Kessler & Hubbard, 2017), and specifically with IWBs. The current research aspires to shed light on the current situation in Greece and similar contexts, whilst also encourage further large-scale research in the field of educational technology and language teacher education.

1.1. The Use of IWBs in Language Learning

IWBs are used as a multimedia platform where teachers can employ a wide range of ICT tools, such as audio files, digital videos, PPT slides, and websites, in combination with the facility of highlighting, dragging, dropping and concealing linguistic units (Cutrim Schmid, 2007). Although it may look like an ordinary whiteboard, the IWB is a large, touch-sensitive, interactive display system that links the whiteboard to a digital projector and a computer (BECTA, 2003; Miller and Grover, 2007). Teachers and students can operate the digital board with the use of a keyboard or a special pen from different positions in the classroom (Armstrong et al., 2005). IWBs made an appearance in English Language Teaching (ELT) in the early 2000s and tended to follow a top-down implementation model (Dudeney & Hockly, 2012). The introduction of IWBs into language classrooms in many contexts was to attend to a perceived need to keep up to date and to be known as having the latest equipment, and were seen as the latest 'must have' teaching device (Hockly, 2013). Nonetheless, IWBs offer a range of possibilities that can benefit both teachers and learners and are considered powerful tools that encompass various learning styles (Alhumsy & Shabdin, 2016). More specifically, the digital boards support multimedia and multisensory qualities which give teachers access to materials or pre-

prepared lessons quickly and efficiently from a range of sources, and move between visual and/or oral input and language practice with ease. Software created for IWBs includes interactive texts and activities, colorful graphics and sound effects that engage and hold the YLs' attention. Children can watch stories on the IWB while listening to the characters speaking in the L2; they can visualize, join in with songs, physically touch and move objects on the screen, play interactive games or work with written texts, all of which strengthen their L2 development (Coyle, Yañez & Verdú, 2010).

Teachers need a reasonable level of expertise to exploit full potential of the digital board, but also sufficient technical competency to face difficulties that may occur. According to Duran and Cruz (2011), IWBs are considered to have many positive effects on language learners and teachers. They provide teachers with the opportunity to utilise a wider range of ICT and web-resources, while students become more attentive and engaged as they find the dynamic of lessons more interesting and stimulating (Olofon, Swallow & Neumann, 2016). Furthermore, Şengül and Türel (2017) have found that teachers ought to use IWBs as students benefit when learning their main language skills. These results have resulted to a preference towards whole-class teaching (Glover & Miller, 2001), and presenting a variety of display (Robison, 2000). Nonetheless, disadvantages have been identified regarding the use of IWBs in language learning and teaching, and they have been noticed to be practical or logistical. According to Glover and Miller (2001), two other very important issues that may be barriers to using IWBs are 1) the cost of the IWB, which can be expensive for a school or an institution to purchase, compared to other presentation and/or display technologies and 2) the preparation process, which takes longer in the initial stage and reaching a technically accomplished level can prove to be timely. Another disadvantage was noted in DeSilva, Chigona and Adendorff's (2016) observations, which have shown that IWBs were used mainly as presentation tools, defeating the purpose of its integration in the lesson and the interactive element of the digital board (Armstrong et al., 2005). The use of IWBs' interactive functions requires effective corresponding instructional design in order to bring about a high level of learning content and student engagement. Interaction in language teaching could mean a number of things. On the one hand, according to Birmingham, Davies & Greiffenhagen (2002), it could be the interaction between pupils and teachers, or pupils and pupils. On the other hand, Buckley (2000) has argued that it is the interplay of digital information as elements in the learning process. Beauchamp and Kennewell (2010), emphasise the role of the teacher and how they integrate the IWB to encourage interactivity in its pedagogical sense. From this perspective, making language pedagogy interactive would mean the teacher and students using particular IWB features such as drop and drag, or moving between multiple screens during lesson time (Moss et al., 2007). In a number of studies, it has been observed that IWBs are not necessarily used interactively and have been recorded to reinforce teacher-centred approaches (Levy, 2002; Kennewell, 2004). Levy (2002) argued regarding the quality and depth of classroom interaction with more social constructivist views of education and learning. As far as the digital board is concerned, it enables the visual information to be more easily shared, thereby 'drawing the class together' and embracing interactivity. In this case, the digital board proves to be ineffective and could have limited impact on teaching and learning if practitioners fail to apply a new approach to language pedagogy interactivity requires (Glover & Miller, 2001; Luo & Yang, 2015). Therefore, the interactive element of the IWB is considered key to effective learning and teaching (Armstrong et al., 2005).

Evidence has shown that effective pedagogical method involves well thought-out lesson planning and curriculum design (Koh & Chai, 2016), with stepped conceptual learning, and a cognitive review, all of which offer opportunities for a use of variety of IWB techniques. Researchers have strongly argued the positive effects of the digital board when appropriately integrated into the language classroom; the true successful integration of IWBs depends on how they have been used by teachers in a learning context (Türel & Johnson, 2012). This has been a noted issue; the need for and lack of

sufficient professional development (Al-Rabaani, 2018) in order to use IWBs efficiently is a key element to YL ELT in the digital age.

1.2. IWBs in the YLs' Classroom

Studies have shown that YLs show appreciation towards IWBs in the language classroom. The majority of children have been observed to enjoy the tactile element and the versatility of the activities the IWB displays. This is thought to be one of its major advantages, since the different learning styles that may be found in the language classroom can be better accommodated when teachers draw on a variety of resources to suit different students' needs and abilities (Mercer, Hennessy & Warwick, 2010; Cutrim Schmid & Whyte, 2012). This use of technology and the way in which information is presented, via colourful, interactive and fun activities, is seen by YLs as intriguing and motivating (Weimer, 2001; Smith, Hardman & Higgins, 2006). The visual aspect of the IWB is considered the primary reason for active and effective YLs' engagement in the language learning process (Beeland, 2002). Smith, Hardman and Higgins (2006) have argued that YLs' interest in learning is enhanced due to the element of visual surprise brought to the lesson. Yañez & Coyle's (2011) study showed that due to the above benefits of the IWB, the majority of children who took part in their research were eager to use the digital board extensively.

From the teachers' perspective, an overview of the literature has indicated several instructional benefits IWBs offer, apart from better classroom management (Beauchamp, 2004) and contextualisation (Levy, 2002; Murcia, 2008); consideration of student needs with different learning styles (Beeland, 2002), there is enhanced interaction with the board or peers (Beeland, 2002; Elaziz, 2008). Nonetheless, Glover & Miller (2001) report that several YL teachers in their study failed to appreciate the fact that interactivity requires a new approach to pedagogy. In a later study, Miller and Glover (2007) found that faster progression from an instructional to an interactive teaching approach could be attempted through ongoing professional development. In research conducted by Gray, Hagger-Vaughan, Pilkington and Tomkins (2005), teachers commented that the IWB supported them in encouraging learners to practise and recycle language recently presented in class. They claimed that students were more focused on vocabulary and spelling, and even though they wrote less, IWBs helped the learners improve their writing'. Furthermore, the study reported that the IWB offered practitioners a variety of accessible ways of drawing their students' attention to grammatical features and patterns. Additionally, the study showed that the students believed that the use of IWBs had a positive effect on their memorisation skills and writing development.

Although relevant studies provide the literature with findings suggesting that student language learning, motivation and engagement may be increased by the use of IWBs. Betcher and Lee (2009, p.8) comment that "what makes the difference is the teacher who understands how to tap into the potential of this new technology to create engaging, interesting, interactive lessons that capture the attention and imagination of the students in pedagogically sound, creative ways".

2. Methods

The present study was triggered by the introduction of IWBs to Greek state schools in 2011 where the Greek Ministry of Education, with the support of MLS (Making Life Simple), a company of educational technology, supplied and installed over 3,000 IWBs to Greek schools across the country (<http://www.skai.gr/news/technology/article/169271/diadrastikoi-pinakes-sta-ellinika-sholeia/>).

This initiative gave an incentive to private language school owners to supply their teachers with IWBs in order to become competitive in the language teaching market. The participating teachers were self-taught and their motivation led them into making an effort to guide their peers when integrating the IWB in their classes.

In light of this interesting development, the present small-scale study focused on language teachers who used IWBs and YLs, aged 9-16, who attended private language lessons after mainstream school. More specifically, parallel to their public school EFL education, many YLLs attend classes at private language schools, which offer English language tuition in the afternoons as a supplement to the lessons that take place in public schools in the mornings. They are dispersed across the country and provide remedial work for school subject courses. The YLs who participated in the current investigation had been studying English from two to eight years. The research goals of the study were:

- To determine the extent to which teachers adopted socio-constructivist approaches with the use of IWBs
- To examine the impact of teachers' efforts on students' involvement
- To present teachers' and students' perspectives on the use and purpose of IWBs in the language classroom

For the needs of the current small-scale exploratory study, data was gathered through 1) semi-structured interviews with five language teachers, 2) questionnaires completed by 50 students, and 3) students' evaluation forms. The semi-structured interviews with the five language teachers provided opportunities to probe deeper and explore the interviewee's opinions. The interviews were carried out in English, as was preferred by the teachers. Conversations were audio-recorded and word-processed, and critical incidents were identified (Dörnyei, 2007). Detailed notes were made during the interviews, marking illuminating responses for the transcriptions of tape recordings, which were used for cross-referencing to the verbatim audio-recorded conversation. The students' questionnaires aimed to provide insights on how the YLs viewed the use of IWBs, in which cases it was used and how it affected their lessons. The questionnaires were written in the students' L1 (Greek) and consisted of three sections: 1) demographic information of the students, 2) the students' exposure and familiarity of IWBs and 3) students' personal opinion of IWBs. The questionnaires were distributed at the start of the school year. Finally, the students' evaluation forms were distributed in order to investigate the students' perspective into more depth. The evaluation forms were distributed at the end of the school year, after the questionnaires' data analysis was conducted. The evaluation forms were designed according to the interview and questionnaire findings, and gave the researcher the opportunity to cross-check the outcomes that derived from the aforementioned data collection tools.

ATLAS.ti 7©2013 (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin) was used to analyse and code the recordings (see Appendix C for a coded sample). The analytical process, based on principles of grounded theory (Strauss, 1987; Glaser, 1992; Charmaz, 2006), was iterative and abductive (Dörnyei, 2007) and the data analysis involved a number of readings of the data entries and progressive refining of emerging categories. The procedure was carried out as follows (inspired by Giannikas, 2013):

- An initial reading of the transcribed interviews was conducted. This process allowed themes to emerge.
- The texts were re-read and thoughts were annotated in the margin. The text was examined closely to facilitate a micro-analysis of data.

The questionnaires and evaluation forms were distributed on a hard copy, which, according to the students, was preferred. The data were transferred on a spreadsheet and calculated on Excel, where tables and charts were created based on data results.

The following section presents the results of the study, where points will be made with regard to the teachers' use and perception of the IWB in the language classroom, illustrated by tables, charts and extracts from the data. The extracts are presented in their original form, as transcribed after data collection.

3. Results

The results will be framed using the teachers and the students' perspective as recorded via the data collection tools.

3.1. The Teachers' Perspective

A main source of data was obtained from the semi-structured interviews in order to gain more insight on their perspective of the use of IWBs in the teachers' context. The purpose of the interviews was to collect information and describe the meaning of IWB-use in the specific context, and take a glimpse into the teachers' classroom reality. The first section of the interviews draws attention to the teachers' backgrounds, the frequency of which IWBs are used in the interviewees' classes, and how long teachers have been using them. The teachers' background was investigated and is initially presented in Table 1:

Teacher	Age/Sex	Years of Teaching	Level of Media Literacy	Use of Technology in Personal Life
Teacher 1	30-35/F	10	Intermediate	Frequent user of technology, social media and YouTube
Teacher 2	30-35/M	8	Advanced	Frequent user of PCs, smartphones and tablets. He uses the Internet daily but does not have a presence on Social Media
Teacher 3	60-65/M	23	Basic	Uses his laptop for work only/ not a frequent technology-user in his personal life. He is not active in Social Media, although uses the Internet for information.
Teacher 4	60-65/F	25	Intermediate	Does not use technology much in her personal life, she owns a tablet and enjoys reading the news online. She is not active on Social Media but may use YouTube occasionally.
Teacher 5	30-35/F	6	Intermediate	She is an active technology-user in her personal life and uses Social Media frequently.

Table 1: Teachers' Backgrounds

The information regarding the Teachers' Background as technology-users offers insight to the use IWBs in the sense that it explains the reason why some of the participating teachers were hesitant or comfortable taking the risk to maximise its use. Figure 1 indicates how long each teacher has been using an IWB:

For how many years have you been using IWBs?

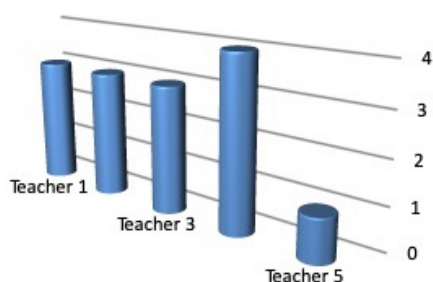


Figure 1: Time the teachers have been using IWBs

The years of IWB-use are interconnected with teaching experience, and how long IWBs were in use at the private language school where the study took place. Teacher 4 began to use the IWB first, despite the fact that she did not use technology as frequently as her peers in her personal life, and was older than the other participants. Nonetheless, she had the most teaching experience (25 years). Teacher 4 did not undertake any official IWB training; she was self-taught and trained and guided her colleagues on how to use IWBs from a technological perspective. Teacher 3 had 23 years of teaching experience; however, he used the IWB for the same amount of years as Teacher 1 and 2 who had been teaching for 10 and eight years respectively.

The second figure shows how frequently IWBs were used per week:

How many times a week do you use IWBs?

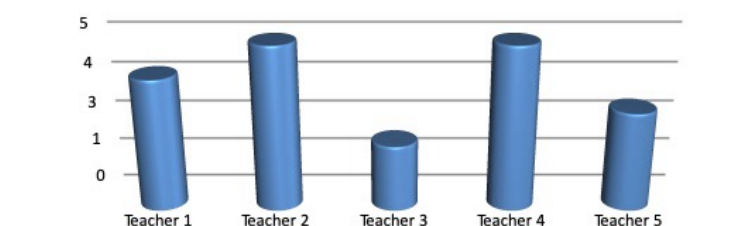


Figure 2: How many times do you use IWBs per week?

Figure 2 brought about interesting insight, as not all teachers use IWBs daily. Only Teachers 2 and 4 use their IWBs 4-5 times a week, a phenomenon which draws great interest since there is a 30 year age difference between the two teachers and Teacher 2 is more experienced in using technology in his personal life than Teacher 4 is. Teachers 1 and 5 are also quite active in their use of technology in

their personal life; however their use of the IWB is not as high as expected. Teacher 3, who uses technology less in his private life, uses IWBs less than his peers. Finally, the third figure shows the amount of time IWBs are used within the lesson:

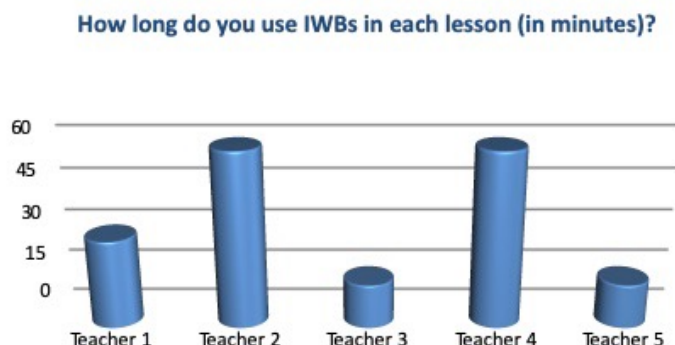


Figure 3: For how long do you use IWBs in the lesson?

This final chart shows that Teacher 5 may use her IWB more frequently than Teacher 3 (see Figure 2), but they both use it for the same amount of class time. Teacher 1 uses her IWB for just over 20 minutes, while Teachers 2 and 4 use it for the same amount of time (approximately 55 minutes). Figures 1, 2 and 3 illustrate the effort teachers make to integrate IWBs in their lesson, but at the same time, they show the reluctance in indulging into IWBs as the majority uses them for a short amount of time during the lesson. The second section of the interviews focused on the pedagogical aspect of using IWBs. The teachers were asked about activities they used the IWBs for. Table 2 displays the teachers' responses:

Teacher	When teaching via course-book	When playing games	When teaching grammar	When teaching vocabulary	When doing stories	When doing listening tasks
Teacher 1	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Teacher 2	✓	✓		✓		✓
Teacher 3	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Teacher 4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teacher 5	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Table 2: What activities do you apply on an IWB?

Teachers stated that in-class tasks derive from their coursebook, where the IWB was used with pre-packaged material. The activities were led by the coursebook and teachers used the IWB as a high tech whiteboard since the same coursebook-led approaches were used with chalkboards and whiteboards. This has been an issue in many contexts, according to Hockly (2013), and, in the specific

study, the result is that the lesson takes a teacher-fronted approach, missing the 'interactive' element.

When asked what they liked most about teaching with IWBs, the teachers replied:

Teacher 1: 'It increases students' interest. Students' attention is automatically on the lesson. I like to see my students engaged and not bored'

Teacher 2: 'It's fun and the students enjoy it, plus I can explain the lesson better'

Teacher 3: 'It makes learning more fun for students and it makes teaching easier'

Teacher 4: 'Students can actively participate in the lesson-all the text/answers are on the board clearly stated. Oral exercises become fun since help is provided in written form and students can follow a pattern when they talk. Vocabulary becomes fun and listening can be explained by providing the text and the related vocabulary'

Teacher 5: 'The fact that students are focused on the lesson'

This evidence shows that even though teachers have not received any training in the field of technology in language education, and more specifically on the use of IWBs, they enjoy using them in their practice, and are aware that their students benefit from them. The fact that the teachers have integrated this digital tool in their lessons has made them realise that they have enriched their teaching, have made it more exciting and that IWBs have a positive impact on students' motivation. However, as Thomas and Cutrim Scmid (2010) have argued, simply introducing technology in the language classroom does not assure an enhanced learning environment. The most important factors of successfully integrating and progressing can be identified in the role of the teacher and their knowledge of the technology. Although the teachers have made positive statements regarding IWBs, the following justifies Thomas and Cutrim Scmid's argument. When asked what teachers disliked about IWBs they claimed:

Teacher 1: 'I don't like the fact that the students can't touch and interact with the board'

Teacher 2: 'I like everything about the IWB'

Teacher 3: 'It requires more teaching time'

Teacher 4: 'There is nothing I dislike about it'

Teacher 5: 'The fact that children cannot use it as much as I do'

The fact that Teachers 1 and 5 feel that the IWB is not interactive enough and cannot be used as much by the children indicates that although they may be technologically aware of how to put an IWB into use, they lack the pedagogical knowledge of its potential. The element of the socio-constructivist approach is lost in such cases. The benefits of active learning strategies are neglected and students are deprived of the opportunity for more social interaction in their learning. The IWB is used as a simple whiteboard and the teacher applies teacher-centred approaches, which creates limitations. Teacher 3 mentions that the use of IWBs suggests more teaching time on his part. This is due to the fact that teachers use the coursebook with the IWB exclusively. IWBs have rich libraries which can support and store a great number of teaching materials. This results to less teaching time and effort from the teacher, however, if the lessons are coursebook-led there is no reason to use the IWB library, which could result to additional preparation time.

3.2. The Students' Perspective- The Questionnaires

The students' questionnaires served the purpose of collecting data regarding what the IWBs were used for in the classroom. This section will focus on the use of games and grammar/vocabulary instruction. One of these elements of teaching is considered interactive and (games) and the other has a long tradition in language teaching and supported in teacher-centred environments

(grammar/vocabulary teaching), i.e applied with the Grammar Translation method. There will be a comparison of the two, followed by a sample of students' preferences in order to draw final conclusions on the extent to which teachers have adopted socio-constructivist approaches with the use of IWBs and finally establish the impact of teachers' efforts on students' motivation/involvement of IWBs in the specific context. Therefore, YLs were asked how often they played games on the IWB in class. The following chart represents students' responses on the use of games:

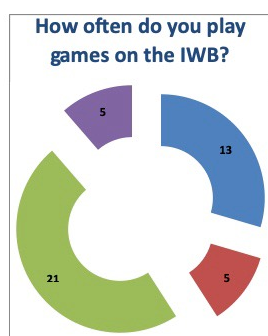


Chart 1: How often do you play games on the IWB?

In Chart 1, the students stated that 48% played games on the IWB once every two weeks, 30% played 2-3 times a week, 11% played every day and 11% never played games on the IWB. The percentages in general are low, considering the fact that games are an activity frequently used with YLs to support an interactive lesson and encourage language learners to work together and learn from each other, as well as the teacher. The IWB is ideal to increase the application of games in the language classroom and support a student-centred environment due to its vivid colors and sound system (Weimer, 2001; Smith, Hardman & Higgins, 2006). The combination of games and IWBs would be ideal as their features would stimulate language learning with children and encourage increased attention and motivation. However, the majority of students played games in the classroom once every two weeks, which is not frequent for the specific age group in a setting where there are specifications for it.

In comparison, Chart 2 indicates the exposure of grammar/vocabulary teaching with the use of IWBs:

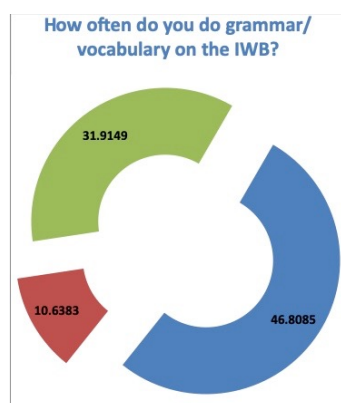


Chart 2: How often do you do grammar/vocabulary on the IWB?

According to the students' responses, the majority of teachers use the IWB to teach grammar and vocabulary (58%) every day, 32% of YLs stated that their teachers never use the IWB and 11% use it 2-3 times a week for grammar/vocabulary. If one compares these figures to the ones retrieved from Chart 1, it is evident that there is a greater emphasis on grammar/vocabulary and YLs are more exposed to traditional activities, even with the use of an IWB, which is considered a more contemporary and interactive tool.

Based on the findings, the socio-constructivist approach is not supported in this context. The majority of teachers transfer their teacher-fronted approaches to the IWB-use and the notion of collaboration and assisted learning are missed. The intension of including new technologies in the language classroom is to provide YLs with cognitive tools for L2 development. If the language lessons continue to be teacher-fronted, students will be deprived of valuable interactive and efficient language learning. The study has shown that the focus has not shifted from the teacher to the student, as is the case in a socio-constructivist classroom. The IWB is used in the classroom to replace the whiteboard and/or chalkboard; however, it has not changed the sense of a passive traditional setting of learning. Had the teachers used a socio-constructivist approach, they would cooperate with their students in order to create a stronger dynamic in the classroom and help students explore and expand their knowledge of the L2. The IWB could bring this dynamic to life if its interactive element was encouraged. According to the data, teachers preferred traditional activities with the students, even with the presence of the IWB, which eliminated collaboration among students that could have been mediated and structured by the teacher.

3.3. The Students' Perspective- Evaluations

Digital boards offer a number of possibilities that learners find appealing. Children enjoy the multimedia aspect, more specifically, the visual aspect, the audio and the fact that they can touch the screen (Hall & Higgins, 2005). Nonetheless, the IWB alone will not guarantee to keep YLs motivated and enthusiastic about their L2 learning. The lack of pedagogical IWB knowledge and interactivity, mentioned previously, creates a desire and need for these missing elements among students. Table 3 represents the students' evaluations of how the presence of the IWB affects their learning and how YLs feel about the way the digital tool is applied in their classes.

The YLs' responses to the evaluation form offered immense insight on how they viewed various aspects of the IWB and how it was used in their classes from their perspective. By focusing on the most important outcomes, one can see that the children showed awareness of the fact that they were learning more with the help of the digital board, and that the majority found it easier to concentrate when the lesson was supported by an IWB. According to 70.2% of YLs, they preferred to have their language lessons with the presence of an IWB, even though 70% believe they are difficult to use, which is justified due to the lack of practice and student-centred approaches, as mentioned earlier. Learners do not become as familiar with the IWB as they should, and do not thoroughly experience all it has to offer. Furthermore, YLs also expressed a dislike when it came to going to the front of the class and working on the IWB. As seen in the previous section, teachers have held on to a teacher-fronted approach, even with the presence of an interactive tool. The board is still seen as a traditional tool used to display information to a number of students. In such settings, when students are asked to work on the board, it is for them to be examined. They are exposed to their teacher and peers while they complete a task. If students are not given the 'interactive advantage' of the IWB they will continue to see certain elements of it as intimidating. This argument can be supported by the fact that 42.1% of the YLs believe that their teachers teach just the same with or without an IWB. The interpretation of this is that the board may have changed form; however, the teaching approach has remained the same.

Evaluation	Strongly Agree%	Agree%	Neutral%	Disagree%	Strongly Disagree%
I learn more when the teacher uses IWBs	42,5	36	4	2	1
I dislike going up to the front to use the IWB	17	8.5	2.1	27.6	40.6
It is easier to understand the work when my teacher uses the IWB	42.5	42.5	8.5	2.1	0
I think students behave better in lessons with IWBs	23.4	40.4	12.7	12.7	4.2
I think IWBs make the teacher's drawings and diagrams easier to see	31.9	19.1	40.4	0	2.1
Teachers teach just the same with or without an IWB	8.5	12.7	8.5	21.1	42.1
I prefer lessons which are taught with an IWB	70.2	15	4.2	2.1	2.1
I would work harder if my teacher used the IWB more often	21.2	17	15	10.6	30
IWBs often break down and this wastes time	10.6	4.2	0	13	66
I think IWBs are difficult to use	4.2	0	6.3	13	70
We get to join in lessons more when my teacher used an IWB	40.4	28	8.5	4.2	4.2
I concentrate better in class when an IWB is used	34	36	15	6.3	2.1

Table 3: Students' Evaluation of IWBs in the Language Classroom

3.4. Discussion

The present study has explored the effect of implementing IWBs in the YLs' classroom, in a context where teachers are not exposed to any training on how to integrate and successfully apply the digital board in their classes. Although findings from the present small-scale study cannot be generalised to other situations, it sheds light on the complexity of applying the IWB in the language classroom when there has been minimum training, if any.

In the current context the teachers and students brought a history of experiences to the classroom, which relate to their understanding of learning and use of technology. When introduced with new technology practitioners are most likely to make sense of it in terms of their previous experiences of

older technologies. The present study shows that participant teachers used digital whiteboards as an extension of the non-digital whiteboard (Kent & Facer, 2004) and though IWBs are meant to give an interactive element to the lesson, and have the potential to go beyond a simple presentation tool (Cutrim Schmid, 2016), teachers continued to use a teacher-centred approach. The experiences of the participating teachers echo findings of other studies (BECTA, 2003) which have focused on the importance of in-service support and teacher training. Without this, it is unlikely that language teachers will become aware of or able to exploit the potential of integrating IWBs.

The data showed that some teachers used the IWBs more than others. The frequency and the duration of IWB use proved to be important indicators for the acceptance of the new technology. Expectedly, teachers who frequently used IWBs were more likely to have a higher level of IWB competency, and, therefore, more positive perceptions towards its use, as seen in Moss et al. (2007). These findings confirm the importance of teachers' individual efforts to achieve higher-level IWB skills. Hall and Higgins (2005) argue that teachers need continuous training in order to improve and maintain their newly developed skills. Furthermore, the fact that teachers had no technical support worked to their disadvantage. Technical support is an essential component in any ICT infrastructure (Ronnkvist, 2000; OECD, 2001) and yet it appears to be in a state of underdevelopment at the present time in many contexts including the Greek setting (OfSTED, 2004), which makes the situation all the more challenging.

IWB issues identified by students in the current research could be considered short-term rather than long-term irreversible difficulties. The findings here suggest imbalance, and a sense of IWB-use that is still at its initial developmental stage. Teachers are reluctant to embrace the IWB, explore all its features, and allow their lesson to become more interactive because of it. Data gathered from students' questionnaires, gave much needed insight into what 'works' for them in relation to IWBs and could critique their teachers' use of the digital board. Similar research has shown that this important information students have been contributing to language teachers has been ignored since they are under pressure to fulfil other responsibilities (Demetriadis et al., 2003; Tearle & Dillon, 2003; Wood, 2001). Giving the opportunity to the students to voice their opinion is a step towards improving the situation in the current and similar contexts.

4. Conclusions

There are considerable advantages to using an IWB in the language classroom; high on the list are that it is engaging, motivating for students and encourages interaction (Hockly, 2013). In the current study, due to lack of professional training on its use, and reluctance of moving away from a teacher-centred approach familiar to the participating teachers, IWBs were not used to their full potential. The results of the study indicate that the presence of the digital board alone does not guarantee an improved pedagogical approach or successful language learning. The teachers' main setback in the study was that they had difficulty managing and combining the use of technology and pedagogy, and create an environment where students could actively participate and interact in the classroom. The present research suggests that with appropriate teacher training, feedback and time for professional development, YL teachers will be more equipped to motivate their students in their commitment to learn and increase their confidence as L2 learners and users.

One of the major issues regarding Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) research, which has been highlighted in the literature, is a failure to consider the classroom context (Egbert et al., 2009). The findings discussed in this paper provide interesting insights into the impact of the use of multi-media materials in language teaching and learning processes, as perceived by the research participants. However, more large-scale studies need to be conducted so that the potential of IWB-use is enhanced and conceptualised.

References

- Alhumsi, H.M. & Shabdin, A.A. (2016). The feasibility of incorporating the Interactive Whiteboard in EFL primary classrooms. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 2(2), 135-142.
- Al-Rabaani, A.H. (2018). Social studies teachers' perspectives on the advantages and challenges of Interactive Whiteboard applications in Oman. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 7(4), 753-762. doi:10.12973/eu-jer.7.4.753.
- Armstrong, V. D., Barnes, S. B., Sutherland, R. J., Curran, S., Mills, S., & Thompson, I. (2005). Collaborative research methodology for investigating teaching and learning: the use of interactive whiteboard technology. *Educational Review*, 57/4, 457 - 469. doi: 10.1080/00131910500279551
- Beauchamp, G. (2004). Teacher use of the Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) in primary schools-towards an effective transition framework. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 13, 329-349.
- Beauchamp, G. & Kennewell, S. (2010). Interactivity in the classroom and its impact on learning. *Computers & Education*, 54/3, 759-766.
- BECTA. (2003). What the Research Says About Interactive Whiteboards. http://www.becta.org.uk/page_documents/research/wtrs_whiteboards.pdf (accessed 24.02.17).
- Beeland, W.D. (2002). Student engagement, visual learning and technology: can Interactive Whiteboards help? Annual Conference of the Association of Information Technology for Teaching Education, Dublin: Trinity College.
- Betcher, C. & Lee, M. (2009). *The interactive whiteboard revolution*. Melbourne, Australia: ACER Press.
- Birmingham, P., Davies, C. & Greiffenhagen, C. (2002). Turn to Face the Bard: making sense of three-way interactions between teacher, pupils and technology in the classroom. *Education Communication and Information*, 2/2-3, 139-161.
- Buckley, B. C. (2000). Interactive multimedia and model-based learning in biology, *International Journal of Science Education*, 22(3), 895-935.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Chrenka, L. (2001). Constructivism and the Role of the Teacher: misconstruing constructivism. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(9), 694-697.
- Coyle, Y., Yañez, L. & Verdü, M. (2010). The impact of the interactive whiteboard on the teacher and children's language use in an ESL immersion classroom. *System*, 38/4, 614-625.
- Cutrim Schmid, E. (2007). Enhancing Performance Knowledge and Self-Esteem in Classroom Language Learning: The Potential of the ACTIVote Component of Interactive Whiteboard Technology. *System: An International Journal of Educational Technology and Applied Linguistics*, 35/2: 119-133.
- Cutrim Schmid, E. & S. Whyte. (2012). Interactive Whiteboards in State School Settings: Teacher Responses to Socio-Constructivist Hegemonies. *Language Learning and Technology*, 16/2: 65-86.
- Cutrim Schmid, E. (2016). Interactive Whiteboards and Language Learning. Cited in Farr, F. & L. Murray (Eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Language Learning and Technology*. London: Routledge, 281-295.
- Delatolas-Saveris, J. (2015). Investigating Teachers' Use of Interactive Whiteboards to Motivate Learners in English Language Teaching. Cited in Ntika, M., E. Kalyva, A. Karamanos, T. Lagkas, P. Patsala, Z. Prodromidou, & Z. Tasioka (Eds.). *Infusing Research and Knowledge in South-East Europe Proceedings of the 10th Annual South-East European Doctoral Student Conference*. Thessaloniki: South-East European Research Centre.

- Demetriadis, S., Barbas, A., Molohides, A., Palaigeorgiou, A., Psillows, G., & D., Vlahavas, I. (2003). "Cultures in negotiation:" Teachers' acceptance/resistance attitudes considering the infusion of technology into schools. *Computers and Education*, 41, 19-37.
- DeSilva, C.R., Chigona, A., & Adendorff, S.A. (2016). Technology Integration: exploring Interactive Whiteboards as dialogic spaces in the foundation phase classroom. *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 15(3), 141-150.
- Dorney, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dudeny, G. & Hockly, N. (2012). ICT in ELT: how did we get here and where are we going? *ELT Journal*, 66/4, 533-542. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccs050
- Duran, A. & Cruz, M. (2011). The interactive whiteboard and foreign language learning: A case study. *Porta Linguarum*, 15, 211-231.
- EACEA. (2009). *Study on the Impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and New Media on Language Learning, Final Report*. European Commission.
- Egbert, J., Huff, L., Levi, M., Preuss, C., & Sellen, J. (2009). Pedagogy, process, and classroom context: Integrating teacher voice and experience into research on technology-enhanced language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93, 754-768.
- Elaziz, F. (2008). *Attitudes of students and teachers towards the use of Interactive whiteboards in EFL classrooms*. Unpublished MA thesis. Bilkent University. Ankara.
- Giannikas, C.N. (2013). The Benefits of Management and Organisation: The case study in Young Language Learners' Classrooms, *Centre of Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 3/3, 87-104.
- Glaser, Barney G. (1992). *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*. Mill Valley, Ca.: Sociology Press.
- Glover, D. & Miller, D. (2001). Running with technology: the pedagogic impact of the large-scale introduction of interactive whiteboards in one secondary school, *Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education*, 10/3, 257-278. doi: 10.1080/14759390100200115
- Gray, C., Hagger-Vaughan, L., Pilkington, R., & Tomkins, S.-A. (2005). The pros and cons of interactive whiteboards in relation to the key stage 3 strategy and framework. *Language Learning Journal*, 32, 38-44.
- Hall, I. & S. Higgins. (2005). Primary Schools Students Perceptions of Interactive Whiteboards. *Journal of Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 21/2: 102-17.
- Hockly, N. (2013). Interactive Whiteboards. *ELT Journal*, 67/3, 354-358. doi10.1093/elt/cct021
- Kennewell S. (2004). The influence of interactive presentation tools on pedagogy. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference, University of Manchester, September 2004. Retrieved April 2017 URL <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/151717.htm>.
- Kent, N. & Facer, K. (2004). Different worlds? A comparison of young people's home and school ICT use. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 20, 440-455.
- Kessler, G., & Hubbard, P. (2017). Language teacher education and technology. In C. A. Chapelle & S. Sauro (Eds.), *The handbook of technology and second language teaching and learning* (pp. 278-292). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kessler G. (2018). Technology and the future of language teaching. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51:205-218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12318>
- Koh, J. & Chai, C.S. (2016). Seven design frames that teachers use when considering technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK). *Computers & Education*, 102, 244-257.
- Levy, P. (2002). *Interactive Whiteboards in learning and teaching in two Sheffield schools: a developmental study*, Sheffield, Department of Information Studies. Retrieved February 24 2017 <http://dis.shef.ac.uk/eirg/projects/wboards.htm>.
- Luo, Yi-F. & Yang, S.C. (2016). The effect of the interactive functions of whiteboards on elementary students' learning. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 54(5), 680-700. doi: 10.1177/0735633115628032
- Mercer, N., Hannes, S., & Warwick, P. (2010). Using Interactive Whiteboards to orchestrate classroom dialogue. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 19(2), 195-209.

- Miller, D. & Glover, D. (2007). Interactive whiteboards: A literature survey. In M. Thomas and E. C. Schmid (Eds.), *Interactive whiteboards for education: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 1-19). New York, NY: IGI Global.
- Moss, G., Jewitt, C., Levačić, R., Armstrong, V., Cardini, A. & Castle, F. (2007). *The Interactive Whiteboards, Pedagogy and Pupil Performance Evaluation: An Evaluation of the Schools Whiteboard Expansion (SWE) Project: London Challenge*. London Challenge, London, DfES.
- Murcia, K. (2008). Teaching science creatively: Engaging primary teacher education students with interactive whiteboard technology. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 3(3), 45-52.
- OECD. (2001). *Schooling for Tomorrow: Learning to Change: ICT in Schools*. Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, Paris, France.
- OfSTED. (2004). *ICT in schools: the impact of government initiatives five years on*. Retrieved at December 2 2018 <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm>
- Prensky, M. (2001). *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*. *On the Horizon*, 9/5: 1-6.
- Papadima-Sophocleous, S., Kakouli-Constantinou, E., & Giannikas, C.N. (2015) *ICT in EFL: the case of Cypriot secondary education*. Cited in: Giannikas, C.N.; McLaughlin, L., Fanning, G. & Deutsch Muller, N. *Children Learning English: from research to practice*. Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Ltd.
- Ramanair, J. & G. Uyu Segat. (2007). *Multimedia Technology: Teachers' Knowledge and Attitudes*. *CALL-EJ Online*, 8/2.
- Robison, S. (2000). *Math classes for the 21st century*, *Media and Methods*, 36/4, 10–11.
- Ronkvist A.M. (2000). *Technology support: it's depth, breadth and impact in America's schools*. Center for Research on Information Technology and Organizations, Minnesota University: Minnesota.
- Smith, F. Hardman, F., & Higgins, S. (2006). The impact of interactive whiteboards on teacher-pupil interaction in the national literacy in the national literacy and numeracy strategies. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 443-457.
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511557842>
- Tearle, P. & Dillon, P. (2003). *Evaluation of the Intel Teach to the Future Programme: final report*. Exeter: University of Exeter.
- Thomas, M. & Cutrim Schmid, E. (2010). *Interactive Whiteboards for Education: Theory, Research and Practice*. New York, NY: IGI Global.
- Türel, Y. K. & Johnson, T. E. (2012). Teachers' Belief and Use of Interactive Whiteboards for Teaching and Learning. *Educational Technology & Society*, 15(1), 381–394.
- Weimer, M.J. (2001). *The Influence of Technology such as SMART Board Interactive Whiteboard on Student Motivation in the Classroom*. Retrieved December 2 2018 at <http://smarterkids.org/research/paper7.asp>.
- Wood, C. (2001). *Interactive Whiteboards: A Luxury Too Far?*, *Teaching ICT*, 1(2), 52-62.
- Yanez, L. & Coyle, Y. (2011). Children's perceptions of learning with an Interactive Whiteboard. *ELT Journal*, 65(4), 446-457.

Christina Nicole Giannikas (christina.giannikas@cut.ac.cy) holds a PhD in the field of Applied Linguistics. She is an education and research consultant and has worked with publishers, Ministries of Education and educational institutions worldwide. Dr Giannikas also works in Higher Education where she lectures courses in Applied Linguistics and is an experienced teacher trainer of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs in Cyprus, Greece and the UK. She specializes in the areas of early language learning, age-appropriate digital pedagogies, digital literacies, assessment, and Teacher Education. For the last four years, Dr Giannikas has been serving as Chair of the EuroCALL Teacher Education SIG and recently became the EuroCALL National Contact for Greece.

Weblink: <http://christinagian.wixsite.com/christinagiannikas>



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 220-237

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Greek teachers' beliefs on the use of games in the EFL classroom

Panagiota KOUFOPOULOU & Evangelia KARAGIANNI

The present paper aims at exploring English language teachers' beliefs about using traditional and digital games with young learners and how these beliefs determine their attitudes. More specifically, 164 EFL teachers working in primary education completed a questionnaire and provided data regarding their views on using games, both traditional and digital ones, to teach English to young learners as well as the factors they consider restrictive in using games in the classroom. The findings revealed that restricted time is one of the main obstacles for playing games in the classroom while availability of technological equipment and familiarity with the use of technology can have direct consequences on teachers' methods, expectations and reservations in terms of playful activities used.



Η παρούσα εργασία έχει στόχο να ερευνήσει τις πεποιθήσεις των εκπαιδευτικών αγγλικής γλώσσας σχετικά με τη χρήση παραδοσιακών και ψηφιακών παιχνιδιών στη διδασκαλία μικρών μαθητών καθώς και τον τρόπο με τον οποίο οι πεποιθήσεις αυτές καθορίζουν τις στάσεις τους. Πιο συγκεκριμένα, 164 εκπαιδευτικοί αγγλικής γλώσσας, οι οποίοι εργάζονται στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση, συμπλήρωσαν το ερωτηματολόγιο και έδωσαν στοιχεία αναφορικά με τις απόψεις τους για τη χρήση παιχνιδιών, τόσο παραδοσιακών όσο και ψηφιακών, στη διδασκαλία των αγγλικών σε μικρούς μαθητές, όπως επίσης και με τους παράγοντες που θεωρούν περιοριστικούς στην χρήση παιχνιδιών στην τάξη. Τα ευρήματα κατέδειξαν ότι ο περιορισμένος χρόνος είναι ένα από τα βασικά εμπόδια που τους αποτρέπουν από την χρήση παιχνιδιών στην τάξη ενώ η ύπαρξη τεχνολογικού εξοπλισμού και η εξοικείωση με τη χρήση της τεχνολογίας μπορεί να έχει άμεσες συνέπειες στις διδακτικές μεθόδους, τις προσδοκίες και τις επιφυλάξεις των εκπαιδευτικών ως προς τη χρήση δραστηριοτήτων με παιγνιώδη χαρακτήρα.

Key words: traditional games, digital games, teachers' attitudes, obstacles

1. Introduction

Playful activities have been extensively preferred in early education as a smooth transition from the relaxed home atmosphere to the demanding school environment since they can impart psychological, social and intellectual benefits for the learners (Calvo-Ferrer, 2017). Some aspects of games are closely related to Dewey's 'learning-by-doing' approach (Reese, 2011), which could facilitate the learning process by imitating the way we grasp the world outside the strict educational classroom in alignment with the social constructivism perspective (Vasalou, Khaled, Holmes & Gooch, 2017). At the same time, the current interests of young people, who are usually technologically competent before they start school, cannot be overlooked (Levy, 2009). In other words, language acquisition has to be redefined by incorporating the positive effects multimedia and technological advances can have (Al-Seghayer, 2001; Reinders, 2017), bearing in mind the need to enhance learners' 21st century skills (Csapó et al., 2012). Nowadays teachers differ not only in their purpose of using games in the classroom, but also in the mode of delivering them, that is traditional games- most often paper-based - or digital ones. This study investigates EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers' views regarding the use of games in the classroom and examines the parameters that influence teachers' choices.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. About games

The term "game" has been used for various activities, so the need to define it appropriately deems important. 'A game is an amusing and challenging activity which abides by certain rules, leads to the achievement of some objective(s) and entails decision-making. In due course, students may interact and/or compete against each other until the game finally comes to an end (Koufopoulou, 2015).

Games are supposed to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom for a variety of reasons. First of all, a game-like situation can entertain the participants and it is bound to motivate them. In this way, students can have fun while learning new structures, revising or accomplishing many more tasks. This relaxed atmosphere could have an impact on their eagerness to learn and could possibly enhance their memory (Brown & Vaughan, 2009; Juul, 2001; Ramantani, 2012; Serderidou, 2013; Tsairi, 2007). Playful tasks can also be utilized to expose students to unfamiliar material and facilitate incidental learning, especially vocabulary items that appear in new and challenging contexts (McGonigal, 2011; Mohsen, 2016). Last, games can be exploited for evaluation and assessment purposes as the end of a game is associated with a score which does not appear as threatening to players/learners as in the case of other forms of assessment, such as tests, in a traditional classroom setting (Brown & Harris, 2014; Csapó, et al., 2012). In this sense, learner's autonomy and formation of a realistic self-perception can be facilitated so that children can reach self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943).

2.2 Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards games

The integration of games in the curriculum might be partly a responsibility of curriculum designers but teachers are those who actualize the details and guidelines of any curriculum. Their key role refers both to implementing changes so as to use games and to overcoming any obstacles encountered during the process. As for the curricula relating to English language teaching in Greece, the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001) along with the new English curriculum for Greek

Schools (Dendrinou, 2013; Dendrinou & Karava, 2013) support the educational aspects of games. More specifically, it is asserted that

“[T]he use of language for playful purposes often plays an important part in language learning and development, but is not confined to the educational domain. Examples of lucid activities include: Social language games: [...] board and card games (Scrabble, Lexicon, Diplomacy, etc.)” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 56)

Research on teachers’ beliefs around the globe has pinpointed a restricted scope in the use of games. Teachers frequently employ playful activities as an entertaining break in a busy session (Rixon, 1981; Silvers, 1982), as a time-filler and/or as a way to praise good behavior and consequently motivate students to participate (Afentouli, 2009; Langran & Purcell, 1994; Michail, 2010; Ramantani, 2012; Wright et al., 2006). It is noteworthy that work taking place in a relaxed atmosphere can lower anxiety and foster learning since students’ attention and interest can be heightened (Silvers, 1982).

Another aspect that cannot be overlooked is the way digital games are treated in the classroom and the underlying teachers’ views. Personal experience, that is, the degree to which teachers play digital games themselves can be decisive. Obviously, a teacher who is an advocate and a keen player of this kind of games is expected to encourage playing digital games as a way to develop new literacies (Awan, 2011; Ertner et al., 2013; Sandford et al., 2006, Shin & Son, 2007; Wastiau et al., 2009). The idea of offering equal opportunities to all students regardless of their learning styles and individual abilities seems to be effectuated due to the flexibility a game-based context allows. In view of the needs of a mixed ability classroom, teachers believe that students with low performance in terms of their skills can be equally competent with their peers while being engaged in games (JGCC, 2012; Takeuchi & Vaale, 2014; Tomlinson & Eidson, 2003).

On the other end of the spectrum, there are also contradictory feelings towards the potential of games as “a teaching device” (Silvers, 1982, p. 29). *Figure 1* summarizes research conducted in different countries and reflects teachers’ skepticism towards games regardless of the advantages usually associated with them (for information about the Greek context see Section 4). As the integration of games in the curriculum is pre-empted if teachers acknowledge more obstacles than benefits to that, it would be worth presenting some reasons why teachers’ views should be taken into serious account.

First, language acquisition is supposed to take place during serious activities including learning grammar rules and extensive skills-based lessons, both of which are aspects missing in gaming. For fear of syllabus and time constraints, teachers seem to restrict their teaching to efficient rather than innovative methods (Casé, 2014; JGCC, 2012; Milatonic, 2012; Takeuchi & Vaala, 2014; Wastiau et al. 2009). Another parameter militating against games is classroom management (Watson et al., 2013). Students who play games can be full of energy, quite noisy and lacking strict discipline. Under these circumstances, teacher may feel afraid to lose control of the situation (Beavis et al., 2014). These parameters are opposed to a teacher-centered classroom as they leave the floor to students to be creative and become responsible for their own learning and requires new methods of assessment according to games specifications (Csapó et al., 2012).

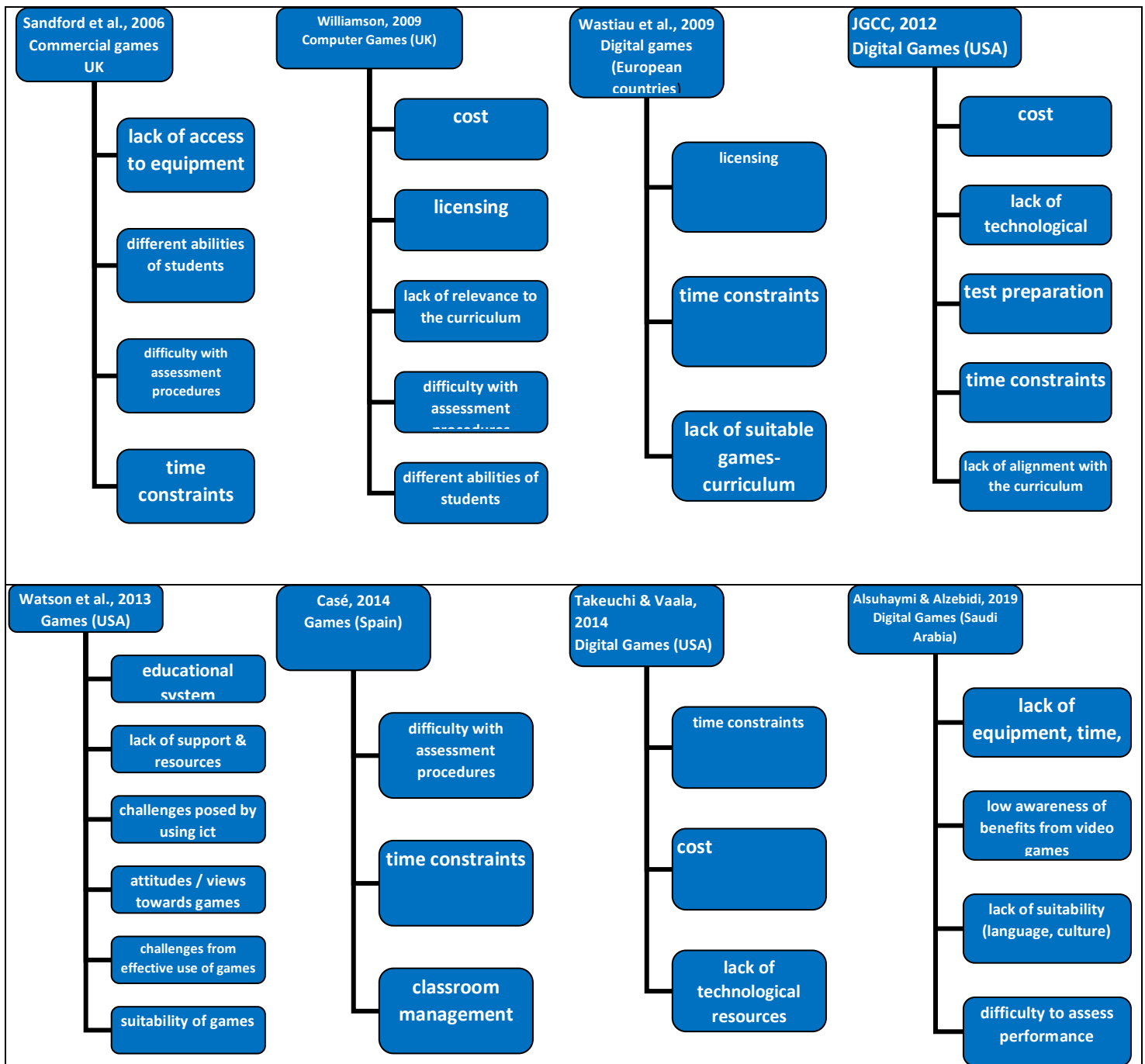


Figure 1: A visual presentation of barriers in the use of games

The surge of students' interest in digital games has been alarming to some researchers who assume this kind of games boost anti-social behavior and are addictive. Although that could be an understatement based on misconceptions about technology as a whole, there are teachers who condemn digital games

and highlight the case of potentially vulnerable students (Williamson, 2009). The fast-paced technological innovations in tandem with lack of experience with ICT could be an inhibitor to teachers' decision to integrate technology of any form in their lessons (Mumtaz, 2000). Thus, inadequate teacher training justifies teachers' reluctance to implement game-based lessons. If cultural appropriacy is examined, lack of suitability is to some extent a well-grounded reason for the teachers to avoid some digital games (Awan, 2011). In countries like China and Saudi Arabia, local language and cultural identity are reasons to avoid digital games, especially those which express and portray the Western world (Alsuhaymi & Alzebidi, 2019, Chengxin, 2016/2017).

To cater for the needs of students, practical matters are to be examined. When a digital or non-digital game is chosen, equipment requirements are important. Not only are teachers skeptical in relation to the equipment readily available in their teaching contexts but without any financial support they often cannot afford to buy materials and gadgets which may differ from game to game (JGCC, 2012; Takeuchi & Vaala, 2014; Williamson, 2009). To make matters even more complicated in terms of finances, digital games are accompanied with licensing with limited time validity (Wastiau et al., 2009). Last but not least, lack of relevance to the teachers' objectives is an additional constraint to playing games (Mozelius et al., 2017).

3. Research design

3.1. Purpose of the study

The research presented in this paper focuses on using games as an educational tool and explores teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards playing games in the context of primary EFL education in Greece. To investigate teachers' views the research questions formulated are as follows:

- 1) What are Greek EFL teachers' attitudes towards games and digital games?
- 2) What are Greek EFL teachers' perceptions about the way games can be used?
- 3) What factors/barriers influence teachers' choices and use of games?

3.2. Research instrument: The questionnaire

In an attempt to collect factual, behavioural and attitudinal data a questionnaire was designed. It comprised close-ended questions which are easy to analyse statistically and minimize the chances for ambiguous responses often associated with open-ended questions (Dornyei, 2003). They also minimize the researcher's subjectivity which could potentially interfere in the research. There were four types of questions: checklists, numeric items, Likert scale items and a rank order scale. An electronic version was created using Google Forms and was distributed to teachers from various locations in Greece to collect efficient and accurate data. The purpose of the research was outlined in a cover letter accompanying the questionnaire. Emphasis was placed on the confidentiality and anonymity issues as well as on the value of the participants' role.

The questionnaire comprised six sections. An effort was made to order questions according to increasing difficulty as Bell (2005) proposed. In Section I participants completed personal information in check boxes. The following four sections included four- or five- item Likert scale questions. In Section II teachers gave details about the equipment available in their teaching settings along with the frequency

of computer use and online games played at school and at home. The questions in Section III referred to playing games in class (frequency, age and level of students involved) as well as the types of games and the teaching objectives they can serve according to Lewis and Benson's classification (1999). In the next two sections (IV and V) information about teachers' beliefs about students and computers and about special features of games (both traditional and digital) was collected. For space economy, the choices appeared next to the question items as presentation of choices does not have an impact on the answers (Javeau, 2000, p. 115). In the final section, teachers were given nine reasons why they might avoid playing games and had to rank them in order of importance.

Following the guidelines given in the literature, wording, length and piloting were considered. Each statement was four to twelve words long and idioms as well as words with negative connotations were eliminated. Present tenses and active voice were preferred throughout the questionnaire (Debaty 1967 quoted in Javeau, 2000). In its printed form, the questionnaire was 4-page long and after piloting it with colleagues it was estimated that ten minutes was enough time to complete all parts.

3.3. Participants

Convenience and snowball sampling were selected as the most appropriate means to explore the views of primary EFL teachers who live and work in different geographical areas of Greece. The questionnaire, which was designed by the author, became available online between December 2014 and March 2015, and was completed by a total of 164 teachers, 150 female and 14 male. Nearly half of the participants were between 31 and 40 years old and had been teaching for more than 25 years. State school EFL teachers comprised the majority of the sample and most of them held a Master's Degree and a computer skills certificate.

3.4. Data analysis

The data were analysed using SPSS 19. Frequency was analysed in the first four sections while Cronbach's alpha co-efficient was estimated for sections IV ($\alpha = .520$) and V ($\alpha = .714$) of the questionnaire (see Appendix) to check internal consistency of the questions.

4. Presentation of Findings and Discussion

4.1. Teachers' attitude towards traditional and digital games

The findings suggest that computers are treated as assistive means to the teachers' purposes. The vast majority of the participants take advantage of the resources they can find through computers both in their life and their lessons. In a similar vein, Korean teachers favour computers and online resources (Shin & Shon, 2007). As far as equipment is concerned, the availability of a computer lab did not coincide with a more frequent arrangement of a lesson there. A wireless connection and an interactive whiteboard (IWB) though, correlated with a higher frequency of playing online games ($p < .001$). An analogous trend was detected in the USA where IWBs occupied the second position in a national survey regarding the devices teachers prefer for digital games (Takeuchi & Vaala, 2014).

From the teachers' viewpoint, students treat computers as a resource of information as they do (59,1% Agree, 13,4% Strongly agree). In addition, those teachers who realised that their students were fond of

games, engaged them in digital games more often (Question 8 & 13, $p = .001$, Questions 8 & 14, $p = .009$). Not surprisingly, the teachers who play online games more frequently are those who give digitally prepared handouts to their students ($p = .001$). Yet, despite the beneficial and enjoyable features which are attributed to games in literature, in this study a number of participants feared that computer games may have an addictive nature. This was especially true among those teachers who had their computer skills certified ($p = .034$). That attitude might be a spurious conclusion due to the widespread use of computers and mobile devices by young people in Greece. Contrary to previous research by Awan (2011), the correlation between gaming as a free time activity and students' engagement in online games was not significant in this study. As regards the frequency of playing games, the data showed that half of the participants play games in class once or twice a month (45,7%) (Chart 1). As far as the setting is concerned, in private schools pupils are more often engaged in playful activities ($p = .017$) as the quality of the learning experiences is highly valued (Tsairi, 2007) and there is more room for amusement given the fact that English is taught on a daily basis in these schools.

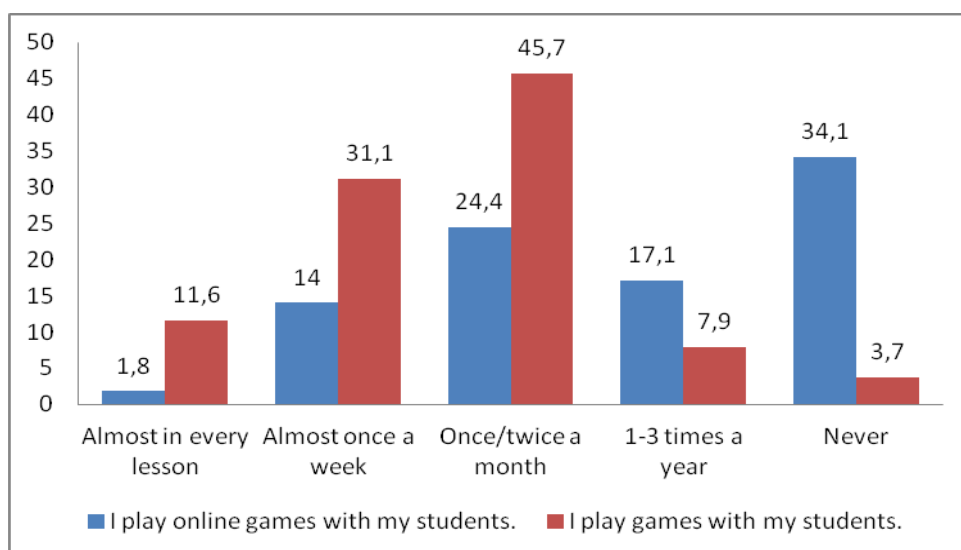


Chart 1: The percentage of teachers playing traditional and online games

Teachers' age is another parameter that seems to affect the choice of playing games as older teachers tend to play fewer games ($p = .038$). Regarding students' level, a sharp drop is observed in the occurrence of playful activities between A2 and B1 level of the Common European Framework (CEFR) in the private sector. Learners' level, then, can be a decisive factor as a demanding syllabus can hinder teachers from incorporating entertaining and relaxing activities in their lessons (Milatonić, 2012).

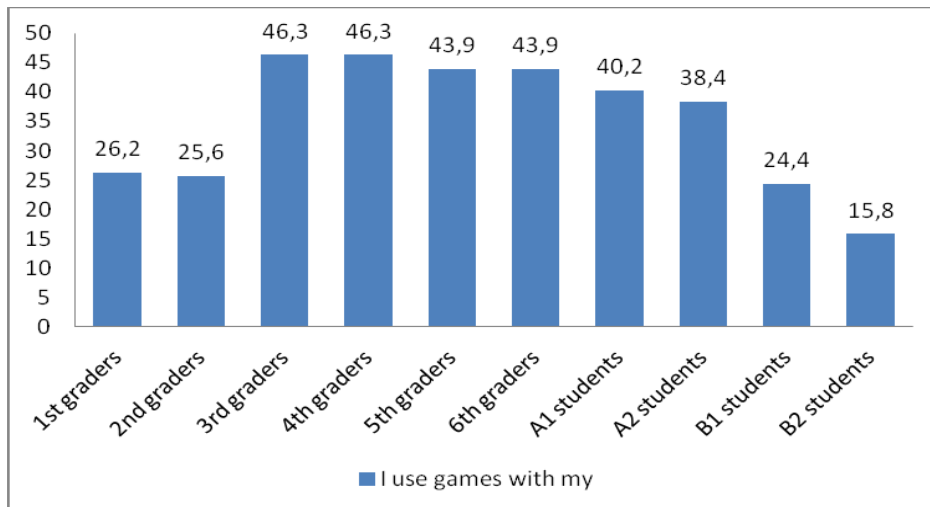


Chart 2: Grades and levels of students engaged in games more often

4.2. Teachers' perceptions about the use of games

The way teachers select their material is associated to their objectives. The games which were favoured by the teachers in the sample are word games, team games, guessing games and other games not included in the classification of Lewis and Bedson (1999). Having recognized the fun element of playful activities, half of the respondents reported that they always use them to entertain students and help them relax. Besides amusement, nearly 50% of the participants teach, practise and develop their students' vocabulary through games. In a regressing order, team games ($p = .005$), guessing games ($p = .02$) and singing and chanting games ($p = .036$) are the types of games applied in the introductions and practice of new words while word games were marginally correlated to being appropriate for revision and consolidation purposes ($p = .034$) (Charts 3 and 4).

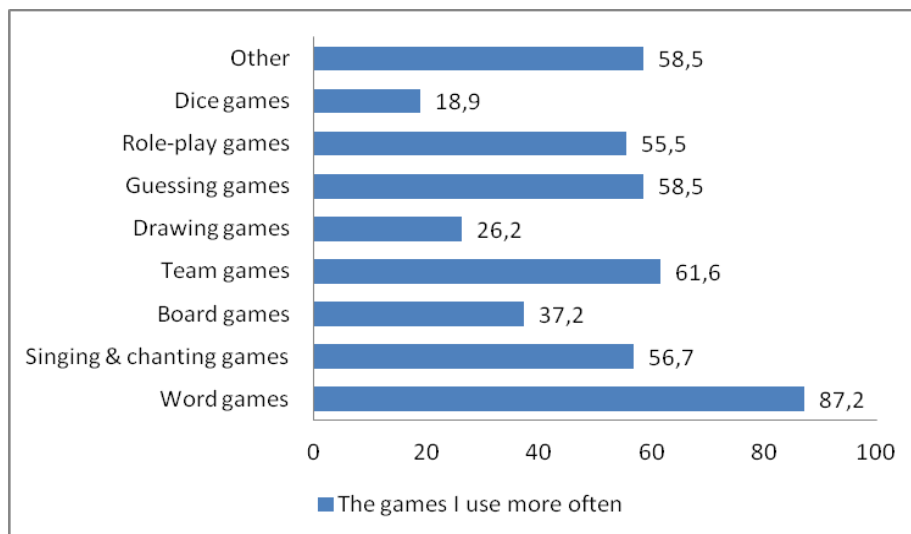


Chart 3: Types of games teachers use more frequently (percentage)

Unlike vocabulary, grammar, is not so commonly associated or revised through games. The data suggest that the traditional approaches are mostly used in teaching grammar. As Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) had claimed in the past, teachers advocate the beneficial role of games, yet, they stick to rules while teaching grammar.

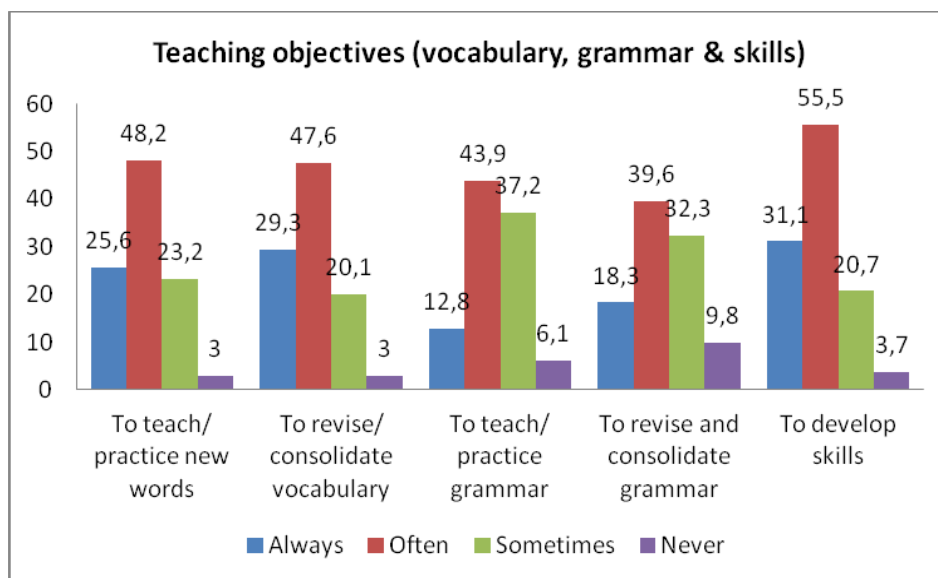


Chart 4: The frequency of using games for particular teaching objectives

Regarding other benefits of using games, most teachers expressed their skepticism about the contribution of games to autonomous learning and the idea of independent learning while playing displayed a low correlation to using games for assessment purposes ($p < .001$). (Neither agree or disagree 34,1% vs Agree 17,1% and Strongly agree 2,4%).

4.3. Factors influencing teachers' choices and use of games

In the last part of the questionnaire, the participants had to order nine statements describing the reasons forcing them to avoid playing games in class according to their importance. According to *Figure 2*, time constraints was the most prevailing reason teachers highlighted no matter what their age, experience, academic qualifications and ICT knowledge was. Lack of the necessary equipment was ranked second as a barrier, corroborating findings in other studies (JGCC, 2012; Sandford et al., 2006, Takeuchi & Vaala, 2014). It is self-evident that this is true about digital games and not about simpler games which require simple stationary found in any classroom, like a pen and paper or chalk and blackboard. Almost equally significant is the factor of noise caused while playing games. This factor appeared in the third place and does not seem to be connected to teachers' age or years of experience as one might expect. Older and more experienced teachers, though, are cautious towards using games with mixed abilities classes and are more worried about monitoring students' progress than younger participants (fifth and sixth statements in *Figure 2*). This trend could be attributed to the different methodology teachers have been trained to use and a general difficulty to follow changes over time (Lee, 2017).

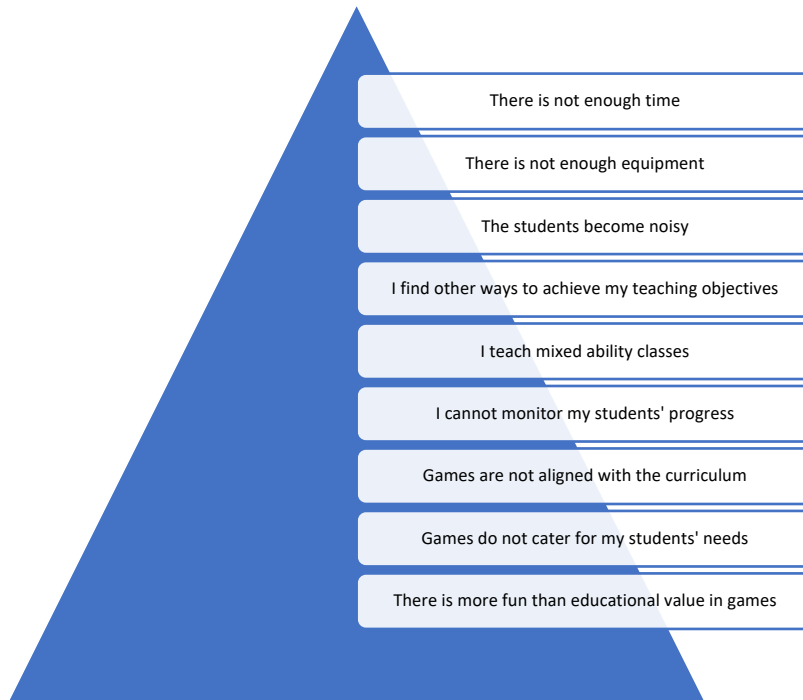


Figure 2: A visual presentation of barriers in the use of games (in order of frequency from top to bottom)

On the whole, the research findings have brought forth the positive attitude of teachers towards games. Yet, there are elements that require our attention. A prime example is the entertaining feature of games. To be more specific, although the participants admitted employing games to relax and have fun with their students, they rejected the entertaining attributes of games to a certain extent. Perhaps, a game is treated as a tool which can be entertaining if the teacher wants to have fun but it does not have such attributes per se. Similarly, access to a computer lab might only partially contribute to engaging students to games as lack of equipment was reported to be a shared demand of almost all teachers including those whose schools have an equipped computer lab. If students have ICT lessons on the same day they have English lessons, the pure existence of computers does not suffice for being at the position to using them. All in all, we can argue that teachers' responses indicated needs of improvement not only in teaching practices through training but also in foreign language education in general. By attending, game-based courses EFL teachers could expand their knowledge on ways to create and adapt games depending on their teaching objectives. Likewise, they would feel confident enough to manage their classes and learn how to assess their students' performance in games. To embrace the idea of using games as an integral part of the curriculum, teachers should be supported by the Ministry of Education and policy makers both practically, through reformations in the curriculum, and financially, by financing the purchase of equipment and resources.

5. Concluding remarks

As it has been discussed, teachers are in favour of games in class especially of non-digital ones and their choices hinge on their teaching goals which have been outlined together with certain features the teachers ascribe to games. An attempt to compare the findings to previous research revealed the international character of teachers' reasons for not using games. The Greek teachers' views on virtual reality games (VR games) would be an interesting area of future research given their international character which allows live communication of players from different countries. The educational benefits students could accrue from their engagement in this type of games could be more realistically examined after training teachers on playing VR games. There is certainly a lot of room for future research on playful activities given their popularity among people of various ages.

References

- Afentouli, A. (2009). 'Exploring behavior and motivation through games to students in the 1st grade of Junior High School.' Unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Patras: Hellenic Open University.
- Al-Seghayer, K. (2001). 'The Effect of Multimedia Annotation modes on L2 Vocabulary Acquisition: A comparative study.' *Language Learning & Technology*, 5/1 (Jan 2001), 202-232, at <http://llt.msu.edu/vol5num1/alseghayer/>, accessed 20 August 2020.
- Alsuyhaymi, D. & Alzebedi, A. (2019). 'Saudi Teachers' Perceptions Regarding adopting Digital Games in Teaching Practice.' *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 18/4: 62-69.
- Author (2015). 'Using computer games to develop young learners' linguistic and cognitive skills.' Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, Patras: Hellenic Open University.
- Awan, R. N. (2011). 'Can playing computer based games positively affect ICT attitudes amongst teachers? A case study of teachers experiences using educational multimedia games as teaching and learning resources in Dubai public schools.' 2nd Conference on Education and Management Technology *IPEDR*, Vol 13, IACSIT Press. Singapore, 226-234.
- Bell, J. (2005). *Doing your research Project: A guide for first time researchers in education, health and social science*. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press .
- Beavis, C., Rowan, L, Dezuanni, M., McGillivray, C., O' Mara, J., Prestridge, S., Stieler-Hunt, C., Thompson, R. & Zagami, J. (2014). 'Teachers' beliefs about the Possibilities and limitations of Digital Games in Classrooms.' *E-learning and Digital Media*, 11/6.
- Brown, G. & Harris, L. R. (2014). 'The future of self-assessment in classroom practice: Reframing self-assessment as a core competency.' *Frontline Learning Research*, 2/1, at <https://journals.sfu.ca/flr/index.php/journal/article/view/24/81>, accessed 20 August 2020.
- Brown, S. L. & Vaughan, C. C. (2009). *Play: how it shapes the brain, opens the imagination and incorporates the soul*. New York: Avery.
- Casé, C. (2014). 'The Educational Value of Games and Songs: The perceptions of teachers.' Unpublished Final Degree Project, Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya, Spain.
- Calvo-Ferrer, J. R. (2017). 'Educational games as stand-alone learning tools and their motivational effect on L2 vocabulary acquisition and perceived learning gains.' *Journal of Educational Technology*, 47/2: 264-278.

- Chengxin, L. (2016/2017). 'Attitudes towards Digital Game-based Learning of Chinese Primary School English Teachers.' Unpublished MSc Dissertation, Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Moray House School of Education.
- Csapó, B., Ainley, J., Bennet, R.E., Latour, T. & Law, N. (2012). Technological Issues for Computer-Based Assessment. In P. Griffin, B. McGaw, & Care, E. (Eds.) *Assessment and Teaching of the 21st Century Skills* (pp. 143-230). Springer Science + Media B.V.: London & New York.
- Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Debaty, P. (1967). *La mesure des attitudes*. Paris: P.U.F./Coll., de Psychologue.
- Dendrinou, B. (2013). The 'PEAP' programme: English for young learners in the Greek Primary School. Athens: RCEl, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.
- Dendrinou, B. & Karava, E. (2013). [Δενδρινού, Β. & Καραβά, Ε. (2013).] 'Ξενογλωσση Εκπαίδευση για την Προώθηση της Πολυγλωσσίας στην Ελλάδα Σήμερα: Προσεγγίσεις και πρακτικές διδασκαλίας.' at rcel.enl.uoa.gr/xenesglosses/guide.htm accessed 25 May 2015
- Dornyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Ertmer, P. A.-L., Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A. T., Sadik, O., Sendurur, E. & Sendurur, P. (2012). 'Teacher beliefs and technology integration practices: A critical relationship.' *Computers & Education*, 59: 423-435.
- Javeau, C. (2000). *Η έρευνα με ερωτηματολόγιο: Το εγχειρίδιο του καλού ερευνητή*. ΑΘΗΝΑ: τυπωθήτω-ΓΙΩΡΓΟΣ ΔΑΡΔΑΝΟΣ.
- JGCC (the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop), (2012). *Teacher Attitudes about Digital Games in the Classroom*. New York: The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop.
- Juul, J. (2001). 'Games Telling Stories? A brief note on games and narratives.' *Game Studies*, at <http://www.gamestudies.org/0101/juul-gts/>, accessed 20 August 2020.
- Koufopoulou, P. (2015). 'Using computer games to develop young learners' linguistic and cognitive skills.' Unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Patras: Hellenic Open University.
- Langran, J. & Purcell, S. (1994). *Language Games and Activities*. London: CILT.
- Lee, J.S. (2017). 'Informal, digital learning of English and second language vocabulary outcomes: Can quantity conquer quality?' *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50/2: 1-12.
- Levy, M. (2009). 'Technologies in use for Second Language Learning.' *The Modern Language Journal*, 93/s1: 769-782.
- Lewis C. & Bedson, G. (1999). *Games for Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maslow, A.H. (1943). 'A theory of human motivation.' *Psychological Review*, 50: 370-396.
- McGonigal, J. (2011). *Reality is broken: why games make us better and how they can change the world*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Michail, M. (2010). 'The influence of games on affective factors in Greek children of third grade in primary education.' Unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Patras: Hellenic Open University.
- Milatonić, B. (2012). 'Games in Foreign Language Classroom.' In A. Biagini, G. Motta, A. Cartney, & A. Vagnini (Eds.) *2nd International Conference on Human and Social Sciences*, 84-87.
- Mohsen, M.A. (2016). 'The Use of Computer-Based Simulation to Aid Comprehension and Incidental Vocabulary Learning.' *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 54/6: 863-884, at <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1113015>, accessed 20 August 2020.
- Mozelius, P., Hernandez, W., Sällström, J. & Hellerstedt, A. (2017). 'Teacher attitudes toward Game-based learning in history education.' *International Journal of Information and Communication Technologies in Education*, 6/4: 27-35.
- Mumtaz, S. (2000). 'Factors affecting teachers' use of information and communications technology: a review of the literature.' *Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education*, 9 (3), 319-342.

- Ramantani, C. (2012). 'Games and role plays as teaching means to help shy and demotivated adult learners overcome their speaking problems in the EFL classroom.' Unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Patras: Hellenic Open University.
- Reese, H. W. (2011). 'The learning-by-doing principle.' *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, 17/1: 1-19.
- Reinders, H. (2017). Digital Games and Second Language Learning. In S Thorne & S. May (Eds.) *Language, Education and Technology*. Encyclopedia of Language and Education (3rd ed.) (pp.329-343). Springer, Cham.
- Rixon, S. (1981). *How to use games in language teaching*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Sandford, R. U., Ulicsak, M., Facer, K. & Rudd, T. (2006). *Teaching with Games: Using Commercial off-the-shelf computer games in formal education*. FutureLab.
- Serderidou, N. (2013). 'Exploring the use of games in the EFL textbook 'English 4th Grade for the State Primary School.' Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, Patras: Hellenic Open University.
- Shin, H.-J. & Shon, J. B. (2007). 'EFL teachers' perceptions & perspectives on Internet-Assisted Language Teaching.' *CALL-EJ Online*, 8/2 (January 2007): 1-13.
- Silvers, S. M. (1982). 'Games for the classroom and the English-speaking club.' *English Teaching Forum*, 20/2: 29-33.
- Takeuchi, L., & Vaala, S. (2014). *Level up learning: A national survey on teaching with digital games*. New York: The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop.
- Tomlinson, C. & Eidson, C. C. (2003). *Differentiation in Practice*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Tsairi, K. (2007). 'Fostering young learners' (aged 9-10) communicative skills through games.' Unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Patras: Hellenic Open University.
- Vasalou, A., Holmes, W. Khaled, R. & Gooch, D. (2017). 'Digital Games-Based Learning for Children With Dyslexia: A Social Constructivist Perspective On Engagement and Learning During Group-Play.' *Computers & Education*, 114, 175-192.
- Wastiau, P. K., Kearney, C. & Van de Berrghe, W. (2009). *How are digital games used in schools?* Brussels: European Schoolnet EUN Partnership.
- Watson, W. R, Yang, S., & Ruggiero, D. (2013). 'Games in schools: Teachers' Perceptions of Barriers to Game-based Learning.' *Journal of Interactive Learning Research*, 27/2: 157-170.
- Williamson, B. (2009). *Computer games, schools, and young people: A report for eductaors on using games for learning*. Bristol: Futurelab.
- Wright, A. B., Betteridge, D. & Buckby, M. (2006). *Games for language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yolageldili, G. & Arikan, A. (2011). 'Effectiveness of games in teaching grammar to Young Learners.' *İlköğretim Online*, 10/1: 219-229.

Appendix I

Questionnaire

THE USE OF GAMES IN THE PRIMARY EFL CLASSROOM

I) PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please check the appropriate boxes.

1) Gender

Male

Female

2) Age

21-30

31-40

41-50

51 ≥

3) Current Employment

State school

Private School

Foreign Language School

Private tuition

Other (Please specify) _____

4) Years of Teaching Experience

1-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

21-25

26 ≥

5) Academic Qualifications

TEFL / CELTA Certificate

University Degree

Master's Degree in process

Master's Degree

PhD in progress

PhD

Other (Please specify) _____

6) ICT Qualifications

Educational Technology course

ICT Certification ECDL

ΤΠΕ – Α

ΤΠΕ – Β

Other

Please specify _____

II) AVAILABILITY OF EQUIPMENT

Please check the appropriate boxes.

7) I have a personal computer

a laptop

a tablet/ iPad

8a) In my teaching context there is

a computer in the teachers' office

a computer lab **If yes, answer also 8b.**

an interactive whiteboard in my classroom

an interactive whiteboard in a classroom I can use

wifi connection to the Internet **If yes, answer also 8c.**

internet connection in the computer lab

8b) I have lessons in the computer lab every

never 1-3 times once/twice almost once almost in

a year a month a week lesson

8c) I play online games with my students every

never 1-3 times once/twice almost once almost in

a year a month a week lesson

9) I use a computer in my free time to

- entertain myself
- play games
- communicate with friends
- find information on the Internet
- prepare handouts for my lessons
- find material for my lessons
- upload material
- Other _____

III) TARGET GROUP & KINDS OF GAMES

Please check the appropriate boxes.

10a) I play games with my students almost in every lesson 1-3 times a week once /twice a month almost once a year never

If yes,

10b) I use games with my

(For state/ private school teachers) 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th graders

(For language school teachers) A1 A2 B1 B2 students

10c) The game(s) I use more often is/are Word games Drawing games
Singing & chanting games Guessing games
Board games Role-play games
Team games Dice games

Other _____

10d) I use games with my students

to help them relax	always <input type="checkbox"/>	often <input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>
to have fun	always <input type="checkbox"/>	often <input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>
to teach /practise new words	always <input type="checkbox"/>	often <input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>
to teach / practise grammar	always <input type="checkbox"/>	often <input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>
to develop skills	always <input type="checkbox"/>	often <input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>
to revise / consolidate vocabulary	always <input type="checkbox"/>	often <input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>
to revise / consolidate grammar	always <input type="checkbox"/>	often <input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>

IV) MY BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENTS & COMPUTERS

Please check the appropriate boxes.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree
11) Students enjoy using a computer.					
12) Students use a computer to find information.					
13) Students are interested in playing digital games in class.					
14) Students are interested in playing digital games at home.					
15) Traditional games can benefit dyslexic students.					
16) Computer games can benefit dyslexic students.					
17) High performing students can benefit more than low performing ones					
18) Students can easily become addicted to computer games.					

V) MY BELIEFS ABOUT GAMES & SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF GAMES

Please check the appropriate boxes.

Through games in the EFL classroom students	Strongly agree	agree	neither agree or disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
19) can improve their communication skills					
20) can improve their spelling skills					
21) can improve their listening skills					
22) can improve their writing skills					
23) can improve their reading skills					
24) can practise what they already know					
25) can learn expressions, phrasal verbs, collocations etc.					
26) can learn without their teacher					
27) can assess themselves					
28) can relax					
29) are more eager to participate in classwork					

	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree
30) Commercial (non-educational) games can be used to teach in the primary classroom.					
31) Educational games are the only ones suitable for classroom use.					
32) Traditional games are more appropriate to my teaching context than digital games.					

VI) REASONS **NOT** TO PLAY GAMES IN CLASS

Why don't you use games in class? Please put the following reasons in order of importance to you. Start from 1 the most important to 9 the least important.

- There is not enough time.
- The students become noisy.
- There is not enough equipment.
- I teach mixed ability classes.
- Games do not cater for my students' needs.
- Games are not aligned with the curriculum.
- There is more fun than educational value in games.
- I find other ways to achieve my teaching objectives.
- I cannot monitor my students' progress through games.

Thank you very much for your help!

Yiota Koufopoulou (koufopoulouyiota@gmail.com) holds a BA in English Language and Literature, University of Athens (2004), a BA in Psychology, University of Athens (2011) and an M.Ed. in TESOL from the Hellenic Open University (2015). She has been teaching English since 2004 in foreign language schools and the public sector. She is currently working as an English teacher in a Primary School in Syros, Cyclades. Her interests revolve around young learners, the use of technology and specific learning difficulties.

Evangelia Karagianni (evangeka@yahoo.co.uk) holds a Ph.D. in Teacher Development (University of Athens) and an M. Ed. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Hellenic Open University). She is an IKY (2004-2008) and Fulbright (2017) scholar. She has taught English in state Primary Schools for more than 25 years. She currently serves as an Education Coordinator of EFL teachers in East Attica and she also tutors EFL teachers at the HOU Master's programme. She co-authored *Beta English & Think Teen* (coursebooks used in state schools). She also participated in the compilation of the new Foreign Languages Curriculum for the Ministry of Education the update of the teaching material for the Master's programme of HOU and the design and production of a MOOC on Distance School Education. She has published papers in peer-reviewed journals and presented her work in numerous conferences. Her current professional interests lie in teaching young learners, the use of ICT in FL learning/ teaching, teacher training and teacher development.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 238-250

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

The practicum as a motivating force to choose teaching English as a career

Stamatia KLANGOU & Areti-Maria SOUGARI

This paper aims to explore the motivational forces that drive university students pursuing studies in English language and literature to follow teaching as a career by looking into the similarities and differences in their views among those students who have completed their practicum as part of their undergraduate studies and those who have not done so. It is interesting to delve into the aspects that motivate a young person to choose teaching English as a career since the future of the young generation depends widely on their choice of occupation. 140 students in their third and fourth year of studies in the School of English took part in this study. 74 had not opted for the practicum, while 66 had done so and had completed it. Based on the findings, both groups are motivated by altruistic views and the fact that they consider English to be an important subject both for them and their future learners. The ability to teach is another essential factor for them, while opportunities and meaningful relationships do not seem to play an important role for their choice. However, their personality seems to be a more motivating factor for those who had completed the practicum.



Το άρθρο αυτό αποτελεί μια προσπάθεια διερεύνησης των κινήτρων που ωθούν τους φοιτητές να ακολουθήσουν τη διδασκαλία των αγγλικών ως επάγγελμα εξετάζοντας τις ομοιότητες και τις διαφορές ανάμεσα στους φοιτητές οι οποίοι έχουν πραγματοποιήσει την πρακτική τους άσκηση στο πλαίσιο των προπτυχιακών τους σπουδών και σε αυτούς που δεν την έχουν επιλέξει. Είναι ενδιαφέρον να εξετάσουμε διεξοδικά τα κίνητρα ενός νέου ανθρώπου να επιλέξει τη διδασκαλία των αγγλικών ως επάγγελμα. 140 φοιτητές που σπουδάζουν Αγγλική Γλώσσα και Φιλολογία πήραν μέρος στην έρευνα. 74 δεν είχαν παρακολουθήσει το μάθημα της Πρακτικής και 66 φοιτητές είχαν ολοκληρώσει την πρακτική τους άσκηση. Σύμφωνα με τα αποτελέσματα, και οι δυο ομάδες φοιτητών έχουν αλtruιστικά κίνητρα και θεωρούν ότι τα αγγλικά αποτελούν ένα ενδιαφέρον μάθημα τόσο για τους ίδιους όσο και για τους μελλοντικούς μαθητές τους. Η διδακτική ικανότητα αποτελεί επίσης ένα σημαντικό παράγοντα για την επιλογή τους, ενώ αντίθετα οι ευκαιρίες και οι ουσιαστικές σχέσεις δεν φαίνεται να τους επηρεάζουν σε σημαντικό βαθμό. Παρ'όλα αυτά, η προσωπικότητα φαίνεται να αποτελεί σημαντικό κίνητρο στους φοιτητές οι οποίοι

έχουν πραγματοποιήσει την Πρακτική Άσκηση σε αντίθεση με αυτούς που δεν έχουν παρακολουθήσει το συγκεκριμένο μάθημα.

Key words: practicum, motivation to choose teaching English as a career, similarities and differences

1. Introduction

Motivation has been an interesting theme of investigation since the 1970s (Bess, 1977), and various fields such as Linguistics and Psychology have put the issue of motivation under the lens (Dörnyei, 2006). In the linguistic field, many researchers have tried to shed light on the motivational forces that drive learners to learn a foreign language as well as the forces that drive teachers to teach a foreign language. However, not much research has been conducted in the examination of the motivation of university students who wish to follow teaching English as a career (Demiröz & Yeşilyurt, 2012, Gürsoy, 2013).

The present study is part of a research that was conducted in order to investigate the beliefs and motivation of students of English in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki to follow teaching English as a career in a country with poor economy in the past few years. It is important to look into the motivational patterns that lead university students to follow this career, since their choice of occupation is one that will play an important role in their lives. In this paper, their motivation will be examined in relation to having completed their practicum, which is offered to the students of the School of English in the fourth year of studies in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In other words, it is necessary to see if the completion of the practicum is related to their choice of profession.

More particularly, this study investigates the motivation of 140 students of English while pursuing their studies towards the attainment of a BA degree in English Language and Literature in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in order to follow teaching English as a career. Their motivation is tested in relation to “Intrinsic value”, “Job benefits”, “Meaningful relationships”, “Altruistic views”, “Ability”, and “Opportunities”. Taking all of these into consideration, this paper attempts to answer the following question: Is there a difference in motivation between the students who have completed the practicum and those who have not completed it?

2. Motivation to choose teaching English as a career

In the past, various voices questioned whether teaching a foreign language constitutes a career. In a study conducted in Poland some years ago, the results were divergent since the researcher concluded that in some countries, such as Greece, Mexico, Russia, Korea and the United States of America, teaching English is considered to be a career, whereas in other countries, such as Germany and Japan, it is not thought to be a career (Johnston, 1977). Their opinions varied, since there were some teachers who connected the profession to the teaching experience and others who thought that commitment to work entailed performing their daily duties. Moreover, several teachers claimed that due to the fact that they could not make ends meet, they also offered private lessons, while altruistic reasons to choose teaching were viewed with irony by some of them.

Teaching as a career and the reasons that lead a young student to follow it has been the research focus of many studies in the past. For instance, altruistic reasons have been found to be among the most important factors that motivate undergraduate students to follow teaching as a career (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). It seems that teaching is considered to be important for the improvement of society and that learners' success is of great importance. These altruistic factors have been connected with intrinsic motivation, which is defined as "doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence" (Ryan & Deci, 2000: 56). The motivational characteristics that are linked with intrinsic motivation are the teachers' need to use their expertise in the field by providing quality and creative learning. The only reward or praise that is expected by intrinsically motivated teachers is their learners' success for the benefit of society.

Another category of motivation is the extrinsic one which is defined as "doing an activity for the attainment of a separable outcome" (ibid). This "separable outcome" includes factors like the salary and long holidays constituting an instrumental type of motivation. It can be assumed that teachers (or students who wish to become teachers) may not be motivated by forces which belong to one sole category. One's goal may be his or her students' success, but it is also quite possible that they expect the salary at the end of the month or the holidays at the end of the school year (Thomson, Turner & Neitfeld, 2011). This view mirrors an individual driven by several factors which fall into both categories (i.e. altruistic views and opportunities) but what may differ is the degree to which each factor motivates each teacher. However, there are opposing views that resulted in a contrast between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci, 1971; Weiner, 1985).

In an attempt to find the motivational forces that lead future teachers of various disciplines in a British university to follow this particular career, it was concluded that those participants who expressed their will to follow teaching as a career were motivated by intrinsic factors claiming their contribution to the society by following a profession, which they considered to be enjoyable (Kyriacou & Coulthart, 2000). On the contrary, those students who were not willing to become teachers claimed that promotion and earnings could be a motivating factor for them.

Another study, which was conducted in Turkey among prospective teachers of various subjects, showed that these teachers' interest in the subject they teach, the methods they use and education itself were related to their effort and persistence to succeed, to their ambitions and to the satisfaction they get from this profession (Eren, 2012). Educational programmes were thought to be of great value, since it feels they would be more prepared when they would be asked to enter the classroom as they would be called to connect their theoretical background with practice. To this end, Housego (1990) came to the conclusion that prospective teachers feel indeed more prepared after attending an educational programme and that their feelings towards the profession may change after one year of studies.

Teaching English as a profession and the motivation of future teachers of English was the focus of a study in Slovenia (Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998). In this study, it became apparent that due to being intrinsically motivated future teachers of English considered their subject enjoyable and important to the extent that it could lead to their students' success. Extrinsic motivation was also present since they claimed that they liked the varied work pattern this profession may offer. A very interesting finding was that they felt the need to familiarise their learners with the English culture as English is considered an international language.

Few future teachers of English claimed that they had been influenced by their family or peers to follow this profession.

Moreover, it seems that even though motivation has been widely researched among learners of foreign languages and what motivates them, there is not much research on what motivates university students to choose teaching English as their profession. In the same path, there are studies on the beliefs about teaching in general, but not so much research on the beliefs about teaching as a career. This conclusion has also been drawn in a recent article on a study that was carried out in Turkey (Gürsoy, 2013). It was concluded that it is important to explore the motivation and the attitude towards teaching English, since the teachers' motivation can enhance students' motivation in turn and pave their way to successful learning. Gürsoy also concluded that lower integrative motivation may show professional readiness because an internal wish to learn is connected to teaching efficacy. Therefore, more research should be conducted in order to help learners succeed under the guidance of motivated teachers with positive views about teaching as a career.

The lack of substantial research on teachers' motivation has been acknowledged in another study, which was also conducted in Turkey (Demiröz & Yeşilyurt, 2012). The findings of this study brought to light that in-service teachers of English in Turkey adopt mastery goal orientation, which is considered to be interrelated with autonomy in asking for help in the professional field, as well as a need to promote learning and professional development. Moreover, it was found that they seem to have low mean scores in ability avoidance (i.e. to avoid showing inferior ability in relation to colleagues) and work avoidance goal orientation (i.e. to make only a small effort in order to perform one's duties as a teacher), two factors that are related with less effort to handle academic and professional tasks. Another finding was that the instructors who had completed a postgraduate degree were less likely to adopt ability avoidance goal orientation than their colleagues who held only a Bachelor's degree. This ability avoidance goal orientation and negative patterns of motivation were positively related. This is a logical result since a teacher, who is not motivated, is not willing to put much effort in order to help his or her learners. Thus, it can be safely inferred that this type of goal orientation is not a characteristic that can assist the learning process.

3. Contextualising the study

3.1. The programme of study

The present study was conducted in the School of English in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The programme of study offers courses in several domains over an eight-semester course, i.e. (i) Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, (ii) English Literature and Culture, (iii) American Literature and Culture and (iv) Translation and Intercultural Studies. The variety of courses offers to the students the proper qualifications to gain wide knowledge on cultural, linguistic and teaching methods, which could prove valuable for their future career as teachers of English. Some of the courses offered concerning the linguistic and teaching fields are: Second Language Acquisition, Methodology of Teaching Modern Languages, The Classroom: Principles and Practice, Practice in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, which are compulsory courses, and Vocabulary Acquisition and Teaching, Syllabus Design and Material Preparation, Language Classrooms Observed, Testing and Evaluation, Assessment in the Classroom, Early Foreign Language Learning and Teaching among others, which are elective ones (<http://www.enl.auth.gr>). The students also have the opportunity to complete their practicum by attending the course.

The practicum lasts for one semester during which the students have to attend a number of seminars prior to the allocation to a particular primary or secondary school. In the past few years this course has become compulsory for the completion of studies. The aim of this course as presented on the internet site is: "...to provide student teachers with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the practicalities of teaching in the context of the primary and secondary ELT classroom in state schools" (ibid). They are allocated to a state school for eight weeks. Throughout this period, they are expected to work closely with the teacher of the school as well as with their University supervisor. The final product is the compilation of a portfolio, which includes observation reports, lesson plans, reflective practice reports, lesson comment forms, and copies of the teaching material they used in class. The portfolio reflects the student teachers' attempt to put theory into practice.

3.2. Job opportunities for graduates

Among other job opportunities, the graduates from the School of English can seek employment in the state sector as teachers in a primary and secondary school or in the private sector (i.e. private centres of foreign languages or private schools). Upon completion of their studies they can be enlisted in the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and be selected as substitute teachers before gaining a permanent position in a state school. At this point, it should be mentioned that teachers in Greece appear to be among the most hard-working teachers in Europe since it has been found that they work for more hours than many of their colleagues in other European countries. For example, according to the European Network "Eurydice", a study carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), teachers in Greece work for 24 hours per week, while teachers in Norway work for 14.5 hours and teachers in Poland work for 14 hours per week (<http://www.iefimerida.gr/news/104908>).

4. The study

4.1. Data collection and analysis

The participants who took part in this study were 140 students of the School of English of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and were in the third or fourth year of their studies. The sample was representative since it covered a 25% of the total number of students studying in the School at the time of the study (Klangou, 2015).

66 (47%) had completed the practicum, whereas 74 (53%) had not opted for the practicum since it was not a compulsory course at the time of the study. In relation to their career intentions, 67.5% of those who had not attended the practicum claimed to be committed to teaching, while 81.9% of those students who had attended this course showed their intention to become teachers of English.

Upon completion of the questionnaires, the results were analysed with the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS 16.0). The questionnaire was found to be reliable since the Cronbach alpha is .781. Motivation was analysed with the help of the T-test for independent samples, because the similarities and the differences between the two groups of students can be safely examined and can render statistically significant results. The significance level is set at $p < .05$.

4.2 Research tool

The data gathering tool was a questionnaire, which is an adapted version of the Reasons for Teaching Scale (RTS) (Kyriacou, Hultgren and Stephens 1999); this questionnaire delved into motivation issues that pertained to the beliefs held by the university students regarding their motivation to choose teaching as a career. As classified by Kyriacou et al. (1999), the questions fall into the following categories: intrinsic value, job benefits, meaningful relationships, altruistic views, ability to teach and opportunities. All the questions made use of a 5-point Likert Scale and the answers ranged from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). The questionnaire also contained some questions, which asked for personal details concerning age, gender, courses they had attended and future career plans.

5. Results

In terms of “Intrinsic value”, significant differences were yielded in the questions about the importance of the subject for prospective teachers and their students showing that the students who had attended the practicum (Group 2) considered the subject more important for themselves and their students than their counterparts (Group 1) who had not attended the course (Group 1; see Table 1).

	Questions about Motivation: Intrinsic value		M	S D	t	df	P
1.	I enjoy the subject I will teach.	Group 1	4.09	0.87	-1.75	138	0.08
		Group 2	4.33	0.70	-1.77	136.68	
2.	I can get a job as a teacher in any part of the country.	Group 1	2.94	1.01	-1.20	138	0.22
		Group 2	3.16	1.14	-1.19	131.05	
3.	The subject I will teach is important to me.	Group 1	3.90	0.70	-2.56	138	0.01
		Group 2	4.22	0.78	-2.54	131.89	
4.	The subject I will teach is an important subject for students.	Group 1	3.90	0.77	-3.75	138	0.00
		Group 2	4.36	0.64	-3.79	137.34	

Table 1: The role of “Intrinsic value” to follow teaching English as a career

It was found that in the case of Group 2, the participants enjoyed the subject they would teach more than those of Group 1; the same participants considered the high value of this particular subject. The fact that they are able to get a job as teachers of English in any part of the country did not result in significant differences between the two groups.

With regard to “Job benefits”, the participants in Group 2 appeared to be more motivated by the fact that teaching offers security and that this job is considered to have a respectable status in society. Long vacations and the certainty of being employed as teachers upon completion of their studies did not yield any significant differences (see Table 2). Interestingly, the mean scores in the question about their future employment were low compared to the results in the other questions.

	Questions about Motivation: Job benefits		Mean	SD	t	df	p
1.	Teaching offers good job security.	Group 1	3.14	0.88	-2.81	138	0.00
		Group 2	3.60	1.01	-2.79	128.73	
2.	There are long vacations.	Group 1	3.55	0.93	-0.12	138	0.89
		Group 2	3.57	1.05	-0.12	131.10	
3.	My employment as a teacher of English is assured after graduation.	Group 1	2.32	1.08	-0.70	138	0.48
		Group 2	2.45	1.09	-0.70	135.85	
4.	Teachers have a respectable social status.	Group 1	3.18	0.87	-2.39	138	0.01
		Group 2	3.56	0.96	-2.38	131.91	

Table 2: The role of "Job benefits" to follow teaching English as a career

Moreover, "Meaningful relationships" seem to play an important role for those students who had attended the practicum. It seems that they had been influenced by other people to follow this career (e.g. previous teachers, friends, family), and that their own experience as students of English was important for their choice (see Table 3).

	Questions about Motivation: Meaningful relationships		M	SD	t	df	p
1.	Family members influenced me to become a teacher.	Group 1	2.74	1.19	-0.74	138	0.00
		Group 2	2.89	1.20	-0.74	135.92	
2.	Other people influenced me to become a teacher (e.g., previous teachers, friends).	Group 1	2.62	1.14	-3.84	138	0.89
		Group 2	3.34	1.08	-3.85	137.40	
3.	It can help me to get a job teaching in another country.	Group 1	3.35	0.83	-1.39	138	0.48
		Group 2	3.56	0.94	-1.38	130.51	
4.	My experience as a student has given me a positive image of the job.	Group 1	3.36	1.04	-3.45	138	0.01
		Group 2	3.93	0.90	-3.48	137.94	

Table 3: The role of "Meaningful relationships" to follow teaching English as a career

In Table 4, it becomes apparent that both groups share similar altruistic views. However, the high mean scores in both questions of this category show that both groups consider teaching to be a noble profession that can help improve society. The level of different views in relation to this set of questions can lead to the conclusion that altruistic views can be a motivating force to become teachers of English for both groups.

	Questions about Motivation:		M	SD	t	df	p
--	-----------------------------	--	---	----	---	----	---

Altruistic views							
1.	Teaching is a noble profession.	Group 1	3.78	1.03	-1.61	138	0.10
		Group 2	4.07	1.09	-1.61	133.96	
2.	Being a teacher can help improve society.	Group 1	4.16	0.66	0.65	138	0.51
		Group 2	4.07	0.88	0.64	119.82	

Table 4: The role of “Altruistic views” to follow teaching English as a career

In terms of “Ability to teach”, the future teachers in Group 2 seem to be more motivated by the fact that they like the activity of classroom teaching as well as by the fact that they consider their personality to be suited for this career since statistically significant differences were found in these questions. Interestingly, the mean scores were high for both groups in both of these questions (see Table 5). Another important finding is the fact that both groups claimed that they are motivated by their learners’ success as the mean scores in this question were quite high (4.40 in Group 1 and 4.53 in Group 2).

Questions about Motivation: Ability to teach			M	SD	t	df	p
1.	I want to help children succeed.	Group 1	4.40	0.68	-1.13	138	0.25
		Group 2	4.53	0.61	-1.14	137.98	
2.	I like the activity of classroom teaching.	Group 1	3.82	0.88	-3.59	138	0.00
		Group 2	4.31	0.72	-3.63	137.18	
3.	I have a personality that is suited for this job.	Group 1	3.52	0.83	-3.69	138	0.00
		Group 2	4.06	0.87	-3.68	134.29	

Table 5: The role of “Ability to teach” in students’ decision to follow teaching English as a career

The last category examined was the one of “Opportunities”, which included questions about the socialisation with colleagues, the salary and the opportunity to use teaching as a stepping stone to follow another profession. The issue of salary received for the work done seems to be a motivating factor in the case of future teachers who had completed the practicum in an attempt to come into contact with their future profession (see Table 6). However, the mean scores were quite low (2.55 for Group 1 and 3.12 for Group 2). Socialisation with colleagues and the opportunity to follow a different career in the future did not yield any statistically significant differences.

In conclusion, “Altruistic views” seem to be important for the majority of future teachers and their decision to attend the practicum plays no role. It seems that two aspects play a great role in their motivation to choose teaching as a career: the enjoyment derived from the subject they will teach and the importance of the subject both for them and their students. “Job benefits” did not seem to motivate them and “Meaningful relationships” were not so important, either. In terms of “Ability to teach”, the majority of the future

teachers were motivated by their will to help their students succeed and by the fact that they enjoy teaching. Personality issues seem to have motivated students who had attended the practicum to contemplate a teaching career. Finally, “Opportunities” were not considered that important by the two groups, since both their satisfaction with the salary and the fact that teaching can lead to other jobs received low mean scores; it seems that only socialisation can be a motivating force for them.

	Questions about Motivation: Opportunities		M	S D	t	df	p
1.	The job offers opportunities to socialize with colleagues.	Group 1	3.97	0.59	0.76	138	0.44
		Group 2	3.87	0.85	0.75	114.81	
2.	The level of pay is quite good.	Group 1	2.55	0.86	-3.22	138	0.00
		Group 2	3.12	1.20	-3.16	116.07	
3.	Being a teacher can lead to other jobs in the future.	Group 1	3.36	0.88	0.19	138	0.84
		Group 2	3.33	1.04	0.19	128.21	

Table 6: The role of “Opportunities” to follow teaching English as a career

6. Discussion

Motivation to choose teaching English as a career was the scope of this study. More specifically, an attempt was made to shed some light on the similarities and differences in the motivation among university students who had gained some teaching experience through a practicum as opposed to students who had not attended such a course. In line with previous studies (Roness, 2011; Eren, 2012), the two groups had positive feelings about the subject of English, since most participants claimed they would enjoy teaching English; thus, “Intrinsic values” were shared by both groups. However, in our study those participants with a definite teaching future orientation were overall more positive about all issues regarding the intrinsic values. On the other hand, both groups were not motivated by the fact that they might find a job in any part of the country, a factor which appeared to be one of the least motivating ones for the future teachers. This could be attributed to the difficulties they might face due to the low salary they would get as new teachers as well as their allocation to remote areas. However, the future teachers who had attended the practicum were also motivated by the importance of English as a subject both for themselves as well as for their own students.

In terms of “Job benefits”, the two groups showed similar views regarding the job security offered by teaching, the long vacations and the assured employment after graduation. At this point, the findings reflect future teachers’ job insecurity and lack of assured employment after graduation. The negative feelings among the Group can be associated with the gloomy economic situation in Greece, as being appointed in the state school sector has become a far-fetched dream. As in previous studies, low pay was found to be a demotivating factor (Richardson & Watt, 2006). However, the fact that the subject of English is quite important seems to act as a driving force for future teachers who have completed the practicum.

With regard to “Meaningful relationships”, their own experience as students of English was given prominence for their career choice. The students who had completed the practicum seem to be more influenced by other people as well as by their own experience as students of English, even though they were not so highly motivated by their families, friends, their own teachers and the fact that they could get a job abroad. It seems that in previous research the findings are quite contradictory regarding the influence exercised by meaningful relationships (Kyriacou & Koberi, 1998; Stuart, 2000), showing that there is a societal difference in the degree of how someone is influenced by others to choose a career since these studies were conducted in different countries.

One of the most important findings was that “Altruistic views” were the most motivating factors for both groups. The vast majority of students claimed that they were motivated by the fact that teaching is a noble profession and by the fact that being a teacher can improve society. The positive views of both groups highlight the fact that these prospective teachers believe that they can improve society by practicing this noble profession. This finding is in line with the results related to “Student development” in previous studies (Poppleton, 1989; Spear, Good & Lee, 2000; Kyriacou & Coulthart, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Roness, 2011; van Uden, Ritzen & Pieters, 2013; Thomson & Palermo, 2014).

“Ability to teach” was also regarded by future teachers of both groups as important since they like the activity of classroom teaching and they have a personality that is suited for this job. The completion of the practicum seems to have influenced their decision-making and to have boosted their confidence in their ability to teach. The fact that they have expressed their willingness to help children succeed was one of the most motivating factors for the vast majority of the prospective teachers. This result was in line with previous research conducted in other countries (Kyriacou, Hultgren & Stephens, 1999; Thomson, Turner & Neitfeld, 2011).

“Opportunities” was seen as a motivating factor. The future teachers who had completed the practicum viewed the salary as a motivating force in order to pursue this career. However, their replies failed to reach the high levels of other questions showing that they are more motivated by other reasons such as altruistic ones. Socialising with other colleagues seemed to be an encouraging factor for both groups, while they were not able to decide if this job could lead to other jobs in the future.

In conclusion, it seems to be important that programmes like the practicum in the School of English of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, are offered in order to provide prospective graduates with an opportunity to have a first contact with the classroom. Theory and practice should coexist in every educational programme that prepares future teachers in order to familiarise with the eventualities of a future profession. Even the students who are not willing to become teachers and who would prefer to follow another profession upon graduation could gain some experience, which might be important for their future. Moreover, as previous researchers concluded (Hoy & Murphy, 2001; Cummings, 2012; Moore-Russo & Wilsey, 2014), these programmes should encourage students to reflect on their beliefs and motivation to follow teaching as a career. These results can be used to improve the educational system of a country since the opinions of the future teachers will influence the teaching practices and their learners one day.

7. Conclusion

The completion of a practicum offers the opportunity to prospective graduates to come into contact with a future profession, to put theory into practice and to contemplate their future commitment to this profession based on their personality, aspirations, abilities, and beliefs. When choosing teaching English as a career in Greece, job benefits do not play an influential role in prospective teachers' decision-making. Other factors seem to exert a certain degree of influence, which shapes prospective graduates' views about their future career choice. Thus it seems that the motivation to choose teaching English as a career is driven by intrinsic values, meaningful relationships, opportunities, and altruistic views. On the whole, university students who have an inner drive to complete their practicum as part of their undergraduate studies show more positive feelings towards teaching in general and teaching the subject of English in particular.

Teacher education programmes can offer an invaluable help to future teachers who complete a practicum as they give an opportunity to connect theory with practice. Even though some of the students of the School of English might wish to follow other careers, the engagement in the practicum can prove to be a valuable experience for their future career, as the experience gained helps people develop their knowledge and their personality.

The study of motivation and beliefs about teaching as a career can bring fruitful results to understanding why someone chooses to follow a particular profession. Once these conclusions are drawn, there will be greater understanding which may eventually assist the educational system through a study of those factors that can motivate someone to become a teacher of English. The need to help learners succeed, the love for the subject they will teach and more altruistic factors such as the ability of a teacher to improve society can also be rewarded with better working conditions in terms of resources and income. After all, the children as the future citizens of this society will gain more if they are taught by highly motivated teachers, who love their profession and enjoy working with children to help them succeed and develop their personality.

References

- Bess, J.L. (1977). The motivation to teach. *Journal of Higher Education*, 48 (3), 243-258.
- Cummings, E. (2012). "A stepping-stone to do something else" *Exploring why Jamaican student teachers enter and complete teacher education*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Toronto.
- Deci, E. L. (1971). Effects of contingent and non-contingent rewards and controls on intrinsic motivation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 8, 217-229.
- Demiröz, H. & Yeşilyurt, S. (2012). Teaching motivation of ELT instructors through goal-orientation perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 3 (2), 1-12.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2006). Individual differences in second language acquisition. *AILA Review*, 19, 42-68.
- Eren, A. (2012). Prospective teachers' interest in teaching, professional plans about teaching and career choice satisfaction: A relevant framework? *Australian Journal of Education*, 56 (3), 303-318.
- Gürsoy, E. (2013). Prospective ELT teachers' attitudes toward the English language in an EFL context. *Journal of International Education Research*, 9 (1), 107-114.

- Hoy, A. & Murphy, K. M. (2001). Teaching educational psychology to the implicit mind. In Torff, B. & Sternberg, R. (Eds.). *Understanding and teaching the intuitive mind*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 145-184.
- Housego, B. (1990). Student teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne de l' Education*, 15 (1), 37-56.
- Johnston, B. (1997). Do EFL teachers have careers? *TESOL Quarterly*, 31 (4), 681-712.
- Klangou, S. (2015). Greek students' motivation and beliefs about choosing teaching English as a career. (Unpublished M.A. dissertation). Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.
- Kyriacou, C., & Coulthard, M. (2000). Undergraduates' views of teaching as a career choice. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 26 (2), 117-126.
- Kyriacou, C. & Benmansour, N. (2002). Moroccan foreign language students' views of a career in teaching. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 3 (2), 84-95.
- Kyriacou, C., Hultgren, A., & Stephens, P. (1999). Student teachers' motivation to become a secondary school teacher in England and Norway. *Teacher Development* 3 (3), 373-381.
- Kyriacou, C. & Kobori, M. (1998). Motivation to learn and teach English in Slovenia. *Educational Studies*, 24 (3), 345-351.
- Moore-Russo, D. & Wilsey, J. (2014). Delving into the meaning of productive reflection: A study of future teachers' reflections on representations of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 37 (1), 76-90.
- Poppleton, P. (1989). Rewards and values in secondary teachers' perceptions of their job satisfaction. *Research Papers in Education*, 4 (3), 71-94.
- Richardson, P. & Watt, H. (2006). "Who chooses teaching and why? Profiling characteristics and motivations across three Australian Universities". *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 34, (1), 27-56.
- Roness, D. (2011). Still motivated? The motivation for teaching during the second year in the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27 (3), 628-638.
- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25, 54-67.
- Spear, M., Gould, K. & Lee, B. (2000). *Who would be a teacher? A review of factors motivating and demotivating prospective and practising teachers*. Berkshire: The National Foundation for Educational Research.
- Stuart, V. (2000). *Reasons for selecting a teaching career and remaining in the profession: A conversation with 10 African American Roanoke city teachers* (Doctoral dissertation). Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.
- Thomson, M., Turner, J. & Nietfield, J. (2011). A typological approach to investigate the teaching career decision: Motivations and beliefs about teaching of prospective teacher candidates. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28 (3), 324-335.
- Thomson, M. & Palermo, C. (2014). Preservice teachers' understanding of their professional goals: Case studies from three different typologies. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 44, 56-68.
- van Uden, J., Ritzen, H. & Pieters, J. (2013). 'I think I can engage my students': Teachers' perceptions of student engagement and their beliefs about being a teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 32, 43-54.
- Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion. *Psychological Review*, 92 (4), 548-573.

References in Greek

Οδηγός Σπουδών 2014-2015: <http://www.enl.auth.gr/>

Στοιχεία του δικτύου 'Ευρυδίκη': Πόσες ώρες διδάσκουν οι εκπαιδευτικοί στην Ελλάδα και στην Ευρώπη. (2013, Μάιος, 13). I efimerida. Retrieved from <http://www.iefimerida.gr/news/104908>

Stamatia Klangou (matinaklaggou@yahoo.gr) holds a B.A. in English Language and Literature and an M.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language both from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She has been teaching English in private institutions, in Second-Chance Schools and in Institutes for Vocational Education and Training. Moreover, she has been working as a substitute teacher of English in the Primary and Secondary Education. Her research interests include teacher motivation, teacher training and teaching English to young learners.

Areti-Maria Sougari (asougari@enl.auth.gr) is an associate professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, School of English, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Some of her work appears in TESOL Quarterly, Language and Education, the Journal of Applied Linguistics and other journals. Her research interests include teaching English to young learners, teacher education and development and teaching English as lingua franca



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 251-267

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

The effects of metacognitive listening strategy instruction on ESL learners' listening motivation

**Corbin Kalanikiakahi RIVERA, Grant ECKSTEIN,
David E. EDDINGTON & Benjamin L. MCMURRY**

Prior studies examining the effects of listening strategy instruction on motivation have shown a positive correlation between the two. However, the participants of these studies all shared a first language (L1) and were not enrolled in an intensive English program (IEP). This study aims to investigate the correlation between listening strategy instruction and listening motivation in an IEP classroom for students from different L1s. Listening motivation was recorded utilizing the English Listening Comprehension Motivation Scale (ELCMS), and strategy use was tracked with the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ). Pre- and post-test scores of 56 participants (control group, $n=30$; experiment group, $n=26$) were analyzed using a mixed-effects regression and paired t-test to determine differences after a 7-week treatment period. Results revealed that study participant motivation levels in both groups decreased over the treatment period, with the experiment group seeing a smaller decrease than the control group.

Key words: listening, motivation, metacognition, strategies

1. Introduction

Listening is an important skill in English language teaching that is often overlooked compared to the instruction of other core skills like reading, writing, and speaking (Flowerdew & Miller, 2013). Vandergrift & Goh (2012) observed that many classroom listening activities focus on learners' outcome of listening as opposed to the comprehension process. They further commented that, unlike reading a written text, listening does not easily allow for instructors to direct attention to certain segments of an aural passage or adequately scaffold thinking and comprehension. Although repeating and/or pausing a passage is an option, doing so can detract from the authenticity of the listening practice. They nevertheless emphasized the importance of listening as a language tool because "it enables language

learners to receive and interact with language input and facilitates the emergence of other language skills” (p. 4).

Different approaches have been used over the years to facilitate listening development. Hinkel (2006) explained that the bottom-up focus of the 1970s pedagogy emphasized the ability to “identify words, sentences boundaries, contractions, individual sounds, and sound combinations” while the focus shifted in the 1980s towards top-down skills emphasizing “listeners’ abilities to activate their knowledge-based schemata, such as cultural constructs, topic familiarity, discourse clues, and pragmatic conventions” (p.117). However, neither of these foci proved to be especially effective alone, as “learners who rely on linguistic processing often fail[ed] to activate higher order L2 schemata, and those who correctly apply schema-based knowledge tend[ed] to neglect the linguistic input” (p. 117), leading to the listening pedagogy of metacognitive listening instruction.

Metacognition is “our ability to think about our own thinking or ‘cognition’, and, by extension, to think about how we process information for a range of purposes and manage the way we do it” (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012, p. 83). Metacognitive listening, therefore, can be viewed as thinking about how individuals listen and the processes they go through to comprehend aural input. Cross (2011) described metacognitive instruction in the listening class as “teaching that focuses on actively eliciting and promoting learners’ knowledge of themselves as L2 listeners...and which provides them with direction about ways to discover how to manage their listening comprehension” (p. 408). One of the ways that L2 listeners can discover how to manage their listening comprehension is through strategy usage. Yang (2009) categorized metacognitive strategies into seven types: planning, monitoring, evaluation, selective attention, directed attention, functional planning, and self-management. While some strategy types are more frequently used than others, Yang asserted that listeners’ metacognitive awareness should be cultivated and strategy instruction should be integrated into the teaching of listening (p. 134). Rahimirad (2014) also mentioned that the role of metacognitive strategy instruction is one that assists students in regulating their learning and awareness to consciously control their listening processes.

1.1. Metacognition and Listening

The intersection of listening and metacognition has only recently been explored. Vandergrift (2004) reviewed two approaches to listening: 1) developing lexical segmentation and word recognition skills, and 2) raising metacognitive awareness. He proposed an integrated model of using metacognitive strategies like planning, directed attention, monitoring, problem solving, selective attention, and evaluation combined with allowing learners to analyze a text after listening to ensure vocabulary comprehension.

Vandergrift later developed a 21-item metacognitive awareness scale for listening instruction (MALQ) to measure self-reported levels of metacognitive awareness by reflecting on their usage of and attitudes towards metacognitive listening strategies (Vandergrift, et. al., 2006) and then repeatedly administered the MALQ to two groups of learners of French as a second language (FSL) (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). The experimental group ($n = 59$) listened to and was guided through texts using the MALQ and practiced listening in five stages: planning/predating, first verification, second verification, final verification, and reflective; while the control group ($n = 47$) listened to the same texts without the MALQ. The researchers also administered the listening section of the university’s FSL Placement Test to both groups. Listening comprehension gains showed that not only did the experimental group outperform the control group in terms of listening scores, but that the less-skilled listeners in the experimental

group significantly improved their listening in comparison to those of the control group and had greater listening gains than the more-skilled participants in their group.

Additional studies subsequently utilized the MALQ but used different instruments to measure listening comprehension gains including the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) among 30 high-intermediate EFL students in an eight-week program of metacognitive instruction using the same five pedagogical stages as Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari's 2010 study (Bozorgian, 2014); the IELTS among 50 Iranian university students (Rahimirad & Shames, 2014); and the Preliminary English Test (PET) and the English Listening Self-efficacy Questionnaire (ELSEQ) with 371 Iranian EFL learners in high school grades three and four (Rahimi & Abedi, 2014). In all of these studies, a metacognitive strategy instruction treatment was administered to an experimental group and a pre- and post-listening comprehension assessment measured differences in gains between the experimental and control groups. Results consistently showed the experimental groups, which received metacognitive strategy instruction, outperformed their respective control group counterparts.

Using slightly different approaches to listening and metacognition, additional studies demonstrate similar results with the experimental group outperforming the control group. Birjandi & Hossein (2012), Cross (2011), and Rahimirad (2014) took the same strategy-instruction model from Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari's (2010) study and applied it to their respective studies, but without using the MALQ to track metacognitive awareness. Birjandi & Hossein (2012) taught male and female Iranian university freshmen ($n = 32$) and used listening items from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to measure listening proficiency. Cross (2011) used news items from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC TV) with 20 Japanese students attending an advanced-level English language course. Rahimirad (2014) opted to utilize the listening module from the Cambridge TOEFL as the listening proficiency test after the experimental group (consisting of 25 female English literature university students) received eight sessions of strategy instruction and metacognitive discussion over the course of four weeks.

Additionally, Goh & Taib (2006) conducted a small-scale study with 10 young learners, aged 11 and 12, in Singapore, who received eight listening lessons with a three-stage sequence of listen and answer, reflect, and report and discuss with similar results.

Thus it can be seen that while the study of listening and metacognition is still a relatively new area of exploration, it seems that exposure to strategy instruction in various forms strongly correlates with improved listening proficiency.

1.2. Motivation and Listening

Like strategy instruction, motivation has been investigated as a moderator to language learning (Gardner & Smythe, 1975). The hypothesis is that individuals who seek to integrate into a language community will demonstrate high motivation to learn the language and thus will achieve high levels of proficiency (see Gardner, 1985, 2000). Indeed, a meta-analysis of Gardner's motivation research revealed a strong and consistent positive correlation between motivation and language achievement (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

Researchers define motivation in various ways. For instance, Keller (1983) described motivation as "the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect." Brown (1986) stated that motivation is "commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one toward a particular action," mainly differing

from Keller's view of motivation as a choice. According to Dörnyei (1998), however, motivation is "a process whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action, or until the planned outcome has been reached." This third definition more clearly encapsulates the concept of motivation, taking into account not only what motivation does, but also when it ends or becomes diminished.

However, few studies have specifically analyzed the relationship between listening and motivation. In 2006, H. Hsu surveyed 480 Taiwanese university students to determine how motivated they felt towards practicing listening in English before comparing those participants' listening comprehension test scores. Hsu measured participant listening motivation utilizing an instrument composed of two sections: the English Listening Comprehension Motivation Scale (ELCMS) a 24-item, 5-point Likert scale survey designed to assess student motivation levels for practicing English listening comprehension, and a questionnaire that solicits self-reported average English listening comprehension scores and information regarding the environments and circumstances in which participants practice English listening. Analysis of participant responses to this instrument garnered a number of results: 1) a high correlation between English listening comprehension scores and general English scores; 2) significant main effects of gender and area of study for motivation; 3) more time on extracurricular English practice, higher self-confidence and personal expectations, and lower anxiety in practicing English listening among highly motivated respondents; and 4) a strong correlation between motivation for practicing English listening and English listening comprehension scores.

S. Hsu (2004) and Mohammad (2010) conducted similar studies looking at the relationship between English listening motivation and listening proficiency scores. S. Hsu's study involved 112 Taiwanese college students, while Mohammad's study consisted of 64 Iranian EFL students majoring in TEFL. The shared result of these three studies corroborates Motlhaka's (2012) claim that "...motivation plays a significant role in improving communicative ability..." (p. 60).

1.3. Metacognition and Motivation

Motivation and metacognition are recognized as key factors in the fields of second and foreign language learning. Moreover, Ziahosseini & Salehi (2008) asserted that the higher the language learner's level of motivation, the more likely they will be to use a language learning strategy. This is perhaps because both motivation and metacognition share some common factors, such as value, expectancy, self-efficacy, and attributions. Because of these commonalities, Vandergrift (2005) began exploring the relationship between these two areas wherein participants (57 Canadian FSL students aged 13 to 14) were given a French listening comprehension test, immediately following which they were given an early version of the MALQ and the Language Learning Orientations Scale (LLOS), a motivation questionnaire validated by Noels et. al. (2000) and derived from Vallerand et al.'s (1992) research regarding motivation assessment. The LLOS measures levels of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation, with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation broken down into 3 subscales each. The study revealed that participants who "reported a greater use of metacognitive strategies also reported more motivational intensity," or, more specifically, those participants who were more extrinsically motivated reported a greater use of six specific listening strategies as defined by the MALQ, and that participants with higher intrinsic motivation reported a greater use of 10 specific listening strategies. An overall analysis of the data showed that all correlations between strategy use and motivations were significant (negative with amotivation, and positive with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation). These correlations culminate in the determination that the more internalized the level of motivation, the more language learners report using metacognitive listening strategies.

In a similar study, Kassaian & Ghadiri (2011) also used the MALQ alongside Vallerand's Academic Motivation Scale—the instrument from which LLOS was derived—to investigate the relationship between motivation and metacognitive awareness and perceived use of strategies among 30 Iranian undergraduate EFL learners at English Institutes, aged 18 to 28. Results showed that 1) problem-solving strategies are used more frequently than planning and evaluation strategies, and 2) a positive relationship between metacognitive strategies and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation exists. The study recommends that student metacognitive awareness be cultivated and that strategy instruction be integrated into listening instruction. Similarly, Harputlu & Ceylan's (2014) study utilizing the MALQ, LLOS, and TOEFL listening section with 33 Turkish English major students aged 20 to 24 revealed positive, though not statistically significant, correlations between the same metacognitive strategies and both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

Nezhad, Behzadi, & Azimi Amoli (2013) utilized a different metacognitive strategy questionnaire with the ELCMS in order to conduct a similar study among 60 Iranian university students, ages ranging from 21 to 31, studying English translation. Results showed that participants given a narrative text to listen to had significantly higher motivation than those given expository text. While the content of these texts was not reported, expository texts are usually defined as texts meant to inform or educate with facts while narrative texts are typically stories written to entertain (Saenz & Fuchs, 2002). The text types also affected listening comprehension differently, with the narrative being more positive. Finally, the narrative text group reported utilizing more top-down strategies, whereas the expository text group applied more bottom-up strategies.

Even though metacognition and motivation have been investigated as moderating variables to language proficiency and have likewise been demonstrated in listening studies to be correlated with each other, research has not yet indicated whether metacognitive strategy usage leads to increased motivation nor have researchers measured whether metacognitive strategies actually affect listening motivation since existing study designs take a single measurement of metacognition and motivation at a certain point in time. Yet this is an important consideration in listening instruction research since a causal relationship could indicate that teaching metacognitive strategies could result in increased motivation, which in turn could lead to improved listening proficiency. Furthermore, existing research studies of metacognition and motivation have only examined foreign language learning where students have limited exposure to the target language outside of class. No research has investigated metacognition and motivation in an ESL setting in which learners are exposed to the target language constantly in the environment, not just in school classes.

2. The Current Study

This study seeks to investigate the relationship between motivation, listening, and metacognitive strategy use to determine whether metacognitive listening strategy instruction, administered over a period of time, would increase self-reported motivation toward improving English listening comprehension. Unlike previously conducted studies, this study uses adult English as a second language (ESL) learners in an intensive English program (IEP) setting and uses two instruments that have, thus far, not been used together, the ELCMS and MALQ. It was hypothesized that the experiment group would, as a result of the strategy treatment they received, see a significantly larger increase in listening motivation when compared with the control group. The following questions guided our study:

- 1) How do scores change on a pre- to post-test assessment of listening motivation?
 - a. What, if any, is the difference between the control and experiment groups?

- b. What is the change for participants with strategy instruction as a treatment?
- c. What is the change for participants without strategy instruction as a treatment?
- 2) How do scores change on a pre- to post-test assessment of listening strategy use over a 7-week strategy course?
- 3) Which strategies on the MALQ do students most commonly report using before and after the strategy treatment?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Participants were non-matriculated, advanced-low to advanced-mid level learners enrolled in an IEP at a large private university in the Western United States. Of the 56 participants, 32 were females and 24 males with a range of native languages. Table 1 provides demographic details for the control and experimental groups.

	Control group	Experimental group
Number	30	26
Sex	14 M / 16 F	10 M / 16 F
Age (mean)	19-46 (26)	18-35 (24)
Native languages (#)	Spanish (20), Portuguese (2), Mandarin (2), Bahasa (1), French (1), Hungarian (1), Korean (1), Mongolian (1), Russian (1)	Spanish (23), Albanian (1), Japanese (1), Portuguese (1)
Home countries	Bolivia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, French Polynesia, Hungary, Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, Peru, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, Uruguay	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Japan, Kosovo, Mexico, Peru
Length of stay in the U.S.	> 1 year = 18 1-3 years = 11 5+ years = 1	> 1 year = 13 1-3 years = 12 5+ years = 1
Reason for studying English	Post-secondary education; work; personal interest	Post-secondary education; work; personal interest

Table 1. Demographic information for control and experimental groups

3.2. Instruments

The study administered the ELCMS and the MALQ through an online survey. Demographic items (participant ID number, instructor name, age, native language, native country, years spent in the United States, and reason for learning English) were added to the ELCMS, and the participant ID number and a list of strategies were added to the MALQ (see Appendix A and B). The ELCMS was administered to both control and experiment groups twice—as pre- and post-tests—whereas the MALQ was administered twice to only the experiment group. The control group did not take the MALQ as to avoid potentially exposing control group participants to metacognition outside of their instructors' lesson plans.

3.2.1. English Listening Comprehension Motivational Scale

The ELCMS was selected over other motivation scales, such as the LLOS, because it tracks participants' self-reported metacognitive strategy use instead of exploring the general areas of amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. The ELCMS consists of 24 items scored on a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), to assess student motivation levels regarding practicing English listening comprehension. The 24 items on the ELCMS can be arranged into positive statements (items 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, and 24) to examine motivation for practicing English listening and negative statements (items 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 16, 20, and 23) to examine a lack of motivation for practicing English listening. Every item is assigned a point score based on student responses with the positive group receiving points ranging from one point for strongly disagree to five points for strongly agree and the negative group scored in reverse with five points for strongly disagree to one point for strongly agree. All point values are added for a single respondent with higher totals indicating higher self-reported levels of motivation towards English listening practice.

3.2.2. Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire

The MALQ has 21 items scored on a 6-point Likert scale, with options of frequency being 1 (*never*), 2 (*rarely*), 3 (*occasionally*), 4 (*sometimes*), 5 (*frequently*), and 6 (*normally*) and assesses self-reported levels of student metacognitive awareness in regard to their understanding of their own listening processes, attitudes, and strategy usage. The MALQ items can be separated into five categories based on the content of each respective item: 1) problem-solving (items 5, 7, 9, 13, 17, and 19), 2) planning-evaluation (1, 10, 14, 20, and 21), 3) mental translation (4, 11, and 18), 4) person knowledge (3, 8, and 15), and 5) directed attention (2, 6, 12, and 16), with point values ranging from one point for rarely to six points for normally, with the exception of items 3, 4, 8, 11, 15, 16, and 18, which were given inverse scores. All point values are added together to create a score for each student, with higher scores indicating higher perceived levels of metacognitive awareness regarding a student's listening ability. When used as a pre- and post-test, the MALQ reveals gains or losses in students' perceived levels.

3.3. Procedure

Prospective participants were invited to take their respective survey(s) as detailed in the instruments section. Participants in the experimental group received a treatment of listening strategies coupled with metacognitive discussion over a duration of seven weeks. Participants took their respective survey(s) a second time, and a mixed-effect regression analysis was conducted in order to see if the treatment influenced their scores over time. All surveys were administered in English since participants reported comprehending each item in a pilot test and in subsequent debriefing.

3.3.1. Strategy Treatment

The strategy treatment was implemented following the same integrated model used by previously described studies (Birjandi & Hossein, 2012; Bozorgian, 2014; Cross, 2011; Goh & Taib, 2006; Rahimi & Abedi, 2014; Rahimirad, 2014; Rahimirad & Shams, 2014; Vandergrift, 2004; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). The treatment period began with an introduction to the topic of metacognition, what it means, and how it can be applied to listening, and the first administration of the MALQ. During each week of the study, the regular course curriculum was supplemented with additional listening and note-taking practice for which participants followed a three-stage process: planning/prediction, verification, and reflection. Listening strategies taught during the treatment period included recognizing paraphrase, repetition, exemplification, and digression, predicting content and lecture direction, using abbreviations and symbols, and listening for cues for definitions, lists, causal relationships, descriptions, comparisons, and classification. The supplemental listening material was strategy-based, thus content topics ranged over a variety of topics such as history, biology, economics, and nutrition. Strategy instruction included teaching/reviewing cue words i.e. "For example", having participants listen for and stop audio upon identifying each respective cue word, and taking note of the information that proceeded each cue. The first author conducted the strategy treatment with experiment group participants.

3.3.2. Data Analysis

For the first research question, the data gathered from the ELCMS pre- and post-tests was analyzed using a mixed-effects regression to account for the repeated measures and the fact that participants gave multiple responses. This test also controls for extraneous variables that could affect the results such as age, gender, and native language, none of which were the focus of this study, all while comparing data between and within our participant groups. Our analysis used *scores* as the dependent variable, with *group*, *pre/post*, *gender*, and *native language* as factors, and *age* as a covariate. The fixed effects input looked at all of these factors and covariates as main effects, while also looking at all 2-way interactions of the *group* and *pre/post* factors. *Participants* was our random effect.

For the second research question, the MALQ results from the experiment group were analyzed using a paired t-test to look at the difference in pre- and post-test scores of the MALQ.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Question 1

The first research question asked how listening motivation scores changed over a 7-week treatment period and whether there was a difference between and within participant groups. A mixed-effects regression revealed differences in pre- and post-test scores between groups as well as within each respective group. There was no significant difference in the pre- to post-test scores among the control group ($p = .223$), nor the scores of the experiment group ($p = .639$). However, the interaction between pre/post-test scores and group yielded a significant difference with an F ratio of $F(1, 54) = 6.535$, $p = .013$. As can be seen in Figure 1, the mean scores of both groups' post-tests were lower than those of their pre-tests, but the experiment group's mean dropped by 1.38 points compared to the control group's 2.8 points.

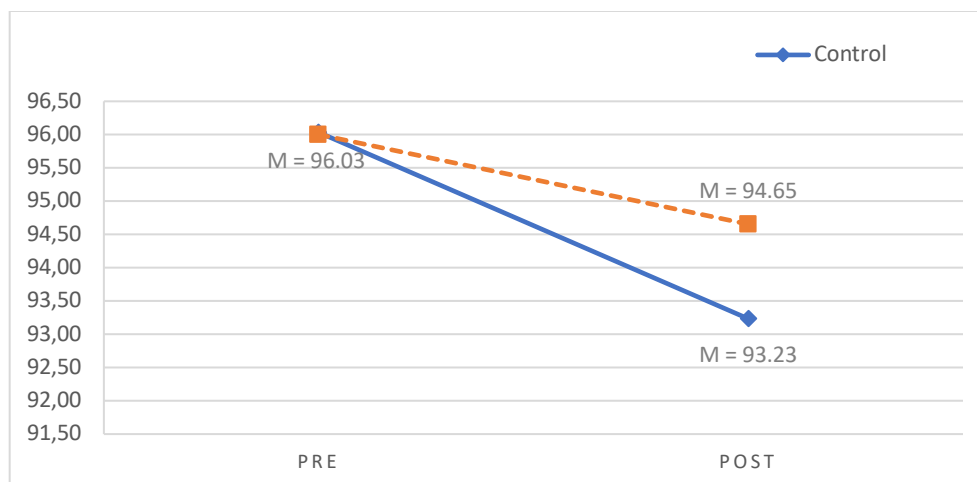


Figure 1. Plot of pre- and post-test score means for the experiment and control groups.

These results contradict Vandergrift's (2004) observation that increased strategy usage is correlated with increased motivation. A possible interpretation of these results is that the strategy treatment employed in this study did not have much of an effect on IEP-enrolled ESL learners of a higher proficiency, which corroborates the findings of previous studies that lower proficiency learners benefit the most from strategy instruction (Cross, 2011; Harputlu & Ceylan, 2014; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010).

4.2. Research Question 2

The second research question asked how awareness of listening strategy usage changed over a 7-week treatment period using the MALQ. A paired t-test determined that there was a slight increase in self-reported levels of metacognitive awareness but with no statistical difference between the pre- (M=87.15, SD=9.5) and post-test (M=90.31, SD = 11.1) assessments of the experiment group's self-reported strategy use; $t(25) = -1.722$, $p = .097$.

Although our prediction that study participants would report an increased usage in listening strategies was correct, the increase was not statistically significant. This is likely due to the short duration of this study and the limited amount of practice participants had with each strategy, especially the ones taught towards the end of the treatment period. Had the post-test been delayed, or even administered again at a later time, allowing participants more time to practice the strategies taught, the resulting increase might have been greater.

4.3. Research Question 3

The third research question asked which listening strategies participants used at the time of data collection. Upon completion of the MALQ, participants were asked whether they used each of the 12 strategies taken directly from the MALQ. The results of the MALQ and the subsequent questions of which of the strategies the students use are reflected in Table 2.

The “Agreement Score” column in Table 2 shows the average score of each item selected on the actual MALQ (based on the Likert scale ranging from 1 [strongly disagree] to 6 [strongly agree]). Any score ranged between one and three would be on the disagree side, and scores between 4 and 6 on the agree side. Ideally, a strategy that is reported to be widely used would have a higher Agreement Score and would be more likely to be reported as a strategy of frequent use on the subsequent 12 strategy questions. Indeed, the strategies with highest reported usage have higher Agreement Scores. One item, “I use the general idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of what I don’t understand” had the highest Agreement Score (5.0) for both the pre- and post-test despite having large differences in reported usage, with the pre-test showing 58% and the post-test showing 81%, respectively.

In addition, the three most commonly known/used strategies before strategy treatment were strategy 1 (81%), 2 (77%), and 3 (73%). After the strategy treatment, strategy 1 and 3 remained in their respective places and had higher usage reported at 96% and 77%, respectively, while the strategy number 4 rose to second place with 81% and strategy 2 dropped precipitously.

We predicted that the problem-solving strategies (strategies 1, 2, 4, 7, and 9) would be reportedly used more than the other types of strategies and that the mental translation strategies (strategies 10,11, and 12) would have the least-reported amount of usage based on previously conducted studies (Harputlu & Ceylan, 2014; Kassaian & Ghadiri, 2011; Vandergrift, 2005). Indeed, strategy 1, a problem-solving strategy, was the most used strategy reported in both the pre- and post-test results and its usage actually increased over the course of the study from 81% of participants using it before the strategy instruction and 96% afterwards. This increase could be attributed to explicit strategy instruction and in-class discussions or as a natural outcome of regular listening practice over seven weeks.

Another problem-solving strategy of interest, strategy 2, saw an 8% decrease in usage between the pre- and post-tests, but its agreement score increased from 4.3 to 4.5, which tells us that although there were fewer participants who reported using this strategy, its frequency of usage actually increased.

Strategy 4, another problem-solving strategy, saw one of the largest increases, going from 58% participant usage to 81% usage on the respective tests. This strategy saw the second-largest increase in usage and became the second most used strategy by the end of the study. It also has the highest and most consistent agreement score of all the strategies listed, a 5.0 for both pre- and post-test results. These results can be interpreted to mean that this is an important strategy for English learners because the agreement score shows it was considered to be used at the highest frequency possible.

In addition, strategy 7, another problem-solving strategy, saw the largest increase in reported usage, going from 38% to 73%. Interestingly, the agreement scores for this strategy remained fairly consistent, seeing only a slight increase from 4.4 to 4.8. This indicates that the participants who reported using this strategy on the pre-test used it fairly frequently and more or less maintained or increased that frequency when taking the post-test. This increase could be attributed to frequent discussion on the lesson’s topics, the introduction of extracurricular materials, and regular pauses during listening practice to prompt participants to make connections to the material with what had already been heard/viewed in the class on the topic.

Another strategy of note is strategy 3, directed attention, which remained as the third most used strategy on both the pre- (73%) and post-test (77%). Again, the change in agreement scores, from 4.7 to 5.0, tells us that participants reported using this strategy more frequently by the end of the study.

Similar to the first reported strategy, this is a result that should be expected as a natural outcome of regular extended listening practice.

Strategy	Pre-test (N = 26)			Post-test (N = 26)		
	n	%	Agreement Score	n	%	Agreement Score
1. I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of words I don't understand. (PS)	21	81%	4.6	25	96%	4.9
2. When I guess the meaning of a word, I think back to everything else that I have heard to see if my guess makes sense. (PS)	20	77%	4.3	18	69%	4.5
3. I focus harder when I have trouble understanding. (DA)	19	73%	4.7	20	77%	5.0
4. I use the general idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of what I don't understand. (PS)	15	58%	5.0	21	81%	5.0
5. After listening, I think about what I might do better next time. (PE)	12	46%	3.7	13	50%	3.9
6. I have a plan in my head before I start to listen. (PE)	10	38%	3.5	9	35%	3.5
7. As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic. (PS)	10	38%	4.4	19	73%	4.8
8. Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to. (PE)	10	38%	3.5	11	42%	3.8
9. As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct. (PS)	10	38%	4.3	10	38%	4.7
10. I translate key words as I listen. (MT)	7	27%	3.2	9	35%	3.3
11. I translate in my head as I listen. (MT)	6	23%	2.7	2	8%	2.5
12. I translate word by word as I listen. (MT)	1	4%	2.0	0	0%	1.8

N = number of participants who use the strategy; PS = problem-solving; DA = directed attention; PE = planning-evaluation; MT = mental translation

Table 2. Reported Listening Strategy Usage

Finally, as predicted, the three least-used strategies related to translating while listening. While the strategy involving translating keywords saw a slight increase in reported usage, the other two, translating mentally and translating word by word, decreased from 23% to 8% and from 4% to 0% respectively. The agreement scores for these strategies are also the lowest out of all the listed strategies. This corroborates previous studies' findings (Vandergrift et. al., 2006; Kassaian & Ghadiri's, 2011) that higher-proficiency learners use translation strategies less frequently than lower proficiency learners.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to look at how ESL learners' levels of motivation towards listening in English changed over a 7-week period of time, with and without explicit listening strategy treatment, in an ESL and IEP setting. The ELCMS and MALQ were the instruments used in order to determine participants' self-reported levels of listening motivation and metacognitive strategy usage and awareness, respectively. Upon analyzing data gathered from 56 participants, overall motivation was found to have decreased over the course of the study, with the experiment group's levels being slightly higher than those of the control group. Based on the literature, there is a strong argument for a positive correlation between metacognition and motivation in the listening classroom. However, the results of the present study would refute this argument.

It would be foolhardy to take one study and use it as the foundation for an argument against the positive correlation found between metacognition and motivation in previous EFL studies. Instead, additional studies should be conducted to further examine this correlation in an ESL and IEP context and with participants at multiple proficiency levels. Using research participants from an ESL classroom would allow for a focus on the possible effects of first language on listening motivation. Unlike the university students and young learners of previous studies, IEP learners are only taught English language skills and therefore may be inclined to lose motivation after prolonged exclusive English instruction.

One of the biggest limitations to this study was the small sample size with 30 of the participants composing the control group for this study and 26 composing the experiment group. The duration of the study was also fairly short: seven weeks, approximately half of a semester at the institution where the study took place; and the study took place in the middle of the semester. Finally, similar studies have shown that the students who gain the most from strategy instruction are low proficiency language learners, not high proficiency ones (Harputlu & Ceylan, 2014; Cross, 2011; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). The proficiency of the participants in this study were English learners at the advanced-low to advanced-mid level. Results from this study appear to reflect this idea of lower proficiency students gaining more benefits from strategy instruction, because, ideally, higher proficiency learners would already be at least somewhat familiar with such strategies.

For future research, it is recommended that a much larger sample size be utilized; we also recommend conducting the study over a longer period of time. Seven weeks of instruction with immediate testing before and after yields a bare minimum of information. Administering follow-up surveys a month or two after the study's conclusion would reveal if the strategy instruction had any longer-lasting effects. It also would be ideal to have participants be at a lower level of English proficiency, as studies have shown that lower-level learners benefit more from receiving explicit strategy instruction. Qualitative data regarding preferred strategy usage could also contribute greatly to the results of future research.

Due to the results of this study, it could be argued that strategy instruction does not have much effect on the listening motivation of higher proficiency ESL learners in an IEP setting. However, we have yet to see the extent and prolonged effects of strategy instruction in this context. Would language learners who have been given an arsenal of listening strategies start a new semester with higher motivation than the semester prior? Would they continue to use certain strategies and discontinue others? We anticipate that future studies will answer these questions in the affirmative, and results will likely contribute to the improvement of listening instruction in language teaching.

References

- Birjandi, P., & Hossein Rahimi, A. (2012). The effect of metacognitive strategy instruction on the listening performance of EFL students. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 4(2). <http://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v4i2.1707>
- Bozorgian, H. (2014). The role of metacognition in the development of EFL learners' listening skill. *International Journal of Listening*, 28(3), 149–161. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2013.861303>
- Cross, J. (2011). Metacognitive instruction for helping less-skilled listeners. *ELT Journal*, 65(4), 408–416. <http://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq073>
- Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 31(3), 117–135. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480001315X>
- Flowerdew, J., & Miller, L. (2013). *Second language listening: Theory and practice*. (J. C. Richards, Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold
- Gardner, R.C. (2000). Correlation, causation, motivation, and second language acquisition. *Canadian Psychology*, 41, 10-24.
- Gardner, R. C. & Smythe, P. C. (1975). Motivation and second language acquisition. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 31, 218-230.
- Goh, C., & Taib, Y. (2006). Metacognitive instruction in listening for young learners. *ELT Journal*, 60(3), 222–232. <http://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl002>
- Harputlu, L., & Ceylan, E. (2014). The effects of motivation and metacognitive strategy use on EFL listening proficiency. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 158, 124–131. Retrieved from http://ac.els-cdn.com.eri.lib.byu.edu/S1877042814061497/1-s2.0-S1877042814061497-main.pdf?_tid=04133f7e-dd93-11e5-afc8-00000aab0f27&acdnat=1456606100_cd22fb821a0cfceab0298a3252e1aa89
- Hinkel, E. (2006). Current perspectives on teaching the four skills. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 109–131. <http://doi.org/10.2307/40264513>
- Hsu, H.-I. (2006). *The effects of motivation on Taiwanese college students' English listening comprehension*. Dissertation Abstracts International, UMI No.3216198.
- Hsu, S. (2004). A study of learning motivation in English listening comprehension. *South Asian Journal of Twenty-Four*, 166–178. Retrieved from <http://ir.lib.tiit.edu.tw/bitstream/987654321/273/1/932412.pdf>
- Kassian, Z., & Ghadiri, M. (2011). An investigation of the relationship between motivation and metacognitive awareness strategies in listening comprehension: The case of Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(5), 1069–1079. <http://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.2.5.1069-1079>
- Masgoret, A.-M., & Gardner, R. C. (2003). Attitudes motivation, and second language learning: A meta-analysis of studies conducted by Gardner and associates. *Language Learning*, 53(1), 123-163.
- Mohammad Jafari, S. (2010). On the relationship between listening comprehension motivation and listening comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 6(2), 89–106.
- Motlhaka, H. A. (2012). *Developing ESL listening: Promoting student motivation*. Indiana University of Pennsylvania. <http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Nezhad, G. R. H., Behzadi, A., & Azimi Amoli, A. (2013). The relationship between motivation and cognitive and metacognitive strategy Use between two task types in listening skill. *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences*, 3(3), 369–381.

- Noels, K. A., Pelletier, L. G., Clément, R., & Vallerand, R. J. (2000). Why are you learning a second language? Motivational orientations and self-determination theory. *Language Learning, 50*(1), 57–85.
- Rahimi, M., & Abedi, S. (2014). The relationship between self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness of listening strategies. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 98*, 1454–1460. Retrieved from http://ac.els-cdn.com.eri.lib.byu.edu/S1877042814026561/1-s2.0-S1877042814026561-main.pdf?_tid=6f5a09d4-dd93-11e5-afc8-00000aab0f27&acdnat=1456606280_7835194414356c25ebe996a5ac211048
- Rahimirad, M. (2014). The impact of metacognitive strategy instruction on the listening performance of university students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 98*, 1485–1491. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.569>
- Rahimirad, M., & Shams, M. R. (2014). The effect of activating metacognitive strategies on the listening performance and metacognitive awareness of EFL students. *International Journal of Listening, 28*(3), 162–176. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10904018.2014.902315>
- Saenz, L. M., & Fuchs, L. S. (2002). Examining the reading difficulty of secondary students with learning disabilities: Expository versus narrative text. *Remedial and Special Education, 23*(1), 31-41.
- Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., Blais, M. R., Briere, N. M., Senecal, C., & Vallieres, E. F. (1992). The academic motivation scale: A measure of intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation in education. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 52*, 1003–1017.
- Vandergrift, L. (2004). Listening to learn or learning to listen? *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 24*(8), 3–25. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190504000017>
- Vandergrift, L. (2005). Relationships among motivation orientations, metacognitive awareness and proficiency in L2 listening. *Applied Linguistics, 26*(1), 70–89. <http://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amh039>
- Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. (2012). *Teaching and learning second language listening: Metacognition in action*. London: Routledge.
- Vandergrift, L., Goh, C. C. M., Mareschal, C. J., & Tafaghodtari, M. H. (2006). The metacognitive awareness listening questionnaire: Development and validation. *Language Learning, 56*(3), 431–462. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2006.00373.x>
- Vandergrift, L., & Tafaghodtari, M. H. (2010). Teaching L2 learners how to listen does make a difference: An empirical study. *Language Learning, 60*(2), 470–497. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2009.00559.x>
- Yang, C. (2009). A study of metacognitive strategies employed by English listeners. *International Education Studies, 2*(4), 134–139. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1065707.pdf>
- Ziahosseini, S. M., & Salehi, M. (2008). An Investigation of the relationship between motivation and language learning strategies. *Pazhuhesh-E Zabanha-Ye Khareji, (41)*, 85–107. Retrieved from https://jor.ut.ac.ir/article_19141_556204a46b665b0ab0778eda4ba13780.pdf

Appendix A

Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ)						
Strategy or belief/perception	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
1 Before I start to listen, I have a plan in my head for how I am going to listen.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2 I focus harder on the text when I have trouble understanding.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3 I find that listening in English is more difficult than reading, speaking, or writing in English.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4 I translate in my head as I listen.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5 I use the words I understand to guess the meaning of words I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6 When my mind wanders, I recover my concentration right away.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 As I listen, I compare what I understand with what I know about the topic.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8 I feel that listening comprehension in English is a challenge for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9 I use my experience and knowledge to help me understand.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10 Before listening, I think of similar texts that I may have listened to.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11 I translate key words as I listen.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12 I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13 As I listen, I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realize that it is not correct.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14 After listening, I think back to how I listened, and about what I might do differently next time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15 I don't feel nervous when I listen to English	1	2	3	4	5	6
16 When I have difficulty understanding what I hear, I give up and stop listening.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17 I use the general idea of the text to help me guess the meaning of words I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18 I translate word by word as I listen.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19 When I guess the meaning of a word, I think back to everything else that I have heard to see if my guess makes sense.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20 As I listen, I periodically ask myself if I am satisfied with my level of comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21 I have a goal in mind as I listen.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix B

English Listening Comprehension Motivation Scale

The following statements are about your own attitudes, concepts, or situations of learning English listening comprehension. Please circle the scale in terms of how well the statements reflect your actual experience, thoughts, and feelings when you are learning listening comprehension.

Directions: Please respond to the following questions using the scale provided:

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

1. I like English listening materials that can arouse my interest in learning.
1 2 3 4 5
2. I don't like to develop English listening comprehension because it takes me too much time.
1 2 3 4 5
3. I think that the person who has great ability in English listening can find a well-paid job more easily.
1 2 3 4 5
4. I often feel bored when learning English listening comprehension.
1 2 3 4 5
5. In order to improve my English listening comprehension, I will try to do the homework well and often spend time practicing it.
1 2 3 4 5
6. I often feel nervous and uncomfortable when learning English listening comprehension.
1 2 3 4 5
7. I often notice the materials and activities concerning English listening comprehension; for example, English programs on the radio, English listening materials and tapes, CDs, and various English listening comprehension examinations.
1 2 3 4 5
8. I like to learn English listening comprehension because it is very important, and I feel confident of learning it well.
1 2 3 4 5
9. I think that English listening comprehension will not be helpful to me in the future.
1 2 3 4 5
10. I like to know the culture and customs of other countries, and often feel excited about getting new knowledge and information in English listening comprehension class.
1 2 3 4 5
11. I am often unable to concentrate on the content of the materials when practicing English listening.
1 2 3 4 5
12. I attend English comprehension classes in earnest because I want to develop my listening skills and ability in order that I can use it in the future.
1 2 3 4 5
13. I often actively show my ability in English listening and speaking in class, and I know I can perform very well.
1 2 3 4 5
14. I believe that I can learn English listening comprehension very well as long as I make a great effort.
1 2 3 4 5
15. I have a sense of achievement when I perform better than others in English listening comprehension class.
1 2 3 4 5
16. Because my English is poor, I don't like to attend English listening comprehension classes.
1 2 3 4 5
17. My purpose of developing the ability in English listening comprehension is to get good grades in tests and to receive compliments of my teachers and my parents.

18. If I am the only person that can answer the teacher's question, I feel excited.
1 2 3 4 5
19. I hope I can perform better in English listening comprehension than others.
1 2 3 4 5
20. After finishing taking English listening comprehension courses, I will not listen to the relevant materials anymore.
1 2 3 4 5
21. I hope the teachers and the classmates can notice that my English listening comprehension is better than other students.
1 2 3 4 5
22. When I can easily and smoothly understand English by listening, I feel satisfied and have great confidence.
1 2 3 4 5
23. I don't like hard English listening materials because those make me feel anxious.
1 2 3 4 5
24. I would like to learn English listening comprehension well because I want to make friends with English speakers and hope to be able to go abroad for advanced study in the future.
1 2 3 4 5

Corbin Rivera (kanepake@gmail.com) holds an MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at Brigham Young University. He teaches ESL courses.

Grant Eckstein (grant_eckstein@byu.edu) is an assistant professor in the Linguistics Department at Brigham Young University. He studies second language reading and writing development, assessment, pedagogy, and curriculum design. He has published in venues such as TESOL Quarterly and Research in the Teaching of English.

David Eddington (eddingon@byu.edu) is a professor in the Department of Linguistics at BYU. His research principally involves data-driven studies of Spanish and English dealing with phonological, sociolinguistic, and morphological issues.

Benjamin McMurry (ben_mcmurry@byu.edu) is the program director at Brigham Young University's English Language Center. His research interests include instructional design theory, evaluation, and materials development.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 268-283

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

The L2 motivational self system profile of Greek adolescents

Zoe Kantaridou & Eleanna Xekalou

The L2 motivational self system (L2MSS) theory (Dörnyei, 2005) has been the dominant theory in L2 motivation research for over a decade now, yet it has been scarcely investigated in the Greek education context. The present study explores the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, instrumentality promotion and instrumentality prevention aspects of Greek junior high school students (N=598) in relation to demographic variables such as gender, school grade, self-reported competence, extra language classes and parental educational level. The results indicated the following order of frequencies in the motivational variables in descending order: instrumentality promotion, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and instrumentality prevention. The anova results indicated that females and students who have higher perceived level of competence, attend extra language classes and whose parents' are more educated demonstrate statistically significantly higher scores in ideal L2 self and instrumentality promotion. The results are discussed in relation motivation enhancement teaching interventions. (151 words)

Key words: L2MSS, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, instrumentality, gender, parental educational level, extra language classes.

1. Introduction

For many years research in L2 motivation has been dominated by the socio-educational model initially introduced by Robert Gardner and his associates (Gardner, 1985). Based on studies conducted within the bilingual dynamics of the Canadian context, Gardner reached the conclusion that the level of the L2 learner's integration in the target language community is the strongest determinant of learning motivation. In spite of the major significance the concept of integrativeness holds, it came in the spotlight of criticism. The main point of that criticism was that the concept of integrativeness requires and, in most cases, also assumes an identifiable and available L2 community. However, due to modern technological advancements, in addition to the gradual appearance of "World Englishes" (Kachru, 2005), contexts with no definite ethnolinguistic group or community of speakers have emerged, into which English language learners aim at integrating. As Ryan explains,

where global languages such as English are concerned, *“not only are notions of contact with an English-speaking community dissimilar to those envisaged by Gardner, but the concept of that community itself is an altogether more vague, abstract entity”* (Ryan, 2009, p. 124).

2. The L2 Motivational Self System

Growing dissatisfaction with the concept of intergrativeness due to the internationalization of English language brought about the need for a novel theoretical framework. Dörnyei (2005) proposed the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) with the intention of accommodating various research avenues, within the modern trend of increased emphasis on the way L2 learners envision themselves in relation to language learning. Proponents of this theory, expect L2 learners to be motivated by the differentiation of their present selves and their future, ideal L2 selves. Having its roots in L2 motivation research and developments in modern psychology, the L2MSS has a solid theoretical basis, as it draws its paradigms mainly from the theory of possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986), the self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) and self-regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1987).

Markus and Nurius' (1986) theory of possible selves focuses on the individuals' vision of themselves in the future. One's possible selves reflect hopes, fantasies and fears, forming a variety of possible life outcomes. In their study Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 954) divide possible selves into three main types, “ideal selves that we would like to become”, “selves we are afraid of becoming” and, finally, “selves that we could become”. The connection of possible selves to motivation is that, by creating an environment in which present selves can be assessed, behaviour aims at positive future outcomes and away from negative ones.

Higgins' theory of self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987, 1998) focuses on the functions of certain possible selves. The theory has two main components, called Ideal Self, and Ought Self respectively. The former refers to the characteristics the learner would ideally like to master, while the latter relates to characteristics believed necessary to be mastered so as to fulfil certain expectations of their social environment. In this way the Ideal Self includes hopes, dreams and desires, while the Ought Self encompasses commitments and duties. Higgins argues that the learner behaves in a way perceived to decrease the distance between the present self and future Ideal and Ought Selves. The clearer the “future self-guides” are, the more capable learners become of regulating their behaviour towards the achievement of their hopes, dreams and wishes.

Higgins (1987) also proposes that regulation of human behaviour is based on a balance between a promotion focus, with which people are capable of anticipating future gain or pleasure and a prevention focus, which enables them to anticipate future loss or pain, resulting from their actions. Depending on their dominant focus, individuals may display one of two types of regulatory orientation, a promotional or a preventional one. The former is associated with accomplishment, advancement and the achievement of desirable future results, whereas, the latter relates to safety, security and the aversion of unwanted effects (Higgins, 1987, 1997; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997).

Apart from the aforementioned developments in the fields of motivation theories and psychology, Dörnyei also based his new conceptualization on his own empirical research on L2 learners' motivation (Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006). Data found by studying a large sample of High School students in Hungary, supported an interpretation of learners identifying with an internal image of an “L2-speaking self” rather than an external reference

group. Thus, the main aspects of integrativeness (Gardner, 1985) with a specific L2 reference group were incorporated into the ideal L2 self construct.

2.1. The principal components of L2MSS

The L2MSS contains three components: the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience. The *Ideal L2 Self* represents the image the L2 learner would ideally like to become in the future, a desirable future self. It functions as a powerful learning motivator based on the individual's will to lessen the distance between the actual present and the ideal future self. The *Ought-to L2 Self* is the L2-specific facet of one's ought-to self. It is much less internalized than the ideal self and may motivate the individual towards learning the second language, in order to fulfil expectations of significant others and avert unwanted consequences.

The *L2 learning experience* refers to the learner's attitudes toward the process of L2 learning and is influenced by features inherent in the environment where the learning takes place. Such features include the curriculum, the L2 teacher, the peer group, and the teaching materials (Dörnyei, 2005). This aspect of the L2MSS has been shown to have a very strong effect on motivated behaviour (Csizér and Kormos, 2009; Taguchi *et al.*, 2009). The reason for this is that "for some language learners the initial motivation to learn a language does not come from internally or externally generated self images but rather from successful engagement with the actual language learning process" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). In comparison to the Ideal and the Ought-to L2 selves, which are judged to be more stable conceptions of motivation, the L2 learning experience is thought to be more situation-specific.

Within this model, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) also proposed two aspects of the traditional instrumentality concept: *instrumentality promotion* and *instrumentality prevention*. The first one concerns motivation with an achievement focus, such as learning English to pursue higher education and the second one describes motivation with an avoidance focus, such as studying so as not to disappoint one's parents. It is important to differentiate between promotional and preventional instrumentality, as the former has been found to be strongly associated with the Ideal L2 Self, while the latter to the Ought-to L2 Self, with the two aspects presumably constituting the occupational/ employment perspectives of the two future selves (Taguchi *et al.*, 2009).

2.2. Application of the L2MSS

Ever since the L2MSS was proposed by Dörnyei (2005, 2009), it has drawn the attention of many researchers. Boo *et al.* (2015) highlight an "unprecedented boom" in L2MSS research studies in the 2005-2015 decade, especially in East Asia and Japan in contrast to the North American context of the social-psychological period with Gardner's socio-educational model (Al-Hoorie 2017).

As several recent studies have shown, the L2MSS is applicable across different countries such as Hungary (Kormos and Csizér 2008; Csizér and Lukács, 2010), Japan, China, and Iran (Taguchi *et al.*, 2009, Papi, 2010), Saudi Arabia (Al-Shehri, 2009), Sweden (Henry, 2009), Indonesia (Lamb, 2012), and Pakistan (Islam, Lamb & Chambers, 2013) as well as in relation to other foreign languages (FL) such as German (Busse, 2013). The present study constitutes an attempt to explore the L2MSS in the Greek context, which, to the best of our knowledge,

has not been researched yet. Moreover, the originality of the study also lies in the fact that it focuses on the adolescent population of junior high school which is highly underrepresented in L2MSS research; only 20% of studies have focused on this age group (Boo *et al.*, 2015: 151).

According to research conducted so far, the Ideal L2 Self seems to be the most powerful component of the L2MSS. From an early point in the system's development it was evident that key dimensions of motivation, such as integration, attitude towards L2 speakers or motivated learning behaviour were interrelated. Thus, it comes as no surprise that many studies have shown it to be a strong determinant of learning attitudes and outcomes (e.g., Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Islam *et al.*, 2013; Papi, 2010; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi *et al.*, 2009). In many of those studies the Ideal L2 Self was the most powerful motivator of all the variables studied (e.g. Al-Shehri, 2009; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2012) and displayed the strongest influence on intended effort (e.g. Papi, 2010). These findings are also in alignment with the established literature in motivation psychology, which assumes that the more self-internalized and intrinsic a motive is, the more effort individuals make towards its achievement (e.g., Noels *et al.*, 1999).

There are numerous reports on the basis of which the Ought-to L2 Self applies significantly less effect on the motivation of the individual compared to the Ideal L2 Self (Islam *et al.*, 2013; Papi, 2010; Taguchi *et al.*, 2009). The Ought-to L2 Self increases anxiety, a fact that possibly explains its secondary role in producing positive L2 learning results (Papi, 2010). Nevertheless, there are cases of L2 learning contexts, such as the Asian, or certain learner subgroups within a context, where the Ought-to L2 Self has a major impact on motivation (You & Dörnyei, 2016). This phenomenon may be related to the intense presence of extrinsic/aversion factors in these contexts, such as strong family influence and pressure for professional success in Asian cultures (Taguchi *et al.*, 2009), or subgroup-specific conditions that do not favour the formation of a detailed and vivid Ideal L2 Self-image (Ueki & Takeuchi, 2012).

Based on the self-regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1987) and viewing the Ideal and the Ought-to L2 Selves as two ends of a motivational continuum, Dörnyei made a prediction about learners' regulatory focuses. He estimated that learners with a more powerful Ideal L2 Self would demonstrate a promotional regulatory focus and appreciate the transition to positive results, while learners with more powerful Ought-to L2 Self would display a preventional regulatory focus and be under pressure to avert the consequences of not fulfilling their obligations and what is generally expected of them (Dörnyei, 2009b). Taguchi *et al.*, (2009) support that Instrumentality Promotion has a stronger correlation with the Ideal L2 Self than Instrumentality Prevention. Conversely, Instrumentality Prevention has a stronger correlation with the Ought-to L2 Self than Instrumentality Promotion. Depending on their dominant Instrumentality type, L2 learners were categorised into groups according to their focus, namely promotional and preventional, and studied separately with the help of cluster analysis (Papi & Teimouri, 2014). The results revealed that the ideal L2 self and instrumentality promotion related to motivated behaviour for the promotion-focus as well as the prevention-focus group. On the other hand, the ought-to L2 self and instrumentality prevention related to motivated learning behaviour only for the prevention-focus group. Thus, the consideration of motivational types in the research of L2 motivation has been recognized as important.

Overall, different future selves and instrumentality foci took priority in learners' motivation in the diverse geographical areas studies due to cultural and social reasons. Since the L2MSS model of motivation has not adequately been studied in the Greek EFL context, the present study aspires to contribute to the literature and spur further research.

3. Methodology

3.1. Aim and research questions of the study

The purpose of the research is to explore the L2MSS of learners towards EFL learning. The study will focus on the following research questions:

- (a) What is the L2MSS of Greek adolescent EFL students in terms of *Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to Self, Instrumentality Promotion, Instrumentality Prevention*?
- (a) How do the components of the learners' L2MSS differ in relation to gender, school grade, and self-reported level of competence?
- (a) How do the components of the learners' L2MSS differ in relation to demographic variables such as extra language classes and their parental educational background?

3.2. Participants

598 students of second and third grade (49.3% males and 50.7% females) from five public high schools in Rethymnon, Crete took part in the study. The method of cluster or stratified random sampling was employed, according to which a number of schools is selected at random to participate in the study and all students of the selected schools are considered as participants (Dörnyei, 2007). The choice of schools was semi-random with a view to representing students of all the social and learning backgrounds of the county of Rethymnon.

Gender		Certificate holders		Extra classes		Educational level		
							Fathers'	Mothers'
Male	294 49.4%	0	289	no	83	primary	66	38
Female	301 50.6%	B1	97	private tutoring	157	compulsory	91	63
Not stated	3	B2	172	FL school	358	secondary	212	201
Grade		C2	40			post secondary	84	102
2 nd	260					HE	129	168
3 rd	335							

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants.

The majority of the participants belong to the 14 (N= 236) and 15 (N= 323) age. According to data from the local Bureau of Secondary Education, the students who participated in the survey constituted 25.41% of 2nd graders, 33.70% of 3rd graders, of the respective grades for

the school year 2017-2018 (598 in total out of 2028 2nd and 3rd grade High School students). It could be claimed that the distribution of the participants is quite even and representative of the sample in terms of its distribution across the students' grade and gender.

Concerning the participants' extra language classes, the vast majority of the students (86.2%) attend English Language Courses after school as well. More specifically, 83 students of the sample (13.8%) learn English at school only, 157 students (26.3%) have private lessons and 358 students (59.9%) attend a private English language school. Students were asked to state the language certificates they hold according to which their self-reported language competence was defined. Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of our participants.

3.3. Instrument

The data collection instrument used in this study was the Greek version of the L2MSS questionnaire by Taguchi *et al.* (2009) (see Appendix A). The choice of a questionnaire was based on evidence of it being a useful research tool in various studies. It is also known to be relatively easy to assemble, versatile and capable of gathering large amounts of data in a quick manner and a readily processable form (Dörnyei, 2007). The choice of the specific questionnaire was made on the grounds that it is a tried and reliable research instrument and this would render the results comparable to studies in other educational contexts. Boo *et al.* (2015:153) found that despite the effort to introduce novel instruments in the L2MSS research, the questionnaire still remains the most widely used one.

Since there was no minimum level requirement for the participants' English competence, the questionnaire was administered in Greek, so all students would be able to understand it and answer accordingly. The Greek translation was piloted with 5 EFL adolescent students to check the wording of each item and then checked by a Greek language teacher. The questionnaire consisted of two distinct parts.

The first one concerned the gathering of information about the participants' L2 MSS and specifically the four scales of Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, instrumentality promotion and instrumentality prevention (Taguchi *et al.* (2009). There was a total of 20 items, equally divided among the 4 scales (5 items for each one). Each item was given in the form of a statement using a 6-point Likert-like scale from agree strongly-6 or disagree strongly-1. The second part of the questionnaire concerned the collection of demographic data, such as age, gender, parents' educational level and the English language certificates they hold.

3.4. Procedure

After the second author visited the five public high schools of the Rethymnon prefecture schools to inform the headmasters about the nature and aim of the research, permission was granted to carry out the research in each of the schools on agreed upon dates. The questionnaires were to be completed during the English language course in the presence of the second author, so that any possible queries could be clarified when necessary. Participation in the research was anonymous and voluntary, with students being willing to participate in the process and the English language teachers eager to assist. The completion of the data collection process took about three months from January to March 2018.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data obtained from student responses were processed statistically with the use of IBM SPSS® version 24 statistics software. Principle component analysis was run on the questionnaire items to check the internal consistency of its Greek translation. Compound variables were formed based on the factors. Reliability was checked through computation of Cronbach's alpha test. The compound variables were later used in the analyses of variance (anova) as dependent variables against which to measure the effect of the independent factors (gender, self-perceived level of competence, extra classes and parents' educational level). Significance level was set at 0.05.

4. Results

Principle component analysis with Varimax rotation on the twenty items of the L2MSS questionnaire indicated four factors with Eigenvalues higher than 1. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated significant adequate sampling. Three items (No 13, 14, 15) loaded on two factors and were removed from the analysis. The current factor solution can still indicate towards the original scale labels but with slightly different item combinations. It explains 55.16% of the total variance. The internal consistency of the factors, as checked by Cronbach α test, was acceptable. Table 2 presents the current factor solution (only loading above .40 are reported), means, standard deviation and Cronbach α of the factors.

Factor one aggregates items signifying the learners' *ought-to L2 self* (5 items). It indicates the external attitudes or pressure that the learners receive in their language learning efforts; what the social environment, the others, the parents will think of them if they have or do not have English language competence. Two items (No 12, 16) from the original prevention scale loaded on this factor. They both refer to more generalized attitudes that the learners seem to be well aware of.

Factor two indicates the learners' *ideal L2 self* (5 items). Apart from the items of the original ideal L2 self scale, one item (3) from the instrumentality promotion scale also loads on this factor. It refers to international travelling and it was interpreted by the participants as a lifestyle choice rather than a career prospect possibly due to their age.

Factor three refers to *instrumentality promotion* with an emphasis on the future professional career of the learners (5 items). All five items indicate rather distant professional prospect for our adolescent participants. One item (No 4) from the original prevention scale loaded on this factor. It was probably the long-term career prospect that led it to this factor rather than the possibility of failure in it. One item (No 2) from the original ought-to scale also loaded on this factor. It indicates the family attitude for career success which also includes English language competence. Factor four indicates *instrumentality prevention* (2 items). Only two items from the original scale loaded on this factor emphasizing proximal undesirable situations that the learners wish to avoid: failing language certificate exams and getting a low mark in the subject.

The principle component analysis performed here points to the directions that the same scale labels used in the original questionnaire can also apply in the Greek adolescent population. The fact that certain items loaded on different factors can be attributed to their

different interpretation by our participants both because of their age and their cultural background, which are as previously mentioned, under-researched.

	F1	F2	F3	F4	Mean (SD)
10. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.	.778				2.77 (1.39)
12. Studying English is important to me because, if I don't have knowledge of English, I'll be considered a weak student.	.699				2.80 (1.45)
16. Studying English is important to me because I don't like to be considered a poorly educated person.	.678				3.22 (1.62)
6. I have to study English, because, if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.	.666				2.65 (1.52)
18. Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English.	.650				2.49 (1.43)
5. I can imagine myself living abroad and having a discussion in English.		.831			4.25 (1.60)
1. I can imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.		.768			4.66 (1.32)
9. I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English.		.749			4.68 (1.30)
3. Learning English is important to me because I would like to travel internationally.		.663			4.84 (1.33)
17. The things I want to do in the future require me to use English.		.450			4.55 (1.41)
4. I have to study English; otherwise, I think I cannot be successful in my future career.			.710		4.31 (1.44)
19. Studying English can be important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.			.659		5.08 (1.20)
11. Studying English is important to me because English proficiency is necessary for promotion in the future.			.658		4.73 (1.27)
7. It is important for me to learn English, because with English I will be able to work anywhere in the world.			.595		4.89 (1.25)
2. My parents believe that I must study English to be an educated person.			.403		4.59 (1.33)
8. Studying English is necessary for me because I don't want to get a poor score or a fail mark in English proficiency tests.				.743	3.59 (1.56)
20. I have to study English because I don't want to get bad marks in it.				.828	3.04 (1.63)
Total variance explained: 55,16%					
Mean total	2.79 (1.07)	4.60 (1.01)	4.72 (.84)	3.32 (1.43)	
Cronbach α	.767	.779	.667	.745	

Table 2. Factor solution of the L2MSS questionnaire, Cronbach α , Means and (SD) of the factors.

After compound variables were computed based on the factors produced in the principle component analysis, analysis of variance (anova) was performed. The anova test with the motivational factors as dependent variables indicated statistical significant differences in factor two and three on the independent variables of gender ($F_2=f(1:594)15.674, p=.000$), $F_3=f(1:594)15.360, p=.000$) and self-reported level of competence ($F_2=f(3:597)28.814,$

$p=.000$), $F3=f(3:597)5.344$, $p=.001$). The independent variable of grade indicated statistical significant differences for factor one, $f(1:597)10.711$, $p=.001$.

	F1	F2	F3	F4
Gender				
Male	2.84 (1.08)	4.43* (1.10)	4.59* (.92)	3.23 (1.44)
Female	2.74 (1.06)	4.75* (.89)	4.86* (.72)	3.40 (1.41)
School grade				
2 nd	2.95* (1.03)	4.61 (.97)	4.76 (.82)	3.43 (1.36)
3 rd	2.66* (1.08)	4.58 (1.05)	4.69 (.87)	3.22 (1.47)
Self-reported competence according to certificates held				
0	2.82 (1.11)	4.23* (1.10)	4.58* (.94)	3.41 (1.45)
B1	2.79 (.94)	4.81* (.88)	4.84* (.75)	3.32 (1.36)
B2	2.74 (1.11)	4.94* (.78)	4.82* (.77)	3.20 (1.41)
C2	2.77 (.84)	5.22* (.58)	4.99* (.50)	3.06 (1.43)
Extra classes				
No	2.53* (1.11)	3.56* (1.11)	4.09* (1.10)	3.26 (1.48)
Private tutoring	2.78* (1.14)	4.72* (.90)	4.71* (.83)	3.25 (1.47)
Language schools	2.85* (1.02)	4.78* (.90)	4.87* (.72)	3.36 (1.40)
Father's educational level				
Primary	2.69 (.91)	3.90* (1.16)	4.42* (.87)	3.29 (1.39)
Compulsory	2.72 (1.26)	4.38* (1.10)	4.63* (1.03)	3.24 (1.59)
Secondary	2.80 (1.12)	4.57* (.98)	4.68* (.86)	3.30 (1.40)
Post-secondary	2.83 (.95)	4.84* (.71)	4.82* (.68)	3.41 (1.37)
HE	2.85 (.99)	5.00* (.88)	4.93* (.75)	3.36 (1.39)
Mother's educational level				
Primary	2.58 (1.11)	3.82* (1.17)	4.34* (.99)	3.06 (1.43)
Compulsory	2.71 (1.09)	4.46* (.99)	4.75* (.80)	3.43 (1.40)
Secondary	2.76 (1.10)	4.46* (.98)	4.63* (.91)	3.16 (1.44)
Post-secondary	2.85 (1.07)	4.75* (.89)	4.81* (.74)	3.44 (1.48)
HE	2.88 (1.01)	4.91* (.93)	4.85* (.79)	3.45 (1.34)

* $p<0.05$

Table 3. Means and (SD) in the four motivation factors in relation to independent variables.

To further illustrate the differences between students of different self-reported competence in the two school grades, cross tabulation was performed. Crosstabs analysis of school grades and certificate holders indicated statistically significant differences ($\chi^2= 3:47.747$, $p=.000$). There are more certificate holders among 3rd grade students (56.2%) and they hold higher percentages in B2 (37.2%) and C2 level certificates (9.2%) compared to 2nd graders (43.6% certificate holders: B2=17.9%, C2=3.4%).

For the variable of extra classes statistical significant differences were indicated for the first three factors ($F1=f(2:594)2.968$, $p=.050$), $F2=f(2:594)57.297$, $p=.000$), $F3=f(2:594)29.721$, $p=.000$). The Tukey HSD post-hoc analyses indicated statistically significant differences in favour of the students who attend extra classes, whether in private tutoring or in a language school. The post hoc analysis is used when the variable (extra classes in this case) has more than two groups (here: no extra classes, private tutoring, classes in private language schools) in order to indicate which specific groups differ significantly.

The anova results indicated statistical significant differences in factors two and three for the independent variables of mother's ($F2=f(4:576)12.290$, $p=.000$), $F3=f(4:576)3.719$, $p=.005$) and father's educational level ($F2=f(4:581)16.298$, $p=.000$), $F3=f(4:581)4.661$, $p=.001$). The post-hoc analyses indicated that zero-certificate holders differ significantly from all the other groups in factor two-ideal L2 self and factor three-instrumentality promotion. Means and standard deviations for all the variables are presented in table 3.

5. Discussion

The discussion will focus on answering the research questions set in the methodology section.

5.1. The L2 MSS of Greek adolescent EFL students in terms of Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to Self, Instrumentality Promotion, Instrumentality Prevention.

The order of frequencies for the Greek adolescent EFL learners is, in descending order, instrumentality promotion ($M=4.72$), ideal L2 self ($M=4.60$), instrumentality prevention ($M=3.32$) and ought-to L2 self ($M=2.79$). Similar order of frequencies was indicated in Teimouri's (2017) Iranian adolescents, although the strength of the means is lower in our participants. Moreover, Teimouri (2017) distinguishes between the own and other standpoints for the ideal and ought-to L2 factors. In our case, although the ideal L2 self is solely from the own standpoint, the ought-to factor aggregates both the own (No12, 16) and the other (No10, 6, 18) standpoints and the means for these items is higher for the former (i.e. the own).

The internal consistency of the L2MSS questionnaire was partially validated in the Greek adolescent population. The labels of the original scales can still be sustained in our factor solution, despite the fact that there are different combinations of items in them. The two items (12, 16) from the prevention scale which load on the ought-to factor indicate the own standpoint; the one item (2) from the original ought-to scale which loads on the promotion factor indicates the importance of parental influence for this age group; and the fact that the two items of the instrumentality prevention factor refer to failing language exams and getting low marks indicates our adolescents wish to avoid solely proximal risks. On the positive side, Greek students do not feel these risks as daunting as their Chinese

counterparts in You and Dörnyei (2016), where instrumentality prevention was the most powerful motivator.

Overall, the Greek adolescents' L2MSS seems to be on the positive side as instrumentality promotion and ideal L2 self prevail but not as strong or developed as in other countries. Appropriate teaching interventions (see section 5.4) could assist towards this direction.

5.2. The effect of gender, school grade, and self-reported level of competence on L2MSS factors

Greek female students demonstrated significantly higher ideal L2 selves and instrumentality promotion than their male classmates. Similar findings have been found in many other L2MSS studies in diverse cultural contexts (Dörnyei & Csizér 2002, Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Ryan, 2009). The female construction of self-image extends to the specific domain of L2 motivation with more openness to communication with people of other cultures and travelling (Henry, 2011). Moreover, female students scored higher in instrumentality prevention while males in ought-to L2 self. This could support Henry's (2011) claim that gender differences are more likely to manifest "in the content of feared selves". However, in the present study differences in the feared selves did not reach the significance level.

2nd grade students indicated significantly higher (albeit relatively low overall) ought-to selves compared to 3rd graders. Their scores in the other factors, although non-significant, are still higher than 3rd grade students. Initially, this was a puzzling finding. Only after the crosstabs analysis with the certificates they hold was run, did its meaning become apparent. 3rd graders having succeeded in language certificate exams may feel that they have fulfilled the expectations of their environment regarding language learning. After all, the Greek society is known for its emphasis on language certificates (Angouri, Mattheoudakis & Zigrika, 2010). In our case, 2nd grade students are possibly in the process of preparing for them and thus feel that they are still struggling to meet such expectations. In this effort, they try to visualise themselves as speakers of English, the benefits it may have in the long run together with the potential disappointment they wish to avoid.

Self-reported level of competence, measured according to the certificates that the participants hold, also indicated significant increase in ideal L2 self and instrumentality promotion: the motivation scores increased for higher certificate holders. This is an important finding given the fact that the L2MSS variables are most often associated with intended effort for learning rather than actual achievement in English language learning (Al-Hoorie, 2017). In the Greek context of secondary education ideal L2 self is positively associated with accomplishments in English. On the contrary, ought-to and instrumentality prevention decreased in frequency, which further substantiates this claim. This finding could also be related to the geographic location of the study, Crete, which is an extremely popular tourist destination. Our participants may more easily anticipate the benefits of English language learning and visualise themselves as speakers of English as an international language not only for social contact but for future professional purposes. Moreover, English may be more readily accessible to them than in other Greek provinces.

5.3. The effect of demographic variables on L2MSS factors.

In a similar vein, ideal L2 self, instrumentality promotion as well as ought-to significantly increased when students attend extra language classes. Such classes whether privately or in

a language school, may assist learners in visualising themselves as English speakers and realising the benefits of foreign language learning but they seem to increase the pressure from the environment towards this direction. Moreover, high parental educational level also significantly increases ideal L2 self and instrumentality promotion. Parental influence is generally stronger for this age group and it seems that the more educated the parents are, the more they can project the benefits of a positive L2 self image to their children and possibly they are willing to invest in supplementary language classes for them. Similar results were also indicated in Iwaniec's (2018) study of adolescent Polish students.

5.4. Teaching implications

Teaching interventions based on the L2MSS model have been relatively few in the literature (Dörnyei 2019). The scarce cases involve adult populations: Magid and Chan in the UK and Hong Kong, Sampson (2012) in Japan and Safdari (2019) in Iran. They all report positive results in the motivational force of the students and a more plausible vision of the ideal L2 self post intervention. It would be particularly interesting to develop or adapt teaching interventions for the adolescent population in Greece. Dörnyei (2001) proposed a four step cycle of motivational teaching practice with a) creating basic motivational conditions, b) generating initial motivation, c) maintaining and protecting motivation, and d) encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. More recently, Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013) proposed a six-step plan for successful teaching interventions which may extend over a term or a year:

- (a) Creating a vision (e.g. future alternatives)
- (a) Strengthening the vision (e.g. future photo album)
- (a) Substantiating the plausibility of the vision (unrealistic expectations)
- (a) Transforming the vision into action (e.g. goal-setting, study plans, self-regulation strategies, success recipes, roadmaps)
- (a) Keeping it alive (e.g. reality checks)
- (a) Counterbalancing the vision (e.g. what if scenarios, overcoming possible barriers)

Such teaching interventions would constitute valuable additions in the motivating learners literature (Dörnyei 2019) which has not been extensively documented. Moreover, they would aptly manipulate the teaching context to improve the L2 learning experience (the third component of L2MSS) for the students.

5. Conclusion

The present study investigated the L2MSS profile of Greek adolescent students in terms of ideal L2 self, ought-to self, instrumentality promotion and prevention. The motivational variables were checked against the independent variables of gender, grade, self-reported competence, extra language lessons and parental educational level. The results demonstrate higher scores in the positive instrumentality promotion and ideal L2 self while lower ones in instrumentality prevention and ought-to L2 self. Instrumentality promotion and ideal L2 self scores were higher for female students, those with higher self-reported competence, those who attend extra language classes and those whose parents are more educated. This is the first attempt to depict the L2MSS profile of Greek adolescents and as such it may constitute the basis for future teaching interventions to enhance the future self images of teenage students. A limitation of the present study is that despite the large scale quantitative data that it is based on, it does not provide any qualitative insight into the participants' view of

their future L2 self images. It would be worth investigating that especially in cases of extreme positive and negative cases of adolescents' future L2 self images.

References

- Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2017). Sixty years of language motivation research: Looking back and looking forward. *SAGE Open*, 7(1), 2158244017701976.
- Al-Shehri, A. S. (2009). Motivation and vision: The relation between the ideal L2 self, imagination and visual style. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 164-171.
- Angouri, J., Mattheoudakis, M., & Zigrika, M. (2010). Then how will they get the “much wanted paper”? A multifaceted study of English as a foreign language in Greece. In *Advances in research on language acquisition and teaching: Selected papers (Proceedings of the 14th International Conference of Greek Applied Linguistics Association)*. Athens: Greek Applied Linguistics Association (179-194).
- Boo, Z., Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). L2 motivation research 2005–2014: Understanding a publication surge and a changing landscape. *System*, 55, 145-157.
- Busse, V. 2013. 'An exploration of motivation and self-beliefs of first year students of German,' *System* 41: 379–98.
- Csizér, K., & Dörnyei, Z. (2005). The internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning effort. *The modern language journal*, 89(1), 19-36.
- Csizér, K., & Kormos, J. (2009). Learning experiences, selves and motivated learning behaviour: A comparative analysis of structural models for Hungarian secondary and university learners of English. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 98-119.
- Csizér, K., & Lukács, G. (2010). The comparative analysis of motivation, attitudes and selves: The case of English and German in Hungary. *System*, 38(1), 1-13.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001b). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., (2005). *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2009). Individual differences: Interplay of learner characteristics and learning environment. *Language Learning*, 59, 230-248.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2009b). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9–42). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2019). Towards a better understanding of the L2 Learning Experience, the Cinderella of the L2 Motivational Self System. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 9(1), 19-30.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (2002). Some dynamics of language attitudes and motivation: Results of a longitudinal nationwide survey. *Applied linguistics*, 23(4), 421-462.
- Dörnyei, Z., Csizér, K., & Németh, N. (2006). *Motivation, language attitudes and globalisation: A Hungarian perspective*. Multilingual Matters, Clevedon.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of motivation and use*. London: Edward Arnold.

- Hadfield, J., & Dörnyei, Z. (2013). *Motivating learning*. Harlow, England: Longman.
- Henry, A. (2011). Gender differences in L2 motivation: A reassessment. In S. A. Davies (Ed.), *Gender gap: Causes, experiences and effects* pp. 81-102. New York: Nova Science
- Henry, A. (2009). Gender differences in compulsory school pupils' L2 self-concepts: A longitudinal study. *System*, 37(2), 177-193.
- Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect. *Psychological review*, 94(3), 319.
- Higgins, E. T. (1998). Promotion and prevention: Regulatory focus as a motivational principle. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 30, pp. 1-46). Academic Press.
- Higgins, E. T., Shah, J., & Friedman, R. (1997). Emotional responses to goal attainment: Strength of regulatory focus as moderator. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 72(3), 515-525.
- Islam, M., Lamb, M., & Chambers, G. (2013). The L2 motivational self system and national interest: A Pakistani perspective. *System*, 41(2), 231-244.
- Iwaniec, J. (2018). The effects of parental education level and school location on language learning motivation. *The Language Learning Journal*, 1-15.
- Kachru, B. B. 2005. *Asian Englishes: Beyond the Canon*. (Vol. 1). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Kormos, J., & Csizér, K. (2008). Age-related differences in the motivation of learning English as a foreign language: Attitudes, selves, and motivated learning behavior. *Language learning*, 58(2), 327-355.
- Lamb, M. (2012). A self system perspective on young adolescents' motivation to learn English in urban and rural settings. *Language learning*, 62(4), 997-1023.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American psychologist*, 41(9), 954.
- Noels, K. A., Clément, R., & Pelletier, L. G. (1999). Perceptions of teachers' communicative style and students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(1), 23-34.
- Papi, M. (2010). The L2 motivational self system, L2 anxiety, and motivated behavior: A structural equation modeling approach. *System*, 38(3), 467-479.
- Papi, M., & Teimouri, Y. (2014). Language learner motivational types: A cluster analysis study. *Language Learning*, 64(3), 493-525.
- Ryan, S. (2009). Self and identity in L2 motivation in Japan: The ideal L2 self and Japanese learners of English. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 120-143.
- Taguchi, T., Magid, M., & Papi, M. (2009). The L2 motivational self system among Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*, 66-97.
- Ueki, M., & Takeuchi, O. (2012). Validating the L2 motivational self system in a Japanese EFL context: The interplay of L2 motivation, L2 anxiety, self-efficacy, and the perceived amount of information. *Language Education & Technology*, 49, 1-22.
- You, C. J., & Dörnyei, Z. (2016). Language learning motivation in China: Results of a large-scale stratified survey. *Applied Linguistics*, 37(4), 495-519.

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Σε αυτό το μέρος, θα ήθελα να εκφράσεις πόσο συμφωνείς ή διαφωνείς με τις ακόλουθες δηλώσεις, απλά κυκλώνοντας ένα νούμερο από το 1 έως το 6.. Παρακαλώ μην παραλήψεις κανένα στοιχείο.

Διαφωνώ κάθετα	Διαφωνώ	Διαφωνώ ελαφρώς	Συμφωνώ ελαφρώς	Συμφωνώ	Συμφωνώ απόλυτα
1	2	3	4	5	6

π.χ. Εάν διαφωνείς κάθετα με την ακόλουθη πρόταση, κάνε αυτό:

Μου αρέσει η ροκ μουσική πάρα πολύ.	1V	2	3	4	5	6
-------------------------------------	----	---	---	---	---	---

- Μπορώ να φανταστώ μια κατάσταση κατά την οποία μιλάω στα Αγγλικά με ξένους.
- Οι γονείς μου πιστεύουν ότι πρέπει να μάθω αγγλικά ώστε να γίνω μορφωμένος άνθρωπος.
- Το να μάθω αγγλικά είναι σημαντικό για εμένα επειδή θα ήθελα να ταξιδέψω στο εξωτερικό.
- Πρέπει να μάθω αγγλικά, διαφορετικά, πιστεύω ότι δεν θα μπορέσω να επιτύχω στην μελλοντική μου καριέρα.
- Μπορώ να φανταστώ τον εαυτό μου να μένει στο εξωτερικό και να κάνει συζήτηση στα αγγλικά.
- Πρέπει να μάθω αγγλικά, επειδή, αν δεν το κάνω, πιστεύω ότι οι γονείς μου θα απογοητευτούν από εμένα.
- Είναι σημαντικό για εμένα να μάθω αγγλικά επειδή με τα αγγλικά θα μπορώ να δουλέψω οπουδήποτε στον κόσμο.
- Είναι σημαντικό για εμένα να μάθω αγγλικά επειδή δεν θέλω να πάρω χαμηλή βαθμολογία, ή να αποτύχω στις εξετάσεις γλωσσικής ικανότητας των Αγγλικών.
- Φαντάζομαι τον εαυτό μου ως κάποιον ο οποίος είναι ικανός να μιλάει Αγγλικά.
- Είναι σημαντικό να μαθαίνω αγγλικά, επειδή οι άνθρωποι του περιβάλλοντός μου αυτό περιμένουν από εμένα.
- Είναι σημαντικό για εμένα να μαθαίνω αγγλικά, επειδή η γνώση των αγγλικών των αγγλικών είναι σημαντική για την μελλοντική ανέλιξη.
- Είναι σημαντικό για εμένα να μαθαίνω αγγλικά, επειδή αν δεν έχω γνώση αγγλικών θα θεωρηθώ αδύναμος μαθητής.
- Όποτε σκέφτομαι την μελλοντική μου καριέρα, φαντάζομαι τον εαυτό μου να χρησιμοποιεί αγγλικά.
- Οι γονείς μου με ενθαρρύνουν να πηγαίνω σε επιπλέον μαθήματα αγγλικών μετά το σχολείο (π.χ. σε Κέντρα Ξένων Γλωσσών).
- Τα αγγλικά μπορεί να είναι σημαντικά για εμένα, επειδή πιστεύω ότι θα τα χρειαστώ για επιπλέον σπουδές στον τομέα μου.
- Το να μάθω αγγλικά είναι σημαντικό για εμένα, επειδή δεν μου αρέσει να με θεωρούν άτομο χαμηλού μορφωτικού επιπέδου.
- Τα πράγματα που θέλω να κάνω στο μέλλον απαιτούν να χρησιμοποιώ Αγγλικά.
- Το να μάθω αγγλικά είναι σημαντικό για εμένα, επειδή οι άλλοι θα με σέβονται περισσότερο αν έχω γνώσεις αγγλικών.
- Το να μάθω αγγλικά είναι σημαντικό για εμένα, επειδή πιστεύω ότι κάποια μέρα θα είναι χρήσιμο για να βρω μια καλή δουλειά.
- Πρέπει να μάθω Αγγλικά, επειδή δεν θέλω να πάρω κακό βαθμό σε αυτό το μάθημα.

Zoe Kantaridou (kantazoe@uom.edu.gr) is a teacher of English for Academic Purposes in the University of Macedonia, Greece. She holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Her research interests lie in the areas of motivation for language learning, curriculum design, task-based teaching, learning styles and strategies and intercultural communication.

Eleanna Xekalou (eleannax@yahoo.gr) is a graduate of the Faculty of English Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She also holds an M.Ed. in Teaching English as a Foreign/International Language from the Hellenic Open University and works as an English language teacher in the private sector.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 284-308

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Promoting Intercultural Competence of Migrant Learners through Computer Mediated Activities in the EFL Classroom

Προώθηση της Διαπολιτισμικής Ικανότητας των Μεταναστών Μαθητών μέσω Δραστηριοτήτων με τη Μεσολάβηση Υπολογιστή, στην Τάξη Εκμάθησης της Αγγλικής ως Ξένης Γλώσσας

Maria MATSOUKA

This article focuses on the intercultural communication competence of migrant pupils attending a 'Reception/Preparatory Class for the Education of Refugees' (DYEP), in Greece. More specifically, it explores whether the intercultural communication competence of migrant learners can be affected by an intercultural educational intervention specifically designed for them, the use of their mother tongue, and the use of the WorldWide Web (the Web) in the learning process. It also explores whether the attitude of migrant pupils towards the host country can be affected by the intercultural educational intervention. To this end, a small-scale case study was conducted, based on a mixed method approach, which used a questionnaire given to the migrant pupils prior to and after the intervention, as well as a classroom observation list. The results confirmed the hypothesis that a cross-cultural educational intervention specifically designed for migrant pupils and including the use of the Web and translanguaging practices in the classroom can enhance the intercultural communication competence of migrant pupils and their positive attitude towards the host country.



Το άρθρο αυτό επικεντρώνεται στην ικανότητα διαπολιτισμικής επικοινωνίας των μεταναστών μαθητών που συμμετέχουν σε μια «Δομή Υποδοχής και Εκπαίδευσης Προσφύγων» (ΔΥΕΠ), στην Ελλάδα. Συγκεκριμένα, διερευνά κατά πόσον η διαπολιτισμική επικοινωνία των μεταναστών μαθητών μπορεί να επηρεαστεί από μια ειδικά σχεδιασμένη διαπολιτισμική εκπαιδευτική παρέμβαση, τη χρήση της μητρικής τους γλώσσας και τη χρήση του Ιστού (WorldWideWeb) στη μαθησιακή διαδικασία. Διερευνά επίσης κατά πόσον η στάση των μεταναστών μαθητών προς τη χώρα υποδοχής μπορεί να επηρεαστεί από τη διαπολιτισμική εκπαιδευτική παρέμβαση. Για το σκοπό αυτό, διεξήχθη μια μικρή μελέτη περίπτωσης με βάση την προσέγγιση της μεικτής μεθόδου, η οποία χρησιμοποίησε ένα ερωτηματολόγιο που δόθηκε στους μετανάστες μαθητές πριν και μετά την παρέμβαση, καθώς και έναν κατάλογο παρατήρησης της τάξης. Τα αποτελέσματα επιβεβαίωσαν την υπόθεση ότι μια διαπολιτισμική εκπαιδευτική παρέμβαση ειδικά σχεδιασμένη

για τους μετανάστες μαθητές η οποία συμπεριλαμβάνει τη χρήση του Ιστού και των μεταφραστικών πρακτικών στην τάξη, μπορεί να ενισχύσει τη διαπολιτισμική επικοινωνία και τη θετική στάση των μεταναστών μαθητών έναντι της χώρας υποδοχής.

Key words: Intercultural Communication Competence, Migrant Pupils, the Internet, Mother Tongue, Translanguaging

1. Introduction

The great interconnectivity of people because of migration is an undeniable fact. The numbers are impressive. Intercultural communication competence has been explored so far mostly in relation to issues such as migrant workers (Byram, Nichols & Stevens, 2001), language learning (Conacher & Geraghty, 2014) and travelers (Bochner, Furnham & Ward, 2001). Any reference to the intercultural competence of migrant learners is indirectly related to other issues, such as language learning (Conacher & Geraghty, 2014) and the use of technology and new media in education (Vlachos, 2009). So, we can say that the intercultural competence of migrant learners needs to be further elucidated.

Most importantly, all reference to migrant learners is made from the host countries' perspective. Only the European Commission Research on 'Children in Communication about Migration' (European Commission Research, 2007) deals with the intercultural communication of migrant pupils and gives voice to their histories and experiences through case studies.

What is more, 'the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization' (UNESCO) has recently admitted that "education at the time of the survey is insufficient to understand the dynamics of education and migration" (UNESCO, 2018, p. 118). On top of that, exploring Greek reality, UNESCO claims that Greek educators are deficient in the inclusion of migrant learners in the national educational system, due to "their inexperience in intercultural issues" (*ibid.*, p. 64). This article therefore seeks to shed light on the way in which the intercultural communication competence of migrant pupils and, consequently, their attitude towards the host country can be further strengthened in the state school system.

2. The interculturally competent migrant learner

2.1. Profile of the interculturally competent migrant learner

Generally speaking, migrant learners are the emergent intercultural speakers in a world where national borders are becoming increasingly porous due to the phenomenon of transnationalism (Vertovec, 2001). It is obvious, then, that learners, especially migrant learners, must find their way through these 'new social fields' created by people with different languages and cultures (Basch, Blanc-Szanton & Glick Schiller, 1992, p. 14). To this end, migrant learners should become interculturally competent learners, who are both "linguistically adept (albeit not 'native speaker' proficient) and capable of identifying the cultural norms that are often implicit in the language behaviour of the groups they meet" (Corbett, 2003, p. 40).

What is more, interculturally competent migrant learners not only "navigate between the languages and cultures they know" (Liddicoat, 2004, p.19) but they also "create identities for themselves which work in these contexts" (*ibid.*). As Darwin & Norton (2014) eloquently put it, "When migrant

language learners speak, they do not just exchange information, they also reorganize a sense of who they are and how they relate to the world” (p.57). Consequently, the classroom becomes “a continual site of struggle, as language learners navigate through different contexts of power” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 57). In a ‘worldly classroom’ like that, as claimed by Giroux (2007), “politics have their own place” (pp. 3-4), and migrant learners can become interculturally competent learners by learning not only how to navigate between different languages and cultures, but also how to claim new identities.

To that effect, an interculturally competent migrant learner, like any interculturally competent communicator, should be aware that “cultures are relative, not absolute, in the sense that there is no ‘normal’ way of doing things, but rather that “all behaviour is culturally variable” (Liddicoat, 2002, p. 10). It is evident, then, that interculturally successful people perceive their ‘self’ in a broader sense. As argued in Pusch, Patino, Renwick, and Saltzman (1981), the effective cross-cultural communicator “tolerates ambiguity and accepts personal failures...respects other cultures and their peoples, understands his or her own cultural roots and their effect on personal behavior, and has a well-developed sense of humour” (p. 99).

In the same vein, Fantini (2000) claims that the effective cross-cultural communicator has “empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, motivation, tolerance to ambiguity, sense of humour, and a willingness to suspend judgment among others” (p. 28). Byram *et al.* (2001) summarize the most important features of the interculturally competent individual, saying that: “He or she is someone who has an ability to interact with “others”, to accept other perspectives and perceptions, to mediate between different perspectives, and to be conscious of their evaluations of difference” (p. 5).

In addition, intercultural communication is characterized by ‘culture shock’. As Dorjee and Ting-Toomey (2018) argue, ‘culture shock’ is about the stress, the feeling of disorientation, and the sense of identity loss you face in a new culture. It may also be expressed by means of psychosomatic symptoms, which hinder the efforts of migrant learners to communicate (Barna, 1994, pp. 337-345). Consequently, in order to become interculturally competent interactants, migrant learners must overcome this negative transition experience and turn it into a positive learning experience of other cultures, which will enhance their intercultural understanding and self-efficacy (Milstein, 2005).

2.2. The interculturally competent migrant learner and the issue of languages

The use of languages in the post-modern reality of super-diversity (Olwig, 2013) is particularly challenging. In this context, the idea of ‘one nation, one language’ fades away. Most of the times, migrant learners come to the intercultural classroom with disparate linguistic repertoires, which reflect their life trajectories, since “a linguistic repertoire reflects a life, not a birth”, as Blommaert (2010, p. 171) argues. What is more, migrant learners must ‘harness’ all their idiosyncratic linguistic repertoires, including their mother tongue, along with all the new languages of the new linguistic community in which they live, so that they are “comfortable and capable in any intercultural context” (Liddicoat, 2004, p. 19). Intercultural contexts are also subjected to great ‘fluidity’, since they change not only from country to country, but also from time to time and from space to space within the same country (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 57).

Bearing in mind “the fluidity and dynamism of the social world” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 57), migrant learners do their best and invest in languages “to claim the right to speak” (*ibid.*). It is clear, then, that interculturally competent migrant learners should be very adept at using any linguistic resource they have at their disposal in order to communicate effectively. This is consistent with translanguaging, which allows students to navigate between different languages in order to

understand the words and the behaviors around them (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging can be implemented by turning the classroom into a ‘third space’, as called by Bhabha (1994, p. 36), a space where “hybrid languages and cultures can thrive” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 63).

To start with, in this multicultural classroom, the English language emerges as a long-established *lingua franca*, “a public property used by anyone to express any cultural heritage and any value system” (Smith, 1987, p. 3). Furthermore, migrant learners invest in learning the target language of their host country, because they “view target language as a necessity or a key to cosmopolitan membership” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 57).

What is more, mother tongues are welcomed in the classroom where intercultural exploration takes place, because, when someone talks in their second or third language, they never abandon their thoughts, feelings and values, which can be expressed only in the mother tongue (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002). By forming their own interpersonal spaces in the classroom, migrant learners legitimize their native languages and “reclaim their right to speak” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 57). Using their native languages, migrant learners also “see themselves in every aspect of their work at school” (Cummins, 2007, p.1) and become more willing to exchange thoughts and ideas.

Another important issue that emerges is that language learning is always politically oriented. Indisputably, in the ‘third spaces’, migrant learners “invest in learning and practicing languages, because they know that they will acquire a wider range of resources... and these social gains in turn will enhance the range of identities they can claim in a particular community” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 57). Languages are always in a power relationship with cultural identities, and migrant learners more or less consciously appropriate languages to claim that power. In this way, “the classroom becomes a generative space for intercultural citizens” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 60).

2.3. The interculturally competent migrant learner and technology

Technology is pervasive in our lives in a more or less conspicuous way. In the case of migration, transport developments have undoubtedly increased both “the speed and frequency of this type of movement” (Vertovec, 2001, p. 15). What is more, the increasing sophistication in communications and especially synchronous communication, such as social networks (Facebook, Twitter) and VoIP Phone Calls (Skype, Viber) (Warschauer & Healy, 1998), helps migrants maintain their social relationships with their country of origin in these new “social fields” that they create (Basch, Blanc-Szanton & Glick Schiller, 1992). Thus, migrant learners come to the intercultural class having a clear idea of who they are and where they come from.

From an educational point of view, “formal language learning now uses technology, allowing all learners equal access to intercultural contact and liberating learning from the physical and temporal boundaries of the class” (Conacher & Geraghty, 2014, p. 11). The Internet, among other Web applications, is “one of the main media for interacting interculturally” (*ibid.*, p.12), as it gives migrant learners the opportunity to explore other cultures, learn about the traditions of peoples, their ethics and pop cultures and the latest news from around the world, among other things.

Admittedly, “when language learners interact via the computer, they are seeking more than words and phrases; instead, they are trying to make themselves understood and be recognized by their interlocutors” (Koufadi, 2014, p. 203). Computer Mediated Communications thus give migrant learners the opportunity to negotiate not only Internet messages but also their individual identities.

What is more, the intercultural communication competence of migrant learners is further reinforced by the ‘new literacies’ (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro & Cammack, 2004), which refer, among other things, to the

ability of learners to use search engines to locate and evaluate information, to interpret multimodal texts and videos, and, to have access to Internet translators and dictionaries, in order to refine the way in which they are expressed. The cultivation of new literacies allows migrant learners to 'settle' in the new global high-tech society and acquire a transcultural identity, using technology as the new *lingua franca*. The cultivation of new literacies, promoting intercultural communication competence, can be developed smoothly along with the foundational literacies of speaking, writing, reading and listening through the blended approach to learning, which combines "both online learning and classroom teacher led tuition" (Vlachos, 2009, p. 253).

As summarized in Vlachos (2009), blended learning in the foreign-language learning context, promotes the intercultural communication competence of learners by helping them "discover and relate to new people from various and diverse social and cultural contexts" (p. 255). It is, therefore, interesting to explore to what extent computer-based practices can affect the intercultural communication competence of migrant learners.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research context and research objectives

Drawing on research exploring the profile of interculturally competent migrant learners (see 2.1 above), the present study deals with the enhancement of the intercultural communication competence of migrant pupils in a junior high school in mainland Greece. Although the education of migrant pupils came to the fore in the current national education system through a series of laws, such as Law 1566/1985 (Government Gazette 167/issue A/30-9-1985), which stipulates that the main objective of school education is the full development of pupils' abilities regardless of gender and origin, and the Joint Ministerial Decision 152360/ΓΔ4/2016 (Government Gazette 3049 B 2016), which determines that the education of all refugee and migrant children should take place in refugee accommodation centers or in reception classes in public schools, aiming at their gradual integration into the national education system, there has been no special provision for the intercultural education of these children. What is more, there is evidence that the development of the intercultural communication competence of migrant learners in the Greek education system has been problematic so far, because "teachers were unprepared, due to their inexperience in intercultural issues" (UNESCO, 2018, p. 64).

In the light of the issues raised above, the aim of this research was to explore the intercultural communication competence of migrant pupils in the 2nd High School of Fillipiada in mainland Greece, using computer-based intercultural activities designed by the researcher and implemented through blended learning (see 2.3 above). The aforementioned activities were designed to raise the awareness of migrants of various aspects of their host country and, at the same time, to provide them with a safe place where they can feel free to express themselves (see 2.2 above). Within this specific context, the present research examined the following research questions:

1. To what extent can intercultural activities improve the intercultural competence of migrant learners?
2. Can the use of the mother tongue improve the intercultural competence of migrant learners?
3. Can the use of new technologies improve the intercultural competence of migrant learners?
4. To what extent can intercultural activities affect migrant learners' attitudes towards the host country?

3.2. Research approach

For the purposes of the present research, a small-scale case study was conducted, and, being a case study, it used the best of both a quantitative and a qualitative method (Creswell, 2003). This is why a mixed methods research approach is used, based on the quantitative research instrument of a questionnaire and complemented by the qualitative research instrument of a classroom observation list (*ibid.*). The quantitative research instrument of questionnaires is employed because questionnaires are “extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering information quickly in a form that is readily processable” (Dörnyei, 2007, xiii, pp. 101-102). Quantitative data were gathered through the same questionnaire administered before and after the educational intervention.

On the other hand, the qualitative research instrument of the semi-structured checklist for classroom observation is also used (Creswell 2003). This direct classroom observation provides a means “of objective measurement of behaviors as they occur in a natural setting” (Nock & Kurtz, 2005, p. 360).

It is also worth mentioning that, by using this methodological pluralism or triangulation (Heale & Forbes, 2013, among others), “we compare the findings from different perspectives and, thus, we increase the validity of our results” (*ibid.*, p.98).

3.3. Research sample and setting

The target population of this research is the refugee and migrant pupils attending certain state schools in afternoon hours, due to a special educational program targeted at these children, which was launched in October 2016 in Greece (Antoinetta, Danai, & Ziomas, 2017). More specifically, they participate in the ‘Reception/Preparatory Class for the Education of Refugees’ (the so-called DYEP) in the 2nd High school of Filippiada, in the mainland of Greece.

The level of their English language ability ranged from A1 to A2, according to the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2011). However, the educational intervention that took place employed English as a *lingua franca*, not as an educational goal. As for e-literacy skills, the pupils knew how to use the keyboard and an Internet Explorer, since digital literacy skills are transferable (Greene, 2018), and most of the pupils are familiar with the Web 2.0 technologies interface (cell phones, i-pods).

Pupils were deliberately selected from secondary education, in order to have the appropriate social and linguistic background to respond to the questionnaires exploring their intercultural competence. The particular classroom consisted of 20 migrant pupils at the time of the research. This is a good representative sample of migrant pupils attending DYEPs, since, according to the latest data, during the school year 2017-2018, of the 20,300 migrant children who were hosted in our country, only 2,026 attended DYEPs (Anagnostopoulou & Vlachou, 2018).

3.4. Research procedure

The research was conducted in May 2019. It took place in one of the two classrooms in the 2nd High School in Fillipiada which were allotted to migrant pupils. The educational intervention designed was conducted by the researcher with the cooperation of the substitute teacher of English of that DYEP, in three sessions of two successive English teaching courses.

As far as the research tools are concerned, the same questionnaire was given to the pupils one day before the start and one day after the end of the educational intervention. The comparison of the

tabulated data of both questionnaires using Microsoft Excel helped draw some tentative conclusions on the reinforcement of the intercultural competence of the migrant pupils in relation to the educational intervention that took place. Finally, the classroom observation lists helped the researcher to focus on details that would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

3.4.1. The educational intervention

The educational intervention designed consists of 3 lesson plans of 90 minutes each (Appendix A). The main aim of the first lesson plan, entitled 'The Olympic Games', is to help migrant pupils enhance their socio-cultural knowledge of the host country, Greece, exploring a global Greek cultural heritage, the Olympic games. By watching video excerpts of some Olympic games from the 3D animated cartoon entitled 'Shaun the Sheep' and alternately video excerpts of the same Olympic games from authentic Olympic events throughout the world, including their countries of origin, migrant pupils may broaden their horizons and reinforce their "ethnorelative worldview", as Bennett suggests (1993, p. 51). They also learn how to deal with diversity, which is perceived as a "difference in the orientation towards the world" (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 7), selecting their favorite Olympic sports and then reflecting on the role of gender in their views and on the involvement of disabled people in Paralympics. Finally, they create their own 'interpersonal space' in the classroom (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 57), the so-called 'third space', as noted earlier (see Bhabha, 1994, p. 36), and bring their daily family life to school by carrying out a survey on the most popular Olympic game of their families.

The second lesson plan, entitled 'Aesop's fables', as the title indicates, helps migrant pupils to delve into the world-renowned ancient Greek Aesop's fables. First, they watch 'The Lion and the Mouse' to discuss some opinion questions about the lion and how it feels about the decisions it has taken, with a view to increasing their willingness to pass judgment, a key feature of intercultural communication competence (Byram *et al.* 2001). In the same line of thinking, they watch 'The Man, the Boy, and the Donkey' and discuss some questions about the correctness of different views in order to 'decenter', namely "to see how things look from different perspectives" (*ibid.*, p. 5), and to develop their ability to tolerate ambiguity in the many different views of people (Pusch *et al.*, 1981) as well. Similarly, they watch 'The Fox and the Stork', a very well-woven story, this time to consider some interculturally sensitive statements pronounced by the two heroes of the fable, which revolve around empathy (Fantini, 2000) for those who cannot eat in the usual way, respect for 'Otherness' (*ibid.*), which is the cornerstone of friendship, and the need for flexibility through behaviour change, taking into account the condition of others (Ellis & Wittenbaum, 2000). In the final stage of this lesson, the use of the full range of the pupils' linguistic repertoire, including their mother tongue in their newly created stories, is the realization of translanguaging, as Garcia and Wei (2014) call it, which helps migrant-pupils to consolidate their position in the hybrid 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 36) created in the classroom.

The third lesson plan, entitled 'Flags', gives migrant pupils the opportunity to delve into an intercultural symbol of the host country, i.e. the Greek flag, in order to compare and evaluate it in relation to other flags. Understanding the products and practices of different cultures and having a critical view of them, the pupils heighten their critical intercultural awareness, as argued by Zhu (2011), which is a guarantee for future intercultural judgments, according to Byram *et al.* (2001). By creating flags, which are used later to make a poster, pupils make the classroom a creative space where the different cultural identities are celebrated, and in this way they manage to "reorganize the sense of who they are and how they relate to the world" (Darvin & Norton 2014, p. 57).

3.4.2. The questionnaire

In view of the fact that, as noted earlier, questionnaires are “extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering information quickly in a form that is readily processable” (Dörnyei, 2007, xiii, pp. 101-102), a self-reporting questionnaire was drawn up (Appendix B), which was administered both in Arabic and in Farsi.

The questionnaire consists of three-domain questions, namely, “the factual, the behavioral, and the attitudinal questions” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 5). Part A consists of some factual questions (Appendix B, Questions 1-4), asking the respondents to provide personal demographic information about their age, gender, country of origin and language background. Part B (Appendix B, Questions 5-8) consists of behavioral questions that try to shed light on “what the respondents have done in the past” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 5). By exploring what the migrant pupils have done in certain social interactions in the past, we assess their intercultural communication competence, which is considered “always interactional” (Kim, 2001, p. 98). Part C, finally, consists of a series of attitudinal questions (Appendix B, Questions 9-31), trying to shed light on what the respondents think and, more specifically, their attitude, opinions and beliefs (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 5).

The questionnaire used was adapted from the most valid measures of intercultural competence, namely the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), the Test of Intercultural Sensitivity (TIS), and The International Profiler (TIP), using the criteria employed by these psychometric tests, as these have been clarified by Camerer (2014).

3.4.3. The classroom observation list

Taking into account triangulation, which welcomes the pluralism of research instruments (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Olsen, 2004), the researcher created a classroom observation checklist template (Appendix C) and used it to enrich the research findings with valuable qualitative data observed in the immediate school environment, which would otherwise have gone unnoticed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

4. Research results

The most important research findings are presented below. To begin with, part A of the questionnaire (Appendix B/questions 1-4) revealed some important demographic information about the research sample). It is worth noting that the pupils’ age ranges from 13 to 17 (Figure 1), without much difference between the number of male (40%) and female pupils (60%) (Appendix D/Graph 2).

Moreover, although the target group consisted of Syria (60%) and Afghanistan (40%) pupils, the languages spoken by them consist of an amalgam of Arabic (52%), Farsi (35%), Turkish (4%) and English (9%) (see Figure 2). It is therefore evident that the target group of pupils is a group of great linguistic and cultural diversity, which, in any case, was to be used as a positive element in this study. It is also clear, as illustrated in Figure 2, that Greek has been a foreign language for the migrant pupils so far. English, on the other hand, has the prestige of a *lingua franca*, especially for Arab countries, as it was used by 7 Arabic pupils, who were taught English in their home country, as the researcher discovered through classroom observation and classroom talk. Most interestingly, the use of 4 languages by 2 different ethnic groups as a communication medium shows the migrant pupils’ ability and need to communicate using their full linguistic repertoires (Blommaert, 2010).

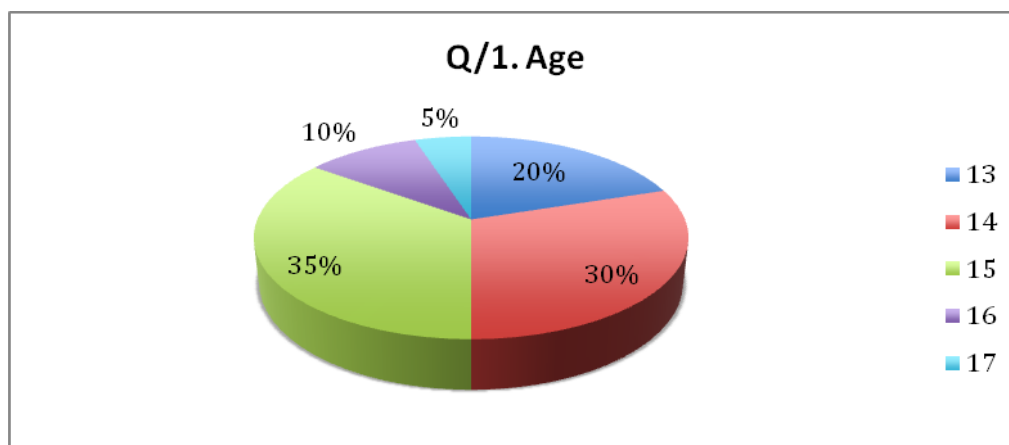


Figure 1. Age of migrant pupils

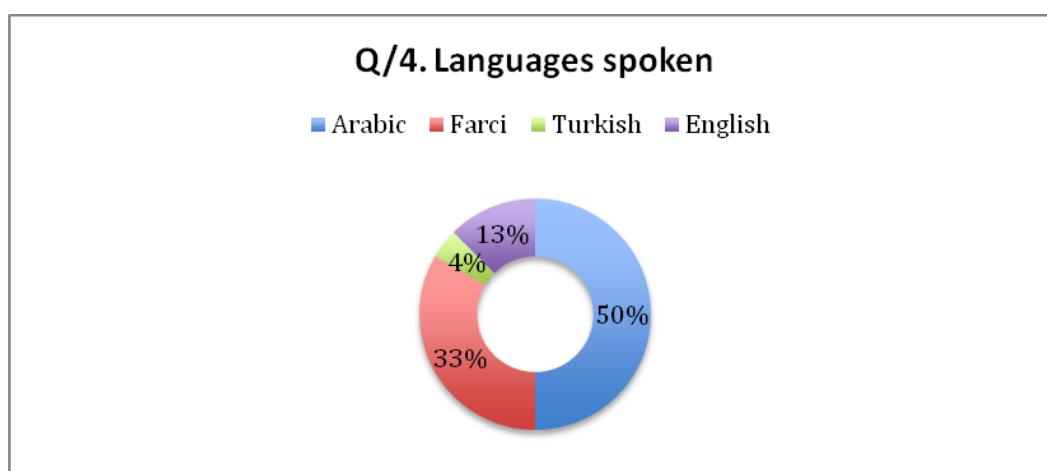


Figure 2. Languages spoken by migrant pupils

Exploring the intercultural behaviour of migrant pupils in their school environment, using the four questions shown in part B of the questionnaire (Appendix B/Questions 5-8), showed that offering one's seat to others on the school bus was a major issue of confrontation, with 40% of pupils refusing to do so (see Figure 3). Fortunately, as shown in Figure 3, this negative rate was eliminated after the intercultural educational intervention and was 'dispersed' almost uniformly among pupils as follows: 30% rarely offer their seat on the school bus, 40% sometimes offer their seat, and 30% of them usually follow the same practice.

As for the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, it seems to be a pervasive practice from the outset (see Figure 4), with 55% of the pupils recognizing that they used their mother tongue in the classroom and a 15% of them accepting the free and uninterrupted use of the mother tongue - a rate that increased significantly to 50 % after the intervention. The data collected through observation in the classroom confirmed the findings, showing that the pupils used their mother tongue not only to give feedback to the teacher and to regulate their relationships but also to express their personal thoughts and feelings.

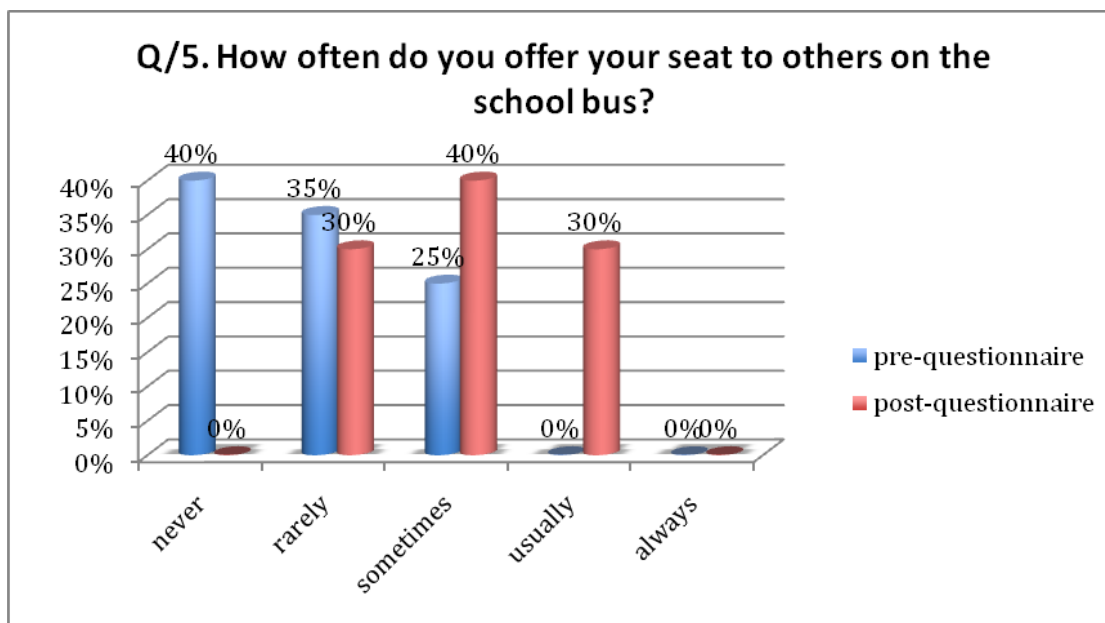


Figure 3. How often migrant pupils offer their seat on the school bus

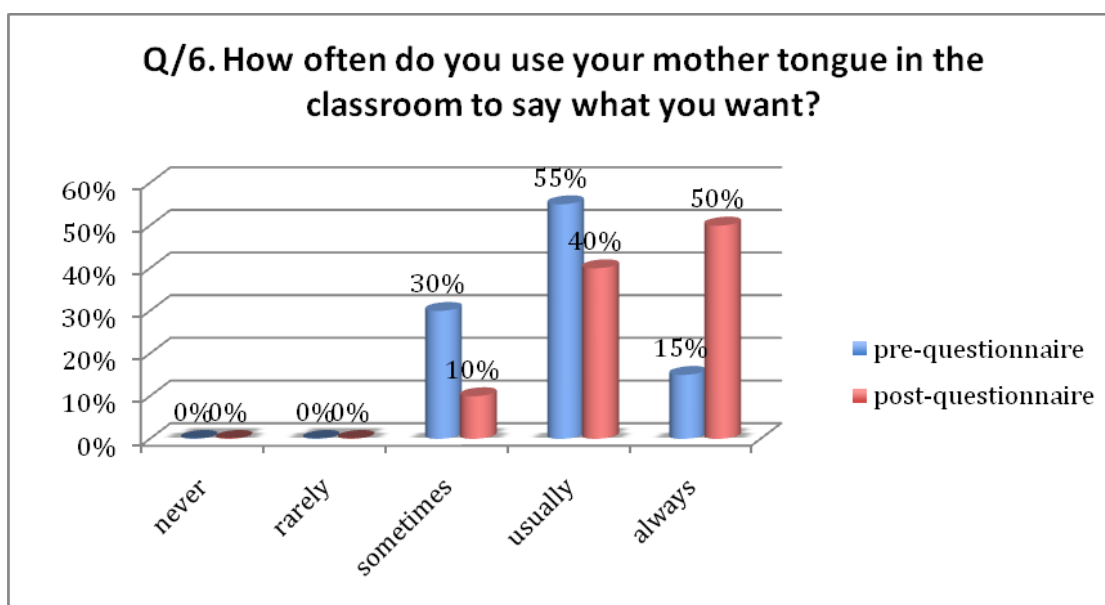


Figure 4. How often migrant pupils use their mother tongue in the classroom

Part C of the questionnaire (Appendix B/Questions 9-31) shed more light on the intercultural profile of migrant pupils. With respect to the life experiences of migrant pupils in Greece (Figure 5), only 13% showed hesitation in thinking of their lives in Greece as a positive experience, a percentage that is negatively estimated but which disappeared after the intercultural educational intervention. Moreover, as reflected in Figure 5, 35% of them always considered their life in Greece to be a positive challenge - a percentage that soared to 60% after the intervention.

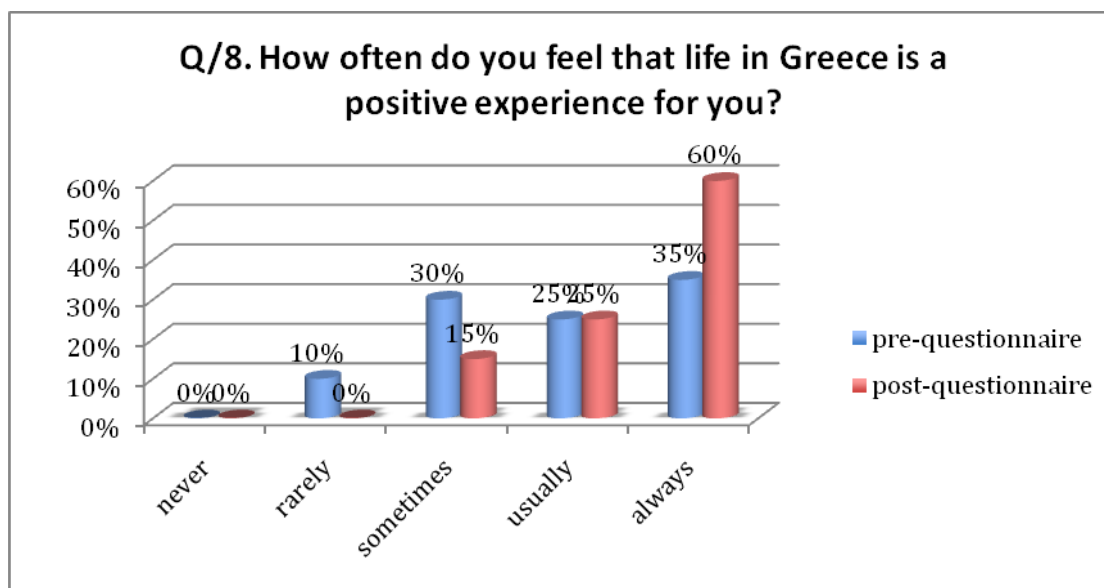


Figure 5. How often migrant pupils feel that life in Greece is a positive experience

In exploring the beliefs of migrant pupils, the results of the research showed that migrant pupils believe that there are more differences than similarities between the two countries. A comparison of Figure 6 with Figure 7 below indicates that the number of pupils who initially agree strongly that there are differences between the two countries is bigger (60%) than the number of pupils who strongly agree that there are similarities between the two countries (30%). However, the number of pupils who strongly agree that there are differences between the two countries is significantly reduced after the intervention (from 60 % to 45 %) (see Figure 7), suggesting that the pupils eventually discovered a lot in common between the two countries.

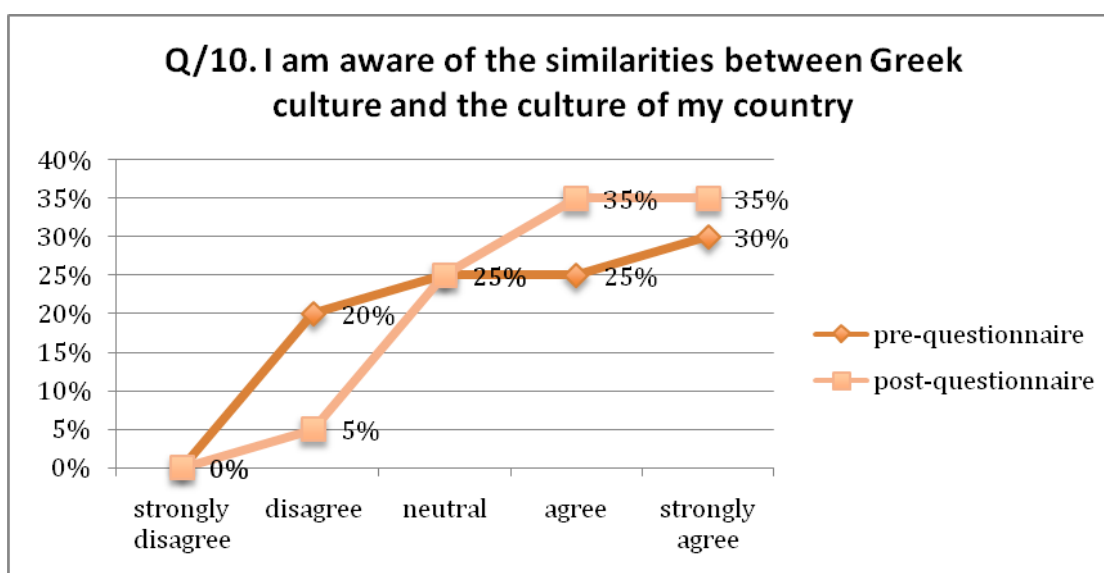


Figure 6. The beliefs of migrant pupils about the similarities between Greek culture and the culture of their origin

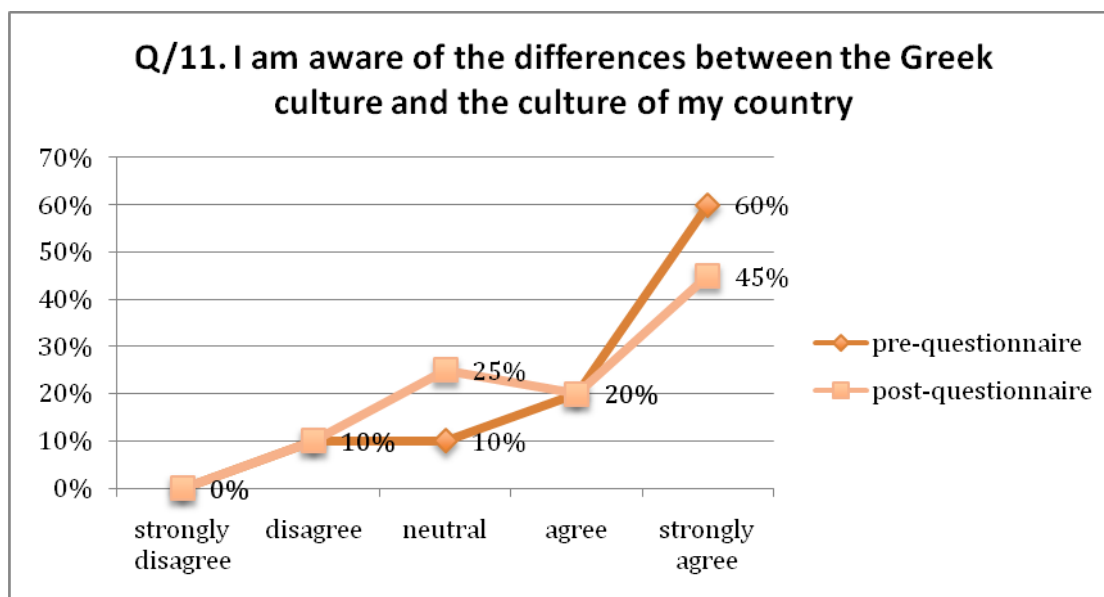


Figure 7. The beliefs of migrant pupils about the differences between Greek culture and the culture of their origin

In exploring empathy, a small number of migrant pupils initially failed to show empathy (10%) (see Figure 8). Fortunately, after the intervention, that percentage was integrated into the 60% of pupils who seemed to strongly agree that intercultural empathy helps them to experience the world in a more pluralistic way. This is in line with the fact that migrant students showed great care for one of their classmates, who had a serious vision problem, as the researcher observed during classes and breaks, proving in practice their empathy especially towards people in need.

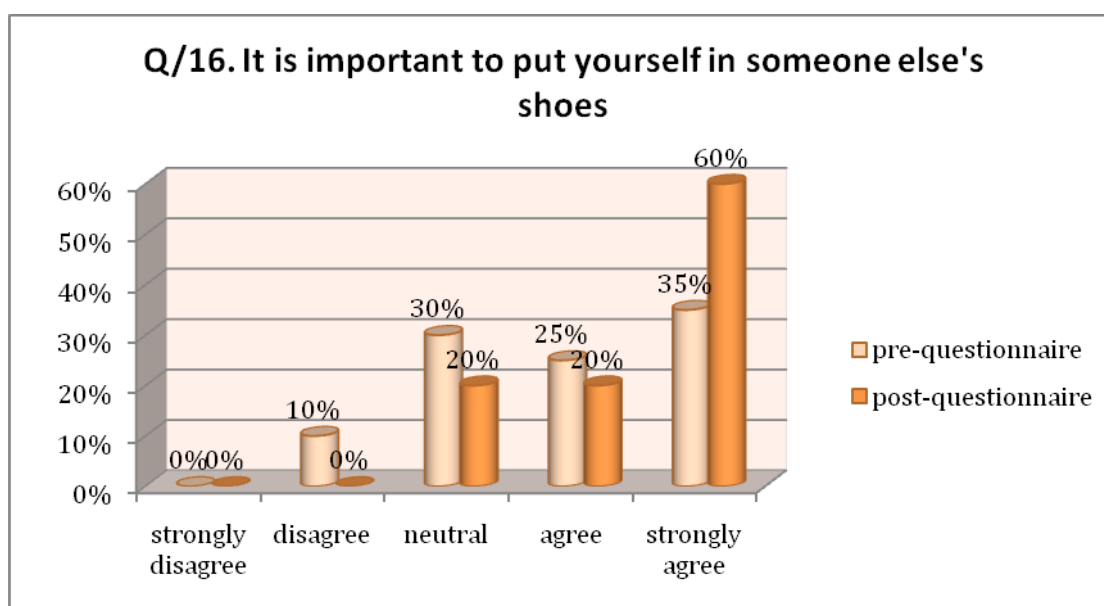


Figure 8. The empathy of migrant pupils

It is noteworthy that the migrant pupils showed great variation in their responses concerning social flexibility and adaptability (Figure 9). At first, migrant pupils (40%) resisted adaptation to their environment, (10%) hesitated to change their behavior and only a small number of them (5%) refused to change their behavior to facilitate understanding in their intercultural interactions, even after the intervention.

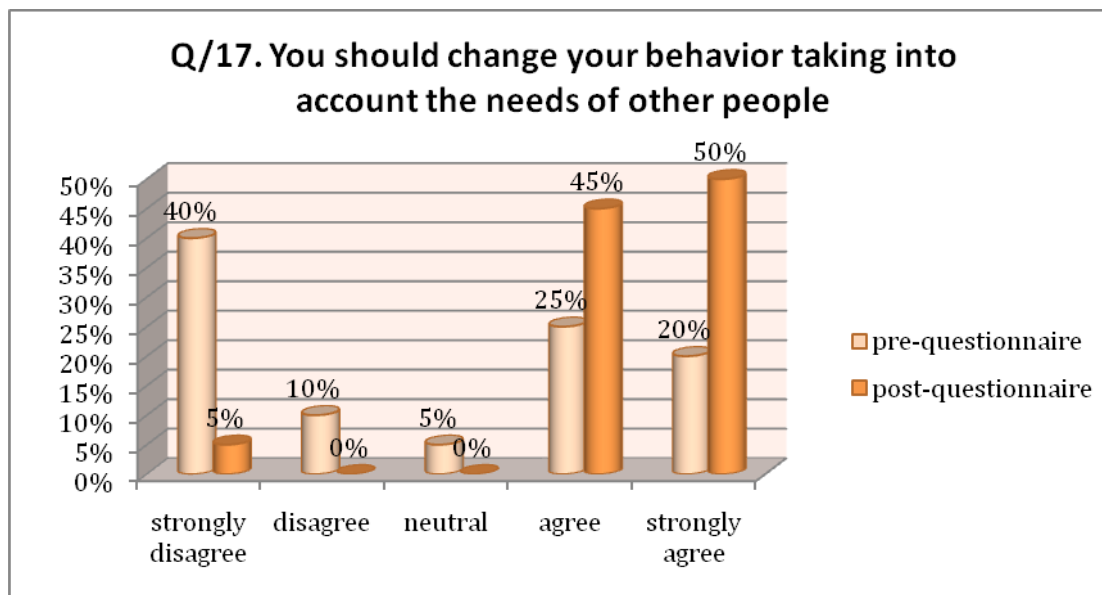


Figure 9. The social flexibility and adaptability of migrant pupils

Not surprisingly, the majority of the migrant pupils (60%) (see Figure 10) strongly agreed on the contribution of all the languages they can handle to the effective management of their intercultural communication from the outset. The very large increase (90%), after the intervention, in the proportion of the migrant pupils who strongly agree on “using their linguistic repertoires in order to support mutual understanding” (Helm & Dabre, 2018, p.144) shows that the migrant-pupils appreciated all the translanguaging practices implemented in the classroom.

What is more, the migrant pupils strongly agreed that the multimodal nature of the Web made learning about the world more fascinating. As observed in the classroom, this was an unprecedented experience for migrant pupils, who increased their autonomous learning activity. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 11, there was a significant increase, from 30% before the intervention to 85% after the intervention, in the proportion of migrant pupils who strongly agreed that online translators and thesauri helped them find the right words to communicate more effectively.

The research findings based on question 27 reveal the gradual increase in the positive and cooperative attitudes of the migrant pupils towards their host country, expressing their interest in learning from their hosts, language and culture, and their interest in making many Greek friends. Nevertheless, at the beginning, 10% of the pupils were reluctant to reveal things about themselves, 30% of them kept a neutral stance, 30% agreed to confide in their Greek friends and 30% were willing to trust the Greeks unreservedly (see Figure 12).

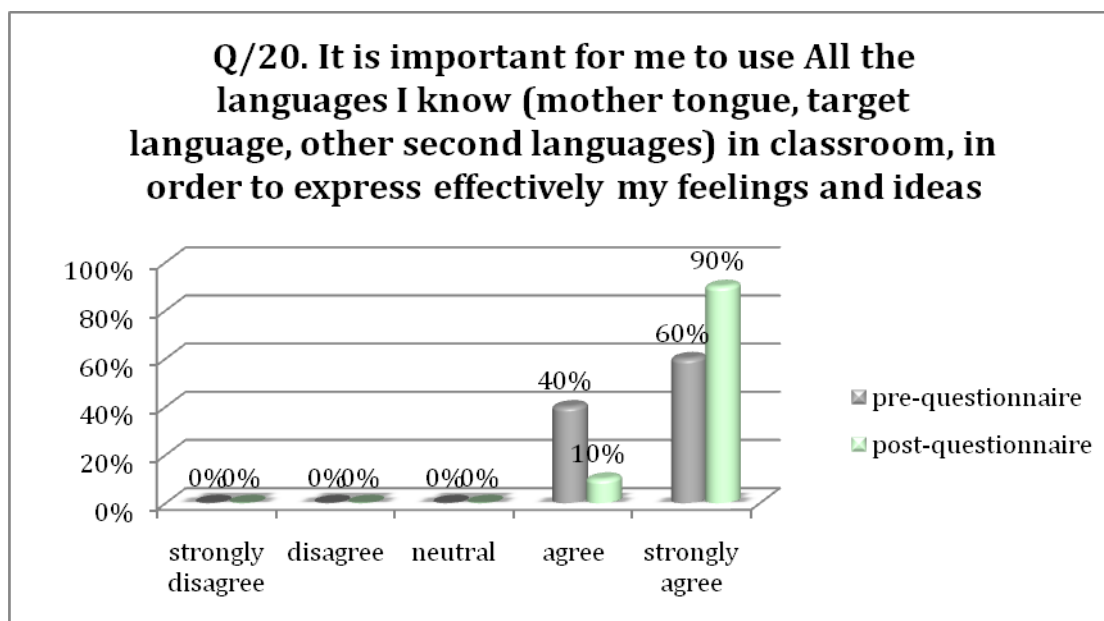


Figure 10. The views of migrant pupils on the use of their full linguistic repertoire in the classroom

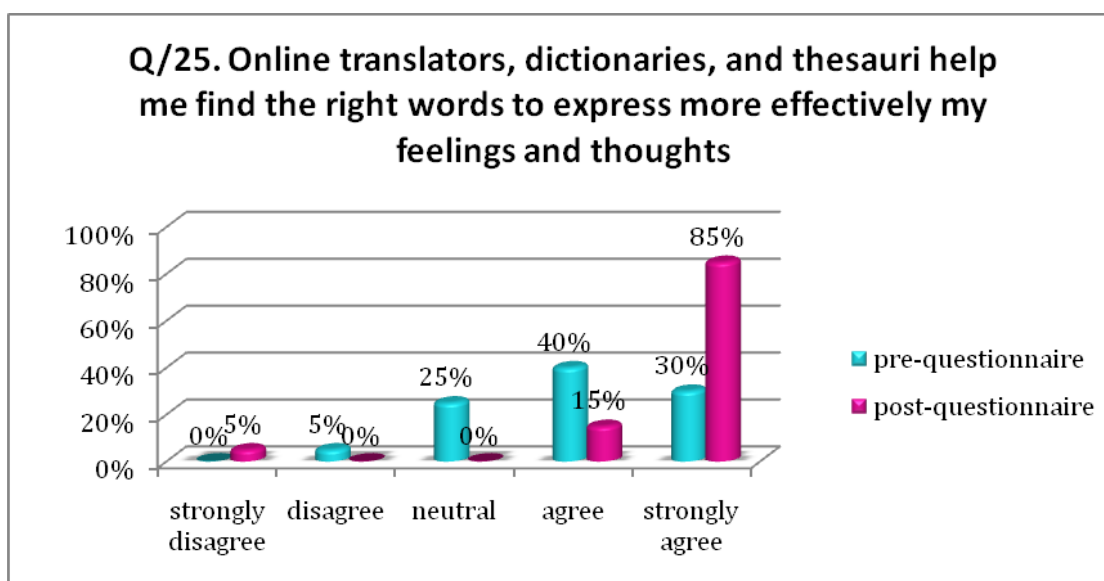


Figure 11. The views of migrant pupils about the use of online translators, dictionaries and thesauri in the classroom

Most importantly, the majority of the migrant pupils, 45% before and 55% after the intervention, as illustrated in Figure 13, fully accept the diversity of Greek people. In spite of that, a small percentage of the migrant pupils (10%) refuse to accept the ‘otherness’ of Greeks even after the intervention, and they retain a negative attitude towards the cultural differences of their host culture. As talk in the classroom revealed, these differences concern Greek eating habits, clothing and gender roles.

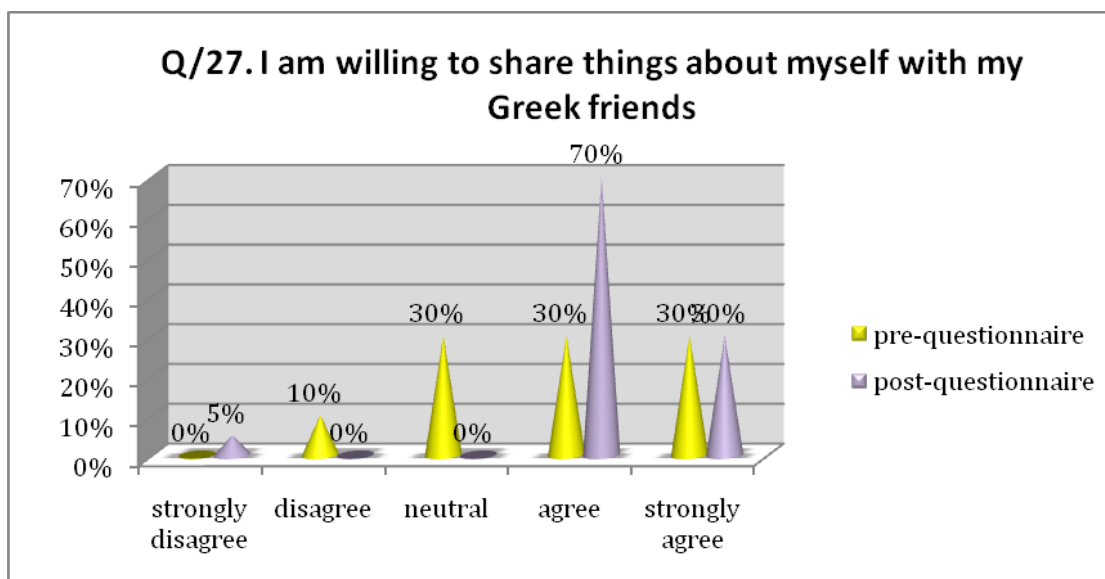


Figure 12. The attitudes of migrant pupils towards their Greek friends.

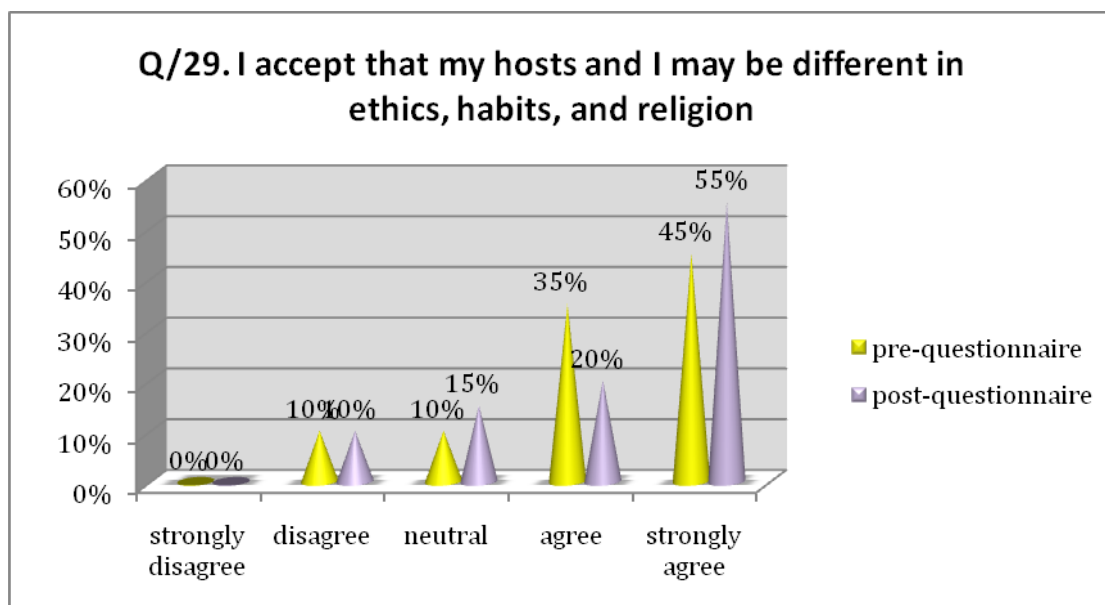


Figure 13. The attitudes of migrant pupils towards the 'otherness' of Greeks

Last but not least, as reflected in Figure 14, a small proportion of the pupils clearly refuse to change both before the intervention (10%) and after it (5%), adopting an ethnocentric attitude. Yet, half of the migrant pupils agreed to change their behavior, adopting a more flexible and ethnorelative worldview, which is a prerequisite for adaptation as well as integration, the more dynamic model of intercultural communication competence, according to Bennett (1993).

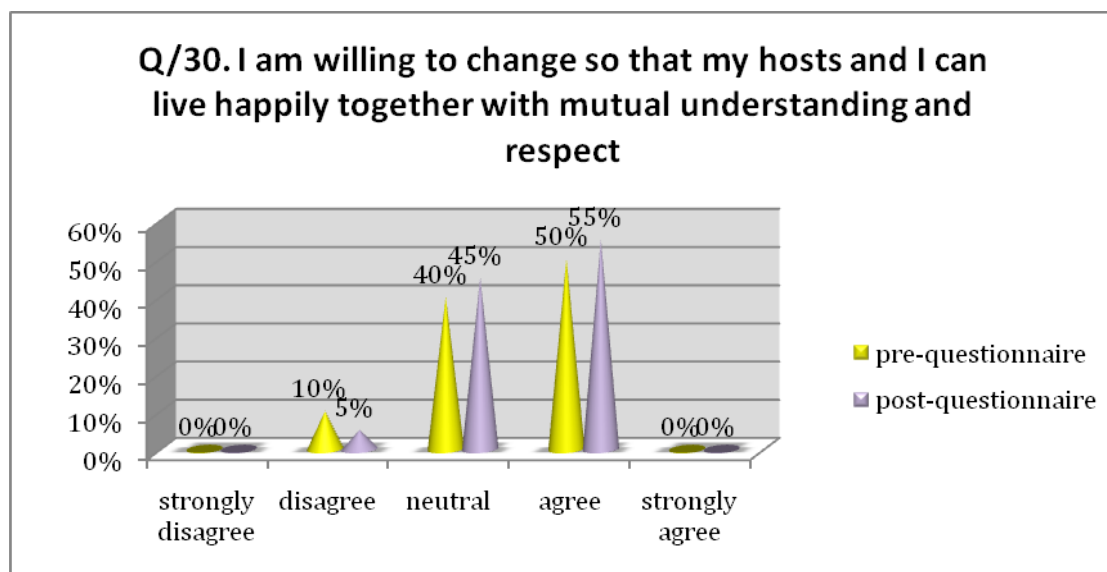


Figure 14. The willingness of migrant pupils to change

Overall, the findings showed that the intercultural educational intervention strengthened the intercultural profile of migrant pupils, increased their curiosity about foreign cultures and their respect for otherness. The use of the mother tongue helped them to express their intentions and needs in communication. The use of modern technology helped them to explore cultures and use online translators and thesauri. Also, their positive attitude towards their hosts became evident when they expressed their eagerness to make many Greek friends and to learn more about their hosts. Nevertheless, as noted, a small percentage of migrant pupils did not accept the otherness of Greeks and refused to change their behavior.

5. Discussion of research results

In this section, the main findings of the study are interpreted in relation to the research questions.

1. To what extent can intercultural activities improve the intercultural competence of migrant learners?

It is obvious from the findings regarding the first research question (see Appendix D/Graphs 5 & 9-17) that the intercultural educational intervention improved the intercultural profile of the migrant pupils. It helped them satisfy their curiosity regarding different countries and cultures and recognize that “behavior is culturally variable” (Liddicoat, 2002, p.10), thus enhancing their ethnorelative view of the world (Bennett, 1993). Moreover, improving their intercultural knowledge through the interculturally designed activities, they were able to “understand more their own cultural roots and their effect on their personal behavior” (Puschet *et al.*, 1981, p. 99). The migrant pupils also learnt to respect different opinions and suspend their premature judgment, thus learning to “tolerate ambiguity and accept personal failures” (*ibid.*). Furthermore, they managed to lessen their cultural shock by turning it into a positive and creative learning experience (Milstein, 2005). They also increased their intercultural critical awareness by “perceiving the discriminations and cultural differences between different countries” (Bennett, 2004, p. 65), without renouncing the uniqueness of civilizations.

What is more, the intervention helped some migrant pupils, who had failed to show empathy, to “see how things look from a different perspective” (Byram *et al.*, 2001, p. 5). Finally, it helped some

migrant pupils increase their intercultural flexibility and change their behavior in order to adapt to the new environment. Their hesitation in changing their behavior seems to be an anticipated response to the hardships they have endured and to the sense of distrust they have developed.

2. Can the use of the mother tongue improve the intercultural competence of migrant learners?

The results of the second research question (see Appendix D/Graphs 6 & 18-20) show that migrant pupils unreservedly believe that the use of their home languages improves their intercultural competence, since their mother tongue helps them to express their thoughts and feelings, which “can only be expressed in their mother tongue” (Byram *et al.*, 2002, p. 13), thus facilitating their intercultural navigation among different languages and cultures. These results are consistent with Darwin & Norton’s belief that “by using their native languages, migrant pupils reclaim their right to speak” (2014, p. 17).

Taking into account the multicultural environment where migrant pupils live, the use of their full linguistic repertoire, including their mother tongue, is required to make meaning of the words and the world around them (Garcia & Wei, 2014). This is all that translanguaging is about (*ibid.*) and the migrant pupils welcomed with enthusiasm the conversion of their classroom into a ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 36), where “the hybridity of languages and cultures can thrive” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 63). In conclusion, the use of the mother tongue of migrant pupils and all the languages they know should be encouraged in the classroom with appropriate practices and established in education policy.

3. Can the use of new technologies improve the intercultural competence of migrant learners?

Concerning the third research question, it was found (see Appendix D/Graphs 7 & 21-25) that the Web promoted the intercultural communication of migrant learners. The majority of the migrant pupils confirmed that the use of blended learning in the educational intervention and the use of the Internet in particular greatly increased their intercultural knowledge and understanding, thus further validating the beliefs of Vlachos (2010). Apart from this, the multi-modal nature of the Web, which is appropriate for any style of learning, sparked their curiosity to delve into the world around them and strengthened their motivation for intercultural exploration, confirming that the Internet is “more enjoyable and easy to use” (Teo, Lim & Lai, 1999, p. 34). Last but not least, the use of online dictionaries, translators, and thesauri boosted the autonomous intercultural development of the migrant learners, affirming that the Internet “assists users in performing their tasks more efficiently and effectively” (*ibid.*). Arguably, the Web is the new *lingua franca* of intercultural communication. For this reason, the new literacy skills of information technology should be used to promote the skills of intercultural communication competence.

4. To what extent can intercultural activities affect the migrant learners’ attitudes towards the host country?

We hope we have managed to show (Appendix D/Graphs 8 & 26-30), even though without establishing statistical significance, that the migrant pupils have a favorable attitude towards their Greek hosts, with some small variations. Most of the migrant learners showed their positive attitude towards their Greek hosts by expressing their great interest in meeting Greek pupils and making them their friends. Moreover, most of them had a cooperative attitude, confirming their intercultural willingness to learn from their hosts, their language, their culture and their values, with a view to minimizing cultural differences. However, when it came to the more ethnorelative attitudes of accepting the otherness of Greeks and of changing their behavior in order to adapt to or to become integrated into the new environment through their free will (Bennett, 1993), the migrant

pupils failed to do so. Some of the migrant pupils kept a neutral attitude at this point, expressing their skeptical or even defensive attitude towards the Greek differentiation. The different attitudes of the migrant pupils confirmed that intercultural competence is a lifelong learning process (Fantini, 2000). In the same vein, recent research confirms that intercultural competence is a life process that resembles a pendulum with many moves forward and backward (Acheson & Schneider-Bean, 2019).

6. Concluding remarks

The aim of this small-case study was to offer insight into the various aspects of the development of the intercultural communication competence of migrant pupils in the foreign language learning and teaching context. Interestingly, it has been shown that the use of new technologies integrated in blended learning, which combines “both online learning and classroom teacher led tuition” (Vlachos, 2009, p. 253), reinforces intercultural competence, because the rich multimodal environment of new technologies can compensate for the intercultural experience and the immediacy of human relationships. The Internet is undoubtedly the new *lingua franca* of international communication. It is also evident that the intercultural learning of migrant pupils presupposes the use of their mother tongue in the classroom, because the mother tongue conveys their thoughts, feelings, ideas, personal history and identities. This is successfully implemented in intercultural education through translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2014), where every language, including the mother tongue, is welcomed in a transformative and creative way. What is more, it is clear that intercultural education affects the attitudes of migrant pupils. Developing their intercultural communication competence can make their attitude towards the host country positive and cooperative and can reduce the culture shock they face when they come in contact with a foreign culture (Milstein, 2005), thus creating the right conditions for peaceful coexistence and social prosperity.

Last but foremost, it is clear that intercultural education should focus on the fact that intercultural communication competence is a lifelong learning and evolving process (Fantini, 2000) not only of interpersonal skills, such as the openness of ourselves up to others and the adaptation to our social environment, but also of intrapersonal skills, such as empathy and critical thinking (Byram *et al.*, 2001; Deardorff, 2009). All in all, by strengthening the intercultural communication competence of migrant pupils, the classroom becomes “a generative space for intercultural citizens” (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 60), where the pupils learn how to negotiate and claim languages, identities, and, ultimately, their own place in the world.

References

- Acheson, K. & Schneider-Bean S. (2019). ‘Representing the Intercultural development continuum as a pendulum: addressing the lived experiences of intercultural competence development and maintenance’. In *European J. Cross-Cultural Competence and Management*, 5(1): 42-61.
- Anagnostopoulou, V. & Vlachou, A. (2018). *Feature: Greek teacher addresses refugee children’s education on World Teacher’s Day*. Retrieved from: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-10/05/c_137513359.htm
- Antoinetta, C., Danai, K. & Ziomas, D. (2017). *Integrating refugee and migrant children into the educational system in Greece*. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333421396_Integrating_refugee_and_migrant_children_into_the_educational_system_in_Greece/citations
- Barna, L.M. (1994). ‘Stumbling blocks in intercultural communication’. In L.A.Samovar & R.E.Porter (Eds), *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* (pp.337-346). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Basch, L., Blanc-Szanton, C. & Glick Schiller, N. (1992). ‘Transnationalism: A new Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration’. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 645(1): 1-24.

- Bennett, M. J. (1993). 'Towards ethnorelativism: 'A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity'. In R. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21–71). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Bennett, M. J. (2004). 'Becoming Interculturally Competent'. In Wurzel, J. (2nd Ed.) *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education* (pp. 62-77). Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bochner, S., Furnham, A. & Ward, C. A. (2001). *The Psychology of Culture Shock*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Byram, M., Gibkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching, A practical Introduction for Teachers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Byram, M., Nichols, A. & Stevens, D. (2001). *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Camerer, R. (2014). 'Testing intercultural competence in (International) English: Some basic questions and suggested answers.' *Language Learning in Higher Education. Journal of the European Confederation of Language Centers in Higher Education (CercleS)*, 4(1): 207-236.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education (5th Eds.)*. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.
- Conacher, J. E. & Geraghty, B. (2014). 'Introduction: Approaching migration, intercultural contact and language learning'. In J.E. Conacher, B. Geraghty (Eds), *Intercultural Contact, language Learning and Migration* (pp.1-18). London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Corbett, J. (2003). *An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Council of Europe (2011). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (12th Edition)*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Quantitative, Qualitative and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cummins, J. (2007). 'What works? Literacy into Practice'. Retrieved from: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Cummins.pdf>
- Darvin, R. & Norton, B. (2014). 'Transnational Identity and Migrant Language Learners: The Promise of Digital Storytelling'. *Education Matters*, 2/1: 55-66.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2009). *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dorjee, T. & Ting-Toomey, S. (2018). *Communicating Across Cultures (2nd Edition)*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing (Second Edition)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ellis, B. & Wittenbaum, G. M. (2000). 'Relationships between self-construal and verbal promotion'. *Communication Research*, 27(6): 704-722.
- European Commission (2007). *EU Research on Social Sciences and Humanities. Children in Communication about Migration*: Brussels.
- Fantini, A. E. (2000). 'A central concern: Developing intercultural competence'. *SIT Occasional Paper Series*. Brattleboro, VT: The School of International Training, 1(1): 25-42.
- García O. & Wei L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Giroux, H. A. (2007). 'Democracy, education, and the politics of critical pedagogy'. In McLaren, P. & Kincheloe, J. L. (Eds), *Critical pedagogy: Where are we now?* (pp. 1-5). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

- Greene, K. (2018). 'Transferable Digital Literacy Knowledge'. *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*, 28(1). Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/lls/vol28/iss1/3/>
- Heale, R. & Forbes, D. (2013). 'Understanding triangulation in research'. *Evidence-based Nursing*, 16 (4): 98-98.
- Helm, F&Dabre, T. (2018). 'Engineering a 'contact zone' through translanguaging'. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 18(1): 144-146.
- Kim, Y.Y. (2001). *Becoming Intercultural: An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Koufadi, E. (2014). 'Integrating Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and online networking in the teaching of English as a foreign language in high school'. *Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning*, 5(1): 199-222.
- Leu, D., J., Kinzer, C., Coiro, J. & Cammack, D. (2004). 'Toward a theory of new literacies emerging from the Internet and other information and communications technologies.' In R. Ruddell & N. Unray (Eds), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (pp. 1570-1613). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Liddicoat, A. J. (2002). 'Static and dynamic views of culture and intercultural language acquisition'. *Babel*, 36 (3): 4-11.
- Liddicoat, A. J. (2004). 'Intercultural language teaching: Principles for practice'. *New Zealand Language Teacher*, 30: 17-24.
- Milstein, T. (2005). 'Transformation abroad: Sojourning and the perceived enhancement of self-efficacy'. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29 (2): 217-238.
- Nock, M. K. & Kurtz, S. M. S. (2005). 'Direct behavioral observation in school settings: Bringing science to practice'. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 12(3): 359-370.
- Olsen, W. (2004). 'Triangulation in social research: Qualitative and quantitative methods can really be mixed'. *Developments in Sociology: Annual Review*, 20: 103-118.
- Olwig, K.F. (2013). 'Notions and practices of difference: an epilogue on the ethnography of diversity'. *Identities*, 20(4): 471-479.
- Pusch, M.D., Patico, A., Renwick, G.W. & Saltzman, C. (1981). 'Cross-cultural training'. In G. Althen (Ed.), *Learning across cultures: Intercultural communication and international educational exchange* (pp. 72-103). Washington, DC: National Association for Foreign Student Affairs.
- Smith, L. E. (1987). *Discourse Across Cultures: Strategies in World Englishes*. Englewood Cliffs, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall International.
- Spitzberg, B. H. & Changnon, G. (2009). 'Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence'. In D. K. Deardorff (Eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (pp. 2-53). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Teo, T. S. H., Lim, V. K. G., & Lai, R. Y. C. (1999). 'Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in Internet usage'. *Omega, the International Journal of Management Science*, 27 (1): 25-37.
- UNESCO (2018). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019. Migration, displacement and education: building bridges, not walls*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Vertovec, S. (2001). 'Transnationalism and Identity'. *Journal of Ethnic Migration Studies*, 27 (4): 573-582.
- Vlachos, K. (2009). 'Comparing face-to-face with blended learning in the context of foreign language education and cross cultural communication'. In E.M.W. Ngi (Ed.), *Comparative blended learning practices and environments* (pp. 250-276). Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.
- Warschauer, M. & Healy, D. (1998). 'Computers and language learning: An overview'. *Language Teaching*, 31(2):57-71.
- Zhu, H. (2011). 'From Intercultural Awareness to Intercultural Empathy'. *English Language Teaching*, 4(1): 116-119.

Legal References

- Law 1566/1985 (Government Gazette 167/issue A/30-9-1985): "On the structure and operation of Primary and Secondary Education and other provisions".
- Joint Ministerial Decision 152360/ΓΔ4/2016(Government Gazette 3049/issueB/23-9-2016): "Establishment, organization, operation, coordination and training program of the Reception Structures for the Education of Refugees (DEEP), criteria and staffing process of these structures".
-

Appendix A

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PmrtR7T8gH6WPYSu3Yc7j-Yav1gaTKM_/view

Appendix B

Questionnaire (in English)

The self-assessment questionnaire

I would appreciate it if you would like to fill out the questionnaire you have in your hands. I would appreciate it if you could answer ALL the following questions. It would help me learn more about the intercultural competence of students and become a better teacher. Be sure that your names are not needed and will not be used in any way. Keep also in mind that there are no right or wrong answers.

PART A: Here are some personal questions.

1. How old are you? Fill in the box with the appropriate number to indicate your age.
2. Place a tick in the appropriate box to indicate your gender.
Male Female
3. Where do you come from? State your country of origin. Use English to give this answer, please.

4. Name the languages you can use to communicate with someone. Use English to give this answer, please.






PART B: Here are some questions about how often you do certain things.

Place a tick in the appropriate box to indicate how often you do the things stated below:

How often do you	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
5. offer your seat to others on the school bus?					
6. use your mother tongue in the classroom to say what you want?					
7. use the Web to find out how things are done in different countries (arts, history, music, sports, entertainment)?					
8. feel that life in Greece is a positive experience for you?					

PAPT C: Here are some questions about how much you agree or disagree with certain statements.

Place a tick in the appropriate box to indicate how much you agree or you disagree with the following statements:

						
		strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
9.	I am curious to know about different countries in the world.					
10.	I am aware of the similarities between Greek culture and the culture of my country.					
11.	I am aware of the differences between Greek culture and the culture of my country.					
12.	I am patient with people with special needs.					
13.	I don't feel anxious when I talk to people from other countries.					
14.	I respect people who have different opinions than mine.					
15.	You should get to know other people well, before you pass judgement on them.					
16.	It is important to put yourself in someone else's shoes.					

17.	You should change your behavior, taking into account the needs of other people.					
18.	My mother tongue helps me find the right words to communicate my ideas to people.					
19.	My mother tongue helps me find the right words to express my feelings and open myself to others.					
20	It is important for me to use all the languages I know (mother tongue, target language, other second languages) in the classroom, in order to express effectively my feelings and ideas.					
21.	I find out more about Greek culture through the Web.					
22.	I find out more about the culture of my country through the Web.					
23.	I am curious to find out more about the countries of the world through the Web.					
24.	Computers make learning about other cultures more fascinating.					
25.	Online translators, dictionaries and thesauri help me find the right words to express my feelings and thoughts more effectively.					
26.	I am eager to make a lot of Greek friends.					
27.	I am willing to share things about myself with my Greek friends.					
28.	I am willing to learn from my hosts, their language and their culture.					
29.	I accept the fact that my hosts and I may be different in ethics, habits, and religion.					
30.	I am willing to change so that my hosts and I can live happily					

together with mutual understanding and respect.					
---	--	--	--	--	--

PAPT D: Here is one final question for you

Fill in the gap with the word that best suits you and makes the sentence true for you.

31. Greece seems a(n) _____ country to me.

- friendly
- foreign
- free
- difficult
- beautiful
- ugly
- other word...

thank you

Appendix C

Name of observer

Date of observation

Number of students observed

Class observed

Languages used	Place (☐) if appropriate	Comments
Greek		for
English		for
Arabic		for
Persian		for
Technology		
Computers are used		for
Intercultural characteristics		Examples
Patience with others		
Flexibility		
Willingness to suspend judgment		
Sense of humor		

Respect for "Otherness": they interact regardless of			
	gender		
	nationality		
	other		
Attitudes/ What they think about Greek			
	teachers		
	friends		
	culture		
	history		
	other		
Other			

Maria Matsouka (matsouka.mariad@gmail.com) is a graduate of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greek and English Language and Philology, and holds a master's degree with distinction in English Language Teacher Specialization from the Greek Open University. She currently teaches English in the public sector. Her research interests include educational technology, lifelong learning, intercultural education, assessment, and prevention theories for high-risk students for school failure.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 309-315

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Book review

Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity.

Mya Poe, Asao B. Inoue, and Norbert Elliot (2018). Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado, 429 pp., ISBN 978-1-64215-015-5

Reviewed by Qiudong LI & Longxing LI

Social justice is about the fair relationship among individuals and the equal distribution of resources in social systems, including educational systems (Poe & Inoue, 2016). If social systems 'work against entire groups of people to maintain the unequal distribution of opportunity, wealth, and justice' (p. 3), social injustice will occur. Take writing as an example, if it is assessed in a system which subverts students' opportunity to learn due to race, gender, language background, and other social axes, marginalized students will suffer unjust assessment. While some myopic studies are blind to the unequal social systems which resulted in minority students' failure in writing, Poe and Inoue (2016) have taken the first step to make voices for justice-oriented assessment heard in their guest-edited special issue of *College English*, enacting the social justice turn in writing assessment scholarship. Following this endeavor, Poe, Inoue, and Elliot's newly edited volume *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity* is another recent action taken to address the question of 'How can we ensure that writing assessment leads to the advancement of opportunity?' (p. 4, emphasis original). Understanding better what unjust social systems are and how to eradicate social injustice in writing assessment, writing program administrators (WPAs), writing assessment scholars, writing instructors, and research students in this field may find this book thought-provoking and forward-looking.

This volume, aside from editors' introduction at the beginning and contributors' assertions and commentaries on writing assessment at the end, contains four main parts with the common goal of advancing social justice and opportunity through historiographic studies (chapters 1-3), justice-focused applications in admission and placement (chapters 4-6), innovative frameworks for outcomes design (chapters 7-9), and teacher research and professional development (chapters 10-11).

Since social justice historiography offers ‘a window to the nature and origin of injustice’ (p. 49), Part 1 brings together historiographic studies on racial injustice and writing assessment to provide a perspective on the ubiquity and diversity of injustices. Chapter 1 delves into classroom writing assessment articles in early editions of *The English Journal* (1912-1935), which were influenced by progressive racism (i.e., assimilation and Americanization interventions on immigrants’ language use to eradicate racial differences). It is found that the racial standard of assessing student language errors based on ‘not just what students write but who they are’ (p. 62) plagued minority students with unjust assessment. Hammond’s historiographic account, though partial, helps excavate injustices behind assessment practices in the early 20th Century. In the future, a more inclusive understanding of the historical relationship between writing assessment and social justice is needed from a wider range of critical perspectives.

Different from the unjust practices revealed in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 reviewed a pedagogical writing and assessment model in the fight for racial and social justice, i.e., the Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge program. The program was launched in the 1960s to prepare colored students to succeed in white mainstream colleges by providing holistic support: financial, academic, psychological, and even employment service. As an essential part of this desegregation program, the writing course emphasized students’ writing confidence and fluency and teachers’ respect for learners’ sociocultural background. More importantly, for social-justice purposes, teachers adopted a subjective and individualized assessment methodology in grading writing. This seminal program offers a precursor example in pedagogy and assessment; thus a fuller account of this program is called for by the author.

Chapter 3 focuses on the Monroe Report, a 1925 report with more than 200 pages of analysis of large-scale writing assessments administered across the entire Filipino school system during the colonial period. American colonial administration instituted the English Only policy only to solidify their power, without addressing Filipino students’ educational needs. The tension between Filipino language ecology and colonists’ intention is definitely “related to the perceived social justice mission of American colonialism” (p. 130). Investigating the writing assessment during that period can tell us about the racist assumptions in our current assessment practices.

To ameliorate admission and placement assessment, Part 2 elaborates on the issue of transparency in first-year writing (FYW) assessment practices. Chapter 4 strives to fill the research gap of applying directed self-placement (DSP) to community college writing assessment practices. The qualitative study found promising consequences of DSP since it empowers students to make decisions and take responsibilities for themselves. However, no disaggregated DSP outcomes data was provided to determine whether DSP also demonstrates disparate positive consequences for student groups of different races, classes, and languages. Hence, the contributor calls for more research to investigate DSP impact on diverse student groups, especially those disadvantaged by the standardized tests for writing

placement.

Similarly, in Chapter 5, Moreland examines the consequences of a standardized test for different student groups to determine their placement into a dual enrollment (DE) FYW course in a community college. While using disparate impact analysis, a validation tool for assessment practices to determine unintentional consequences specific to disparate impact, Moreland had much difficulty in accessing test-score data disaggregated by the institution. She argues that the absence of data caused by bureaucratic action is a salient “violation of students’ civil right” (p. 192) and a standard of fairness and transparency of assessment genres that determine student placement has to be explored in further research.

Chapter 6 examines the FYW placement process model at a doctoral-granting university. The thought experiment evidenced that English linguistic imperialism, a kind of “colonial phenomenon in which colonial states assert their legitimacy through language” (p. 206), flourished in the model. The theoretical problems within the placement model posed to international students colonial risks, including economic exploitation, marginalization of international student labor, linguistic containment and English linguistic imperialism, and suppressing student agency. Based on Young’s (2011) social connection model of responsibility, the contributor proposes that the writing programs bear the shared responsibility for undermining linguistic imperialism and promoting linguistic equality.

Part 3 is dedicated to advancing social justice and opportunity by adopting innovative construct models from other disciplinary theories to articulate writing outcomes. In Chapter 7, writing assessment is interpreted within Galtung’s (1969) framework of structural violence, a less interpersonal or visible violence in social structures imposed on the disadvantaged. The criteria for interpreting writing assessment as violent (unjust) are built on three constructs of the framework: (a) potential-actualization distance (i.e., the distance between the possibility of actualizing the potential and the potential achieved), (b) a zero-sum cost-benefit relation (i.e., a relationship in which one suffers and another benefits), and (c) the avoidability of the harm (i.e., the extent to which harm caused by certain assessment practices is avoidable). To demonstrate how violence relates to unjust assessment, the contributors discuss at length two types of violence that enacted injustice on three long-term American immigrant students: representation and normalization. The former means that marginalized students are represented or described by those with more social power in assessment scores and decisions, and the latter is one that favors proximity to predetermined assessment norms. In the case study, the three subjects who graduated with distinction from high school were violently placed by a standardized multiple-choice test into the college’s ESOL program because their identity was represented as immigrants (representation) and their circumstances of birth were far from Americanness (normalization). Since representation and normalization subverted students’ learning opportunity, the contributors recommend adopting Kane’s (2013) argument-based validation model with emphasis on evaluation of score uses and interpretations to identify and disrupt structural violence.

Set against the background of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2014, Chapter 8 attends to the prevalent white habitus across American institutions, which refers to a racialized socialization process of producing whites' racial perceptions through repeated practices in institutional contexts. To dismantle white habitus and change hostile institutional climate, the contributors employ the lesson study model—"a collaborative and recursive model of teacher research developed in Japan that places focus on learning problems and responsive lesson planning" (p. 257)—to plan an antiracist lesson. After one class period's learning intervention, the assessment of students' pre- and post-lesson writing artifacts demonstrated statistically significant improvement in learning outcomes; however, the lesson study failed to inspire enthusiasm among students to challenge institutional racism due to inflexible and incurious pedagogies. Hence, the contributors suggest students being involved as researchers and evaluators in the lesson design so as to empower them to take actions.

Based on the assumption that attitudes towards writing are closely related to students' engagement in writing, Chapter 9 takes into account the intrapersonal domain (i.e., student attitude) of sociocognitive research as an assessable program component. The contributors examined the portfolio assessment process of the FYW program at a racially-diverse university and found that the assessment, without incorporating intrapersonal domain, failed academically-marginalized international students. Through implementing a curriculum that emphasized writing about personal experiences as communication with readers, the contributors found that students' attitudes towards school writing shifted from negative to positive. However, the correlation between student attitudes and their writing performance has not been elucidated and needs continuing research.

As one of the few attempts to focus on vulnerable groups, Part 4 aims to advance opportunity for Native American students (Chapter 10) and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students (Chapter 11) through teacher research. Chapter 10 reports on a two-year study of writing instructors' professional development focused on justice-oriented writing assessment at a Native American college. What makes this professional development distinctive was the adoption of culturally responsive pedagogy to gain sovereignty, or "the right to determine how writing is assessed". Culturally responsive professional development is informed by four dimensions of social justice instructions: (a) analysis of structural inequalities in families and communities, (b) development of reciprocal relations with students, families, and communities, (c) teaching to high expectations based on students' culture, identity, language, and experience, and (d) integration of marginalized perspectives into curriculum (Sleeter, 2014). By adopting culturally relevant prompts, students' writing scores improved and teachers' professional development around writing assessment leading to social justice outcomes was also demonstrated. This case evidences writing teachers' successful professional development, and the key to the success is to know the local cultural values, particularly as an outsider.

Against the backdrop of human rights improvement for LGBTQ groups, Chapter 11 pushes forward the development of justice-oriented writing assessment by including sexuality in the process of designing college-level writing prompts and tasks. Using focus-group methodology, the contributors depict how LGBTQ students struggled with writing about homophobic topics and how their writing abilities were constrained by these negative affective aspects. Therefore, to ensure that LGBTQ students feel safe to write on any topics even related to their sexual orientation, the contributors call for joint efforts from writing teachers and assessment researchers to analyze queer rhetoric and student narratives and incorporate affective aspects into assessment construct and design.

As the title suggests, three principles inform this collection. First, both large-scale standardized assessment and classroom assessment are attended to within an ecological framework. Second, social justice theory is adopted as the foundational framework. Third, a focus on the advancement of opportunity is to identify opportunity structures leading to additional learning opportunities. By connecting writing assessment, social justice theory, and the advancement of opportunity, the volume's editors and contributors are committed to liberating writing assessment from its confined role as a tool only for admission, placement, progression, and certification, to shifting writing-assessment validation to social justice, and to generating equal opportunity for all test-takers through writing assessment.

Taken together, the eleven chapters of this collection share an interest in making visible social injustice issues through developmental studies on writing assessment. From an interdisciplinary perspective, this book provides readers with critical methodological and pedagogical references to identify the intended and unintended social consequences of assessment practices for all test takers, particularly for disadvantaged students. Pushing social justice research forward on the basis of previous research (e.g., Elliot, 2016; Poe & Inoue, 2016), this collection not only makes social justice the aim and consequence of writing assessment, but also provides actionable suggestions on integrating social justice into teaching and assessing writing. The reflections and future research guidelines in the Eighteen Assertions and the actionable framework in the Action Canvas for Social Justice at the later part of the volume together form an important innovation of the present volume, allowing a synchronic perspective for readers to approach social justice at any time point through a principled framework.

Apart from the incisive analysis and criticism throughout the volume, the considerably designed structure makes this book so reader-friendly that readers can gain a clear overview of the content and get back on track when they get lost in the frontiers explored. For example, the outline listed at the beginning of each chapter, which consists of research problem, methodology, conclusions, and future directions, etc., helps readers grasp the main ideas of each chapter quickly. In addition, the open access provided by the publisher is expected to disseminate the ideas wider and exert greater impact in the community so as to promote the social justice endeavor in writing assessment.

With regard to the weakness of this volume, there is a lack of sufficient empirical studies on student experiences in the process of assessing writing. Among all the chapters, only Chapters 9 and 11 explore student attitudes and narratives to provide insights into their personal experiences with writing. Most chapters ignore students' voices; for example, Toth (Chapter 4) only interviews administrators in excavating the consequences of DSP. Since students are the most direct assessment stakeholders, observing their participation in classroom writing ought to be advocated as a starting point for conducting writing assessment studies. After all, dedication to students is what the editors emphasize in the acknowledgments page of the book. In addition, this collection revolves around unjust writing assessment only in American educational settings. Readers, especially those from EFL contexts, should be aware that the research processes and outcomes might not be replicable in their specific contexts. For instance, Chapter 11 details LGBTQ students' experiences with writing assessment, but discussing sexual orientation remains a sensitive topic or even a taboo in some countries. In the future, more research conducted in contexts other than the US is expected to enrich the scholarship of social justice in writing assessment.

With much work to do, all stakeholders need to question and challenge those social systems leading to unjust assessment practices so as to ultimately increase students' opportunities to learn. Social injustice is generally deep-rooted and invisible as pointed out at the outset of the book, but it is encouraging to see that the editors and contributors, who are not simply scholars but also social justice fighters, have exhibited their decision and ambition to advance justice and opportunity in and through writing assessment. To conclude, this volume is not only a milestone which addresses the past, present, and prospect of justice-oriented writing assessment research, but also a significant reference book to the broader field of language assessment studies. We would highly recommend this volume to writing assessment scholars, advisory boards, administration, students, and many other stakeholders.

References

- Elliot, N. (2016). A theory of ethics for writing assessment. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 9/1, <http://journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=98> (accessed 10 December 2019).
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6/3: 167-191.
- Kane, M. T. (2013). Validating the interpretations and uses of test scores. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 50/1: 1-73.
- Poe, M., & Inoue, A. B. (2016). Toward writing assessment as social justice: An idea whose time has come. *College English*, 79/2: 119-126.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2014). Deepening social justice teaching. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 10/1, http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SSO_Feb2015_Template.pdf (accessed 24 March 2019).
- Young, I. M. (2011). *Responsibility for justice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Qiudong LI (listerlee2009@hotmail.com) is a lecturer in TEFL in the Department of English, Foshan Open University, China. He holds an MA in applied linguistics from Jinan University, China, and a postgraduate diploma in ELT from National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His academic interests include ELT for adults, language testing, and CALL.

Longxing LI (yb67707@um.edu.mo) is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of English, University of Macau. He has studying and researching experience in Harbin Institute of Technology, Nanyang Technological University, and Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests relate to translation and interpreting, second-language writing, and English teaching and learning. He has published papers in *System, Language and Education, International Journal of Bilingual Education*, and *Bilingualism, Shanghai Journal of Translators*, etc.



Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning

Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2021, 316

ISSN: 1792-1244

Available online at <http://rpltl.eap.gr>

This article is issued under the [Creative Commons License Deed. Attribution 3.0 Unported \(CC BY 3.0\)](#)

Book review

Error Analysis in the world: a bibliography.

Bernd Spillner (2017). Sprachwissenschaft. Band 37. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 579 p.

ISBN 978-3-7329-0356-6, ISBN (E-Book) 978-3-7329-9680-3, ISSN 1862-6149

Reviewed by Eirini Monsela (monsela@gmail.com)

The present bibliography by the German polyglot linguist Bernd Spillner is a sequel to the first volume, *“Error Analysis. A comprehensive bibliography”*, published by Benjamins in 1991. In this extended bibliography about error analysis in several source and target languages, both intralingual and interlingual, Spillner first sets out the importance of error analysis in the mother tongue acquisition and communication for understanding errors in the foreign language acquisition (see p. 7). He further explains his principal reason for its publication: despite the great number of studies analysing the errors that learners make in acquiring a foreign language, there is as yet no satisfactory overview summarising them. Regarding this, he underlines the great necessity to effectively compare the already excitable big amount of error analysis results.

The book cites more than 6000 publications about error analysis written in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian. The titles are listed in alphabetical order (in the authors’ last names) and they focus mainly on the topics of ‘code switching’ and ‘corrective feedback’. The attached CD-ROM, which contains all the titles of the publications cited in the book, provides a useful digital tool for keyword searching.

Finally, Spillner highlights the importance of systematic error analysis to all linguists, theoretical and practical, consisting of the following methodical steps: 1. Identification of the errors, 2. Classification of the errors, 3. Causes of the errors, 4. Impact of the errors and 5. Teaching strategies to remedy the errors (see pp. 13-18). He appeals also to teachers, whom he perceives as practical linguists, who have to use error analysis in their everyday work: the book puts at their disposal a useful tool together with a large collection of error-examples.

The bibliography will be of interest to all linguistic researchers, regardless their theoretical orientation, who study the means of acquisition of a foreign language. This is evident since the ultimate goal of all methodological approaches concerned with acquiring a foreign language is one, namely to arrive at a scientifically justified explanation for the errors that students make, an explanation which provides a foundation to develop language teaching methods (see pp. 8, 10, 12).