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# Teaching Practices and Equitable Learning in Children's Language Education

Christina Nicole Giannikas

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# Teaching Practices and Equitable Learning in Children's Language Education

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A volume in the Advances in Early Childhood and
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The first steps in bilingual education are often taken in schools by introducing CLIL modules in content subjects. The present study is a longitudinal mixed methods study that explores the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders as well as the learning and teaching perspective at a German primary school that has introduced English CLIL modules. Data was gathered from questionnaires with parents after a year of CLIL instruction (n=120), learner questionnaires (n=240), teacher interviews (n=7), transcribed lessons, as well as parts of a large-scale test that was used for learners at the end of year 4 (n=63), which is the end of primary school in the German context. The data were triangulated in order to make inferences about the perspectives of the different stakeholders in a teaching development process that affects the entire school.

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Effective language teaching can provide children with the satisfaction of succeeding in the challenge of learning a foreign language. All these issues must be taken under consideration when researching children and their teachers. Production training is under-investigated in L2 training studies, and despite the small number of studies with adults, there are very few studies of children. Even fewer attempts have been made to compare classroom instruction with computer-assisted training. The results show that output practice has an advantage over delayed production after only three weeks of training particularly in less marked sounds. Findings also show that learning English before the age of puberty does not warrant accent-free pronunciation.

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In Chile, as in other countries that have been following an international trend the past decades, the age

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children start learning English has lowered. So, it has become imperative that teachers acquire the proper knowledge to instruct these young learners. However, it is common to find in language classrooms across the country teachers who do not have such training. This reality creates challenges in areas such as assessment, materials design, and professional development. This chapter presents a study that explores how Chilean teachers of English without previous experience or training in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) assess children in primary schools. Through an online survey, data was collected from 56 participants from the central zone of the country. The findings of this study are in line with those of previous studies conducted in different countries over the world, which suggests that the main issues regarding TEYL are cross-cultural.

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This chapter examines the instructional intervention aimed at enhancing source-based compare-contrast writing in the secondary school students. Conceptually, it relies on the schema theory as a cognitive basis for integrated reading-writing instruction. The theory asserts that writing and reading both generate meaning using similar cognitive processes and types of knowledge: meta-knowledge of reading and writing strategies in relation to communicative goals, domain and textual knowledge, procedural knowledge that involves integrating writing and processing information while reading the text. Methodologically, the instruction is based on read-write cycle and was carried out in a secondary public school of Kyiv, with the 10th-grade students being the participant (n=22). The general hypothesis about a positive impact of read-write cycle instruction is partially confirmed in the research, which is an indication of the necessity to give further insight into the issue.

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This chapter discusses major contributions in research and professional assessment development and reviews key classifications in young language learner assessment (YLLA). Using the five-level metric (close, immediate, proximal, distal, and remote) by Ruiz-Primo et al., the authors classify assessments as curriculum aligned or non-aligned. Inequalities limiting access to learning and to opportunities for achievement (economic status, pre-primary education, digital environment) are linked to the five metrics. They review international examinations for YLLs (Cambridge, TOEFL, Pearson) and measure their alignment with an interactive and performative-enacted curriculum. Recommendations are given for separating external assessments as local or international in washback phenomena, for the inclusion of national assessment specialists in the research paradigm, and for greater attention to language assessment literacy in teacher training. The authors predict that increases in distance and digital learning will determine future forms of YLLA and exacerbate existing inequities.

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Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration are 21st-century skills that prepare individuals to succeed in the changing world. Therefore, there is a strong pedagogical need to promote these skills in EFL classrooms, given that meaningful language learning enables learners to use English as a tool for effective communication. However, the Chinese learning culture has long been criticised for being reluctant to develop thinking skills. Hence, this study aims to break the stereotypes and to find out how teachers promote thinking skills in Chinese primary EFL classrooms. The key finding reveals the use of silence as an opportunity to promote thinking, whereas challenges, such as insufficient pedagogical knowledge, are also identified from classroom interaction. Pedagogical suggestions are put forward for teacher educators and teachers in the field of language education.

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*Lorena Salud Gadella Kamstra, University of Essex, UK*

Teacher motivation plays a crucial role in the learning and teaching of languages. Despite its importance, research on language teacher motivation is limited. On a different note, research on teacher education (TE) has exposed the ineffective preparation of teachers for the reality of the classroom. This chapter will discuss implications for language teacher training programs by establishing a link between teacher motivation and TE. This qualitative investigation was conducted in secondary state schools in Spain, and 23 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers participated. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teacher demotivation to teach EFL, which in turn was associated to teachers' lack of training in inclusive and reflective practices. The findings revealed the demotivating influence of these two areas and explored how these could be tackled in TE while accounting for teachers' needs. By enhancing teacher training, the language classroom could become an inclusive and reflective space for young learners and teachers.

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This study aims to investigate the effects of multisensory vocabulary teaching (MSVT) on 4th-grade learners' English vocabulary knowledge. Accordingly, the experimental group was taught through MSVT while the control group was given mainstream coursebook-based instruction. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used. The non-parametric Wilcoxon tests yielded statistically significant differences regarding pupils' vocabulary achievement in favor of the experimental group both in the immediate post-vocabulary test and in the delayed post-vocabulary test. Furthermore, content analysis of the learners' diaries, teachers' blogs, and interviews revealed mostly positive views about learning words through MSVT compared to coursebook-based learning.

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*Aysegul Liman Kaban, Bahcesehir University, Turkey*

An educational, personalized electronic book called You Are in the Story (YAITS) is evaluated to assess its effectiveness on reading comprehension and motivation on sixth grade EFL students in a state secondary school in Turkey. The study was conducted with 48 students (aged 11-12) that included reading comprehension scores and reading motivation scores. Results indicated that reading comprehension scores showed no significant difference between groups. YAITS considerably led to superior reading motivation scores compared to the printed guided reading control group. Personalized e-book reading had a positive influence on the internal reading motivation of the learners. Participant students claimed that they preferred to read in their free time the printed version of the books because of the sense of ownership that the printed text storybooks offered.

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García and Flores state that new pedagogies must respond to the complex bilingualism of students and to the heterogeneous classes of the 21st century. The main goal of this chapter is to describe the theoretical foundations of a new approach to bilingualism and interculturality in Early Childhood Education (ECE) called "the PETaL approach", whose acronym stands for "Play, Education, Toys, and Languages". PETaL is an approach and not a methodology in that it is a flexible model of bilingual implementation that adapts its key methodological principles to the particular context in which it is developed. Moreover, it is an approach that entails intercultural education as a constitutive axis of accommodation and plasticity, which are sine qua non conditions of it. The PETaL approach is framed in the European space, which offers a suitable international and socio-educational context where it has begun to be experimented and which has already attached itself to incipient research.

**Chapter 11**
Craft and Project Work for Young Language Learners: Setting Up Projects to Maximize Language Learning.............................................................................................................................. 213
*Frances Jane Shiobara, Kobe Shoin Women's University, Japan*

Most young learners love craft projects, whether it's drawing, coloring, or creating. For this reason, many language teachers have incorporated craft projects into their classes. Although craft activities are enjoyable, there is a real risk that very little language acquisition may take place, if the planning and realization of the craft in class is not carefully carried out with language as a priority. This chapter will explain the benefits of incorporating craft projects within a second language learning curriculum and how these activities can be adapted to maximize language acquisition. There will be a clear explanation of the pedagogical background to incorporating craft projects as well as detailed descriptions of the types of craft projects that might be the most effective, and how to adapt craft projects to incorporate some of the best practices of teaching English to young learners.

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# Preface

*"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire" ~ William Butler Yeats*

The language education journey millions of children embark upon can be an enriching experience that brings about a great deal of advantages in the development of the young learner. It can enhance their problem-solving skills and expression, their cognitive growth, their attention span and self-confidence, and assist them in appreciating their identity and culture (Cameron, 2003; Curtain, 1990; Nikolov, 2016; Read, 2014; Singleton and Ryan, 2004). All this is possible if the journey in question is conducted efficiently, that is, when age-appropriate approaches are applied within the child's learning environment (Nikolov & Mihaljević-Djigunović, 2011). Research and informed discussions of teaching English to children has rapidly developed, which mirrors the increase of YL programs across the globe. Johnstone (2009, p. 33) describes the widespread of English language learning programs to children as 'possibly the world's biggest policy development in education'. Teaching English to YLs is now the focus of important European and global studies (Garton, Copland & Burns, 2014), and a range of qualitative and quantitative investigations (see Muñoz, 2006; Giannikas, 2011; Giannikas, 2020).

Nonetheless, teaching English to young learners is a field of continuous development, variety and challenges. The present edited volume '*Teaching Practices and Equitable Learning in Children's Language Education*', provides the literature with contributions from a number of researchers, who bring together emergent and groundbreaking work on pedagogy and equity in pre-primary, primary and secondary language education. The volume is essential as it not only includes chapters that range from research studies, analyses, discussions, and debates of the most tenacious and perennial early language education issues, such as teaching practices, teacher-student reflections, diversity, equity, new technologies, and age-appropriate assessment methods, but the book also comes at a time of great educational uncertainty due to COVID-19, where the language learning and teaching scene is changing, and this important field needs to be brought to the centre of our attention. This edited volume is intended to raise awareness about the current range of issues in researching children and language education, to identify new and much needed directions for research, and to disseminate findings and investigations carried out in various contexts worldwide. Finally, the edited volume aims to respond to the needs of practitioners, teacher educators and researchers through relevant studies that include sound pedagogical and content knowledge.

The newly-commissioned chapters of the book link the theoretical understanding and practical experience of teaching children English, and aspires to be a ground-breaking resource, bringing together the fields of language teaching, teacher training and professional development in a balanced relationship.

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The edited volume can be of interest to a wide readership, such as scholars and researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, professional educational organisations, practitioners, teacher educators, policy-makers and administrators. Given its vibrant scope and nature, the volume addresses various needs and is an important primary source in Applied Linguistics courses as it accommodates diverse topics and it balances research and practice. Furthermore, this collection can also become a point of reference in pre- and in-service training of school teachers in general and language education.

More specifically, the first chapter, by Karin Vogt, concentrates on CLIL modules in content subjects and the first steps in bilingual education often taken in schools. Chapter 1 introduces a longitudinal mixed methods study that explores the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders, as well as the learning and teaching perspective of a German primary school that has introduced CLIL. Data were gathered from questionnaires with parents after a year of CLIL instruction (n=120), learner questionnaires (n=240), teacher interviews (n=7), transcribed lessons as well as parts of a large-scale test that was used for learners at the end of year 4 (n=63), which is the end of primary school in the German context. The chapter displays data that were triangulated in order to make inferences about the perspectives of the different stakeholders in a teaching development process that affects the entire school.

In Chapter 2, Hana Ehbara Martha Young-Scholten and Jalal Al-Tamimi discuss production training is under-investigated in L2 training studies and despite the small number of studies with adults there are very few studies of children. Even fewer attempts have been made to compare classroom instruction with computer-assisted training. The participants were 58 Libyan-Arabic children aged between 6 and 8 (+2 months in the delayed post-test). All were reported to have had no prior instruction in English before the training. Second language researchers emphasize the significance of having homogeneous participant groups owing to the inherent variability of speech in general and L2 speech learning in particular and all were born and had been raised in Libya. According to the authors, because gender could be a potential variable, both boys and girls were included as equally as possible in each condition. The results show that output practice has an advantage over delayed production after only three weeks of training particularly in less marked sounds. Findings also show that learning English before the age of puberty does not warrant accent-free pronunciation.

Chapter 3 presents Erica Ramirez discusses the situation in Chile, where due to children's early English language learning start, it has become imperative that teachers acquire the proper knowledge to instruct young language learners. However, it is common to find, in language classrooms across the country, teachers who do not have such training. This reality creates challenges in areas such as assessment, materials design and professional development. This chapter presents a study which explores how Chilean teachers of English, without previous experience or training in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), assess children in primary schools. Through an online survey, data was collected from 56 participants from the central zone of the country. The findings of this study are in line with those of previous studies conducted in different countries over the world, which suggests that the main issues regarding TEYL are cross-cultural.

In the fourth chapter of the edited volume, Tamara Kavytska examines an instructional intervention aimed at enhancing source-based compare-contrast writing in secondary school students. Conceptually, it relies on the schema theory as a cognitive basis for integrated reading-writing instruction. The theory asserts that writing and reading both generate meaning using similar cognitive processes and types of knowledge: meta-knowledge of reading and writing strategies in relation to communicative goals; domain and textual knowledge; procedural knowledge that involves integrating writing and processing information while reading the text. Methodologically, the instruction is based on Read-Write Cycle and was carried



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out in a secondary public school of Kyiv, with the 10th-grade students being the participant (n=22). The chapter presents a general hypothesis about a positive impact of Read-Write Cycle instruction is partially confirmed in the research, which is an indication of the necessity to give further insight into the issue.

Chapter 5 discusses major contributions in research and professional assessment development, and reviews key classifications in Young Language Learner Assessment (YLLA). Using the five-level metric (close, immediate, proximal, distal and remote) by Ruiz-Primo et al. (2002), the authors, Poonam Anand and Starr Ackley, classify assessments as curriculum aligned or non-aligned. Inequalities limiting access to learning and to opportunities for achievement (economic status, pre-primary education, digital environment) are linked to the five metrics. The authors review international examinations for YLLs (Cambridge, TOEFL, Pearson) and measure their alignment with an interactive and performative-enacted curriculum. Recommendations are given for separating external assessments as local or international in washback phenomena, for the inclusion of national assessment specialists in the research paradigm, and for greater attention to Language Assessment Literacy in teacher training. The authors predict that increases in distance and digital learning will determine future forms of YLLA and exacerbate existing inequities.

In the sixth chapter, Xuying Fan and Li Li focus on creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration as 21st-century skills. Therefore, there is a strong pedagogical need to promote these skills in EFL classrooms, given that meaningful language learning enables learners to use English as a tool for effective communication. The authors look at the Chinese learning culture, which has long been criticised for being reluctant to develop thinking skills. Hence, this study aims to break the stereotypes and to investigate how teachers promote thinking skills in Chinese primary EFL classrooms. The key finding reveals the use of silence as an opportunity to promote thinking; whereas challenges, such as insufficient pedagogical knowledge are also identified from classroom interaction. The chapter puts forward pedagogical suggestions for teacher educators and teachers in the field of language education.

In Chapter 7, Lorena Salud Gadella Kamstra discusses teacher motivation and the crucial role it plays in the learning and teaching of languages. Despite its importance, research on language teacher motivation is limited. On a different note, research on teacher education (TE) has exposed the ineffective preparation of teachers for the reality of the classroom. This chapter discusses implications for language teacher training programs by establishing a link between teacher motivation and TE. The author presents a qualitative investigation which was conducted in secondary state schools in Spain and 23 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers participated. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teacher demotivation to teach EFL which, in turn, was associated to their lack of training in inclusive and reflective practices. The findings revealed the demotivating influence of these two areas and explored how these could be tackled in TE while accounting for teachers' needs. The chapter suggests that enhancing teacher training, the language classroom could become an inclusive and reflective space for young learners and teachers.

Chapter 8 concentrates on an investigation of the effects of Multisensory Vocabulary Teaching (MSVT) on elementary school children's knowledge of English language vocabulary. According to the authors, Şule Çelik Kokmaz and Çiğdem Karatepe, the young learners who participated in the experimental group was taught through MSVT while a control group was given mainstream coursebook-based instruction. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used. Furthermore, the authors claim that the non-parametric Wilcoxon tests yielded statistically significant differences regarding pupils' vocabulary achievement in favor of the experimental group both in the immediate post-vocabulary test



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and in the delayed post-vocabulary test. Finally, the study includes content analysis of learners' diaries, teacher's blogs, and interviews, which revealed mostly positive views about learning words through MSVT compared to coursebook-based learning.

In the ninth chapter, Aysegul Liman Kaban discusses an educational, personalized e-book known as "You Are in the story" (YAITS) and evaluated to assess its effectiveness on reading comprehension, and motivation of 11-12 year old EFL students in a state secondary school in Turkey. The study included 48 children that included reading comprehension scores, and reading motivation scores. Results indicated that reading comprehension scores showed no significant difference between groups. YAITS considerably led to superior reading motivation scores, compared to the printed guided reading control group. The chapter elaborates on how personalized e-book reading had a positive influence on the internal reading motivation of the learners. Nonetheless, participant students claimed that even though results showed that students' motivation increased, they preferred to read the printed version of books in their free time, as the sense of ownership that the printed text storybooks offered.

The main goal of Chapter 10 is to describe the theoretical foundations of a new approach to bilingualism and interculturality in Early Childhood Education (ECE) called "the PETaL approach", an acronym that stands for "Play, Education, Toys and Languages". The author, María Elena Gómez-Parra, argues that PETaL is an approach in that it is a flexible model of bilingual implementation which adapts its key methodological principles to the particular context in which it is developed. Moreover, it is an approach that entails intercultural education as a constitutive axis of accommodation and plasticity, which are sine qua non conditions of it. The PETaL approach is framed in the European space, which offers a suitable international and socio-educational context where it has begun to be experimented, and which has already attached itself to incipient research.

The volume closes with Chapter 11, where the author, Frances Jane Shiobara, discusses young learners' love of craft projects, whether it's drawing, coloring or creating. The author presents the fact that many language teachers have incorporated craft projects into their classes. Although craft activities are enjoyable, there is a risk that very little language acquisition may take place, if the planning and realization of the craft in class is not carefully carried out with language as a priority. This chapter explains the benefits of incorporating craft projects within a second language learning curriculum and how these activities can be adapted to maximize language acquisition. There is a clear explanation of the pedagogical background to incorporating craft projects as well as detailed descriptions of the types of craft projects that might be the most effective, and how to adapt craft projects to incorporate some of the best practices of teaching English to young learners.

This volume reflects teaching practices and research in a growing language learning community, where the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted scholars in the field to develop new traditions and shed light on age-appropriate and effective approaches. The chapters reveal many strengths in their arguments, for example research methodologies and strategies, topics that are of interest to practitioners and researchers, the significance of effective teaching practices and equitable learning in the field, and the international scope of how pre-primary, primary and secondary language learning is developing. The aspiration of the volume is to provide its readership with thought-provoking and inspiring chapters that will encourage further development in the field that will assist practitioners, teacher educators and scholars through these uncertain times.



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# Chapter 1
# Introducing CLIL Modules to Primary School Learners:
## A Multi-Perspective Study

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## ABSTRACT

*The first steps in bilingual education are often taken in schools by introducing CLIL modules in content subjects. The present study is a longitudinal mixed methods study that explores the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders as well as the learning and teaching perspective at a German primary school that has introduced English CLIL modules. Data was gathered from questionnaires with parents after a year of CLIL instruction (n=120), learner questionnaires (n=240), teacher interviews (n=7), transcribed lessons, as well as parts of a large-scale test that was used for learners at the end of year 4 (n=63), which is the end of primary school in the German context. The data were triangulated in order to make inferences about the perspectives of the different stakeholders in a teaching development process that affects the entire school.*

## INTRODUCTION

Content and Integrated Language Learning (CLIL) has become an established teaching approach. In primary and pre-primary contexts, immersion programmes seem to have been an important focus of scholarly attention and empirical study both in international and in German contexts (e.g. Kersten & Rohde, 2015). First steps in bilingual education, however, are often taken in (secondary) schools by introducing CLIL modules in content subjects, and this approach lends itself to primary education. The present study is a longitudinal mixed methods study that explores the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders as well as the learning and teaching perspective at a German primary school that has introduced English CLIL modules in music, PE and Domestic Science for the first four years of primary school. Data were gathered from questionnaires with parents after a year of CLIL instruction (n=188), learner

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questionnaires (n=240), teacher interviews (n=7), transcribed lessons as well as parts of a large-scale test that was used for learners at the end of year 4 (n=57), which is the end of primary school in the German educational context. The data were triangulated in order to make inferences about the perspectives of the different stakeholders in a teaching development process that affects the entire school. In addition, the effects of CLIL modules for young learners on their engagement for an interest in the foreign language and their potential effects on the development of their oral skills in the foreign language will be discussed.

## BACKGROUND

Bilingual education is a variable concept that has been defined in different ways, with the commonality of bilingual instruction involving two languages for instruction. May (2016, p. 3) identifies as features of bilingual programmes that both languages are used as a medium of instruction, delivering content and that the programme serves a purpose that is related to its underlying philosophy and its educational goals, but also the type of learners ("constituency of students", p. 3) who are supposed to benefit.

The European model of bilingual education is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). CLIL is defined by Coyle et al. (2010, p. 1) as "a dual-focused approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language", highlighting the simultaneous and integrated nature of learning content and language. CLIL is in line with the core philosophy of European plurilingualism for its citizens, and thus conceived for the majority of the population in Europe. It has been implemented as a mainstream approach to education, in an attempt to reach as many learners as possible. The extent of the contact in the target language typically leads to a functional competence in the language rather than near-native proficiency (Pérez Cañado, 2012). With North American bilingual immersion programmes[1] and European international schools being considered as its predecessors, CLIL can be seen as an educational approach that is supposed to herald social and language change. Preparing pupils for (working) life, imparting values like respect and tolerance, developing communicative language skills and extend subject-related knowledge as well as learning ability in general are posited as key goals of CLIL. CLIL is often described as an umbrella term that encompasses various formats and multiple approaches (Marsh & Wolff, 2007), making it fundamentally contextualised (Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2013), and at times rather vague in terms of conceptualisation (Cenoz et al., 2014). On the other hand, it is these two qualities, contextual and conceptual flexibility, that give CLIL as a teaching principle a notion of inclusiveness, which might account for its considerable uptake in Europe.

In the German context, major formats of CLIL subsume bilingual streams and bilingual modules (Elsner & Keßler, 2013a). Bilingual streams are characterised by a selection of non-linguistic subjects that are taught to separate groups of learners using the target language as a medium of instruction, usually after an intensive phase preparation phase with additional target language instruction. Learners typically start with one subject taught in the foreign language and add more subjects in the following years, a format characterised as late partial immersion by Breidbach and Viebrock (2012). Bilingual modules are defined by Elsner and Keßler (2013a, p. 2) as using the target language for "small units illuminating one particular topic from various points of view, (…) used at individual stages in one or more chosen non-language subjects". As Germany consists of sixteen federal states which have independent school systems, there is considerable variation in the realization of CLIL and thus the major formats mentioned would necessarily have to be generalised.



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Just like everywhere in Europe, a solid body of research on CLIL and related forms of bilingual education (termed *bilingualer Sachfachunterricht*, see discussion in Breidbach & Viebrock, 2012; Rumlich, 2016) has been produced in Germany (e.g. Heine, 2010; Roos, 2014). There are several thematic foci in the empirical studies such as learners' motivation and willingness to perform CLIL (e.g. Abendroth-Timmer, 2007; Verriere, 2014), intercultural learning processes (e.g. Lamsfuß-Schenk, 2008) or CLIL teachers' subjective theories (e.g. Viebrock, 2007). Most prominent, however, are performance-related aspects in relation with the effectiveness or the "added value" of CLIL with regard to language performance and / or subject content performance (e.g. Fehling, 2008; Zydatiß, 2007), more recently taking into account selection effects (e.g. Rumlich, 2016), i.e. positive selections of learners with favourable dispositions (Rumlich, 2016, p. 89).

The focus on effectiveness of CLIL is due to the selective educational school system in Germany, with Gymnasium as the (secondary) school type for the most academically able learners and other secondary school types (comprehensive schools, Hauptschule / secondary modern school, and Realschule) for the others, as a result of learners being streamed in segregated school types after only four years of primary school at age 10 (for a critical discussion, see Breidbach & Viebrock, 2012). With Gymnasium representing the typical school type offering CLIL, the focus of research has been on performance-related aspects of CLIL. The impact of selection effects in the German Gymnasium CLIL settings have been seen critically in the literature e.g. by Rumlich (2016), who found that learners who were selected for CLIL streams had a significantly better developed linguistic competence, more interest in the target language, better cognitive skills in general and more exposure to the target language outside of school, thus relativizing studies that attribute a comparatively better foreign language proficiency of CLIL learners solely to CLIL instruction (also Bruton, 2011). In a German educational context, the socio-economic background has found to be decisive in the academic success of learners and thus does not implement equal opportunity (Gomolla & Radtke, 2007). Thus, particularly in this context, the creaming effects of CLIL that are produced in Gymnasium as the top-tier school type do not always comply with the principles of equitable foreign language teaching. Therefore, in an attempt to implement a more emancipatory concept of CLIL ("CLIL for all"), other school types were targeted for CLIL instruction in the last decade, primary schools but less academically oriented school types as well, e.g. vocational schools (Vogt, 2002). The following section is dedicated to CLIL in primary schools.

## CLIL in German Primary Schools

German primary school typically comprises four years with children starting at about age 6. English is taught from year 3 in most primary schools with some federal states teaching it throughout primary school. Contact times usually are two lessons (90 minutes), either taught in two separate units of 45 minutes or evenly spread out during the school week. For CLIL in primary schools, Burmeister and Massler (2010, p. 7) identify a continuum between two poles, CLIL modules as units taught in the target language on an irregular basis and immersion programmes with a substantial (more than 50%) amount of subject-related instruction in the target language, during the entire primary school years. Elsner and Keßler (2013b, p. 19) report that while only a small number of primary schools operate an immersive system, bilingual modules are more widespread in comparison. Wolff (2017) reports 287 primary schools that are either immersive schools or have a bilingual stream, compared to 1,500 secondary schools. 113 of those 287 are private primary schools which are considerably more flexible in their organisational structures. Wolff (2017) posits that CLIL instruction in different formats is on the rise in German primary schools.



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The focus of the research in primary contexts, however, seems to be on immersion rather than bilingual modules (Becker, 2014; Kersten & Rohde, 2015).

Elsner and Keßler (2013b, p. 24) maintain that bilingual modules as one variant of CLIL are well suited for primary school because some topics of the primary curriculum would lend themselves to this kind of CLIL. Moreover, they highlight the introduction of bilingual modules as an easy and efficient way to increase learners' contact with the target language, using it to teach authentic subject content (p. 20). However, there are some challenges that pertain to teachers' qualifications to teach subject-specific content in a foreign language.

Primary school teachers hold an MA or equivalent qualification and usually teach the majority of subjects to their learners. One peculiarity of EFL teaching in primary in German contexts is that due to the introduction of foreign language instruction in 2004 in all of Germany, not all teachers, despite their dedication and enthusiasm, have actually studied the foreign language they teach (for an overview of German primary school teacher education, see Wilden & Porsch, 2020). As Böttger (2012, p. 116) maintains, organising teaching and learning processes requires highly skilled teachers with an advanced proficiency level in the target language and a well-developed primary-related foreign language teaching competence. This is asking much of teachers who might not have trained in the foreign language at all and represents an issue that will be discussed in the present study as well.

Llinares (2017) posits that CLIL in primary is under-researched, despite the substantial body of research on CLIL in general. However, work has been done on what Dalton-Puffer (2011) categorised product-oriented and process-oriented empirical research on CLIL, with a focus on young learners, many of which from a Spanish context. In terms of outcomes (product-oriented research) of CLIL, Pladevall-Ballester and Vallbona (2016) investigated the development of receptive skills with primary-level CLIL learners. Pladevall-Ballester (2019) compared young learners' motivation to learn EFL in CLIL and non-CLIL settings, while Martinez-Adrián et al. (2019) looked into the use of communication strategies reported by primary CLIL learners. Less research seems to have been done on process-oriented CLIL research, e.g. García-Mayo & Hidalgo (2017) on L1 use of young CLIL learners in task-supported interaction or Becker (2014) on peer-to-peer scaffolding in science classes in primary.

Research on CLIL modules in a German context encompass the study by Massler and Stotz (2013) who researched task design and assessment procedures of CLIL in the primary sector in Germany and Switzerland. A previous European project, ProCLIL (Massler & Burmeister, 2010) was carried out between 2006 and 2009 and focused on the introduction of CLIL modules in primary schools in various European countries. In the framework of the ProCLIL project, Massler (2012) scrutinised perceived outcomes of CLIL instruction from the perspective of teachers and learners as well as parents. Stakeholders in CLIL have more recently received heightened attention (e.g. Pladevall-Ballester, 2015; San Isidro & Lasagabaster, 2020; van Kampen et al., 2020). In the German context, however, Massler (2012) seems to be the only study to date that has considered all the relevant stakeholders (parents, learners, teachers) in the context of CLIL modules in primary. In her longitudinal qualitative study of the German part of the ProCLIL project, Massler (2012) investigated the perspectives on CLIL voiced by teachers (n=12), parents (n=213) and children (n=176) with questionnaires and interviews. While learners and parents voiced positive views on CLIL modules, teachers also highlighted the challenge of CLIL for less academically able learners. In the study, learning outcomes were not tested. The explorative nature of the study only gives limited insights into the stakeholders' perspectives, preventing a general overview of the results.

The present study is an attempt to shed light on the perspectives of the introduction of CLIL modules to learners, teachers and parents as relevant stakeholders in order to make inferences about the views on



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learning and teaching CLIL in minimal input contexts (Pladevall-Ballester and Vallbona, 2016), concerning what is still considered an innovative teaching approach. Both the processes of CLIL instruction using modules and the products, more precisely the development of oral competences in the foreign language, are subject of the study.

# METHOD

## Research Questions and Study Design

The research context was a primary school in Germany which offered English as a foreign language from grades 1 to 4. In a unanimous decision taken by the entire school (teachers and parents), CLIL modules were introduced, to be supplementing the two lessons of regular EFL tuition (90 minutes a week) in selected subjects, mostly P.E., music and art, but also domestic science, depending on the teacher's choice. The length of the modules was decided by the teacher; bilingual modules were taught in all year groups. Before the start of CLIL teaching, in-service teacher training on methodological aspects of CLIL was offered to teachers in co-operation with school authorities and the university. Teachers were supported by the school with materials for CLIL being purchased and teachers were able to reduce their teaching load when opting to teach CLIL. For their linguistic development, they had access to the self-access learning facilities at the university free of charge. Counselling by colleagues or university lecturers was available throughout two school years.

The research questions can be formulated as follows:

1. How do learners regard CLIL modules and what results have been achieved in their view after a school year?
2. To what extent has the foreign language developed after two years of CLIL instruction with modules?
3. How do parents evaluate the introduction of CLIL modules after one school year and what are their observations of the children?
4. How do teachers perceive teaching content in the target language to young learners concerning assets, challenges and outcomes? How do they describe their learners' reactions and their progress in the course of the school year?

The study design is characterised as a mixed methods study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) with data triangulation and methodological triangulation. It can further be classified as descriptive classroom research (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 185), as it enhances our understanding of the complexity of foreign language learning and teaching and of the multitude of factors involved in the language teaching and learning processes. The lesson observations (n=5) and the teacher interviews (n=7) form the qualitative part of the study. Parents (n=188) and learners (n=240) were surveyed by way of a questionnaire in order to reach as many stakeholders as possible. The results of the needs analysis questionnaire informed the choice of materials, the selection of topics for in-service teacher training and other professionalization measures as a sustainable support structure for the teachers. The results of the needs analysis questionnaire will not be considered in the research report. The study timeline can be found in figure 1.



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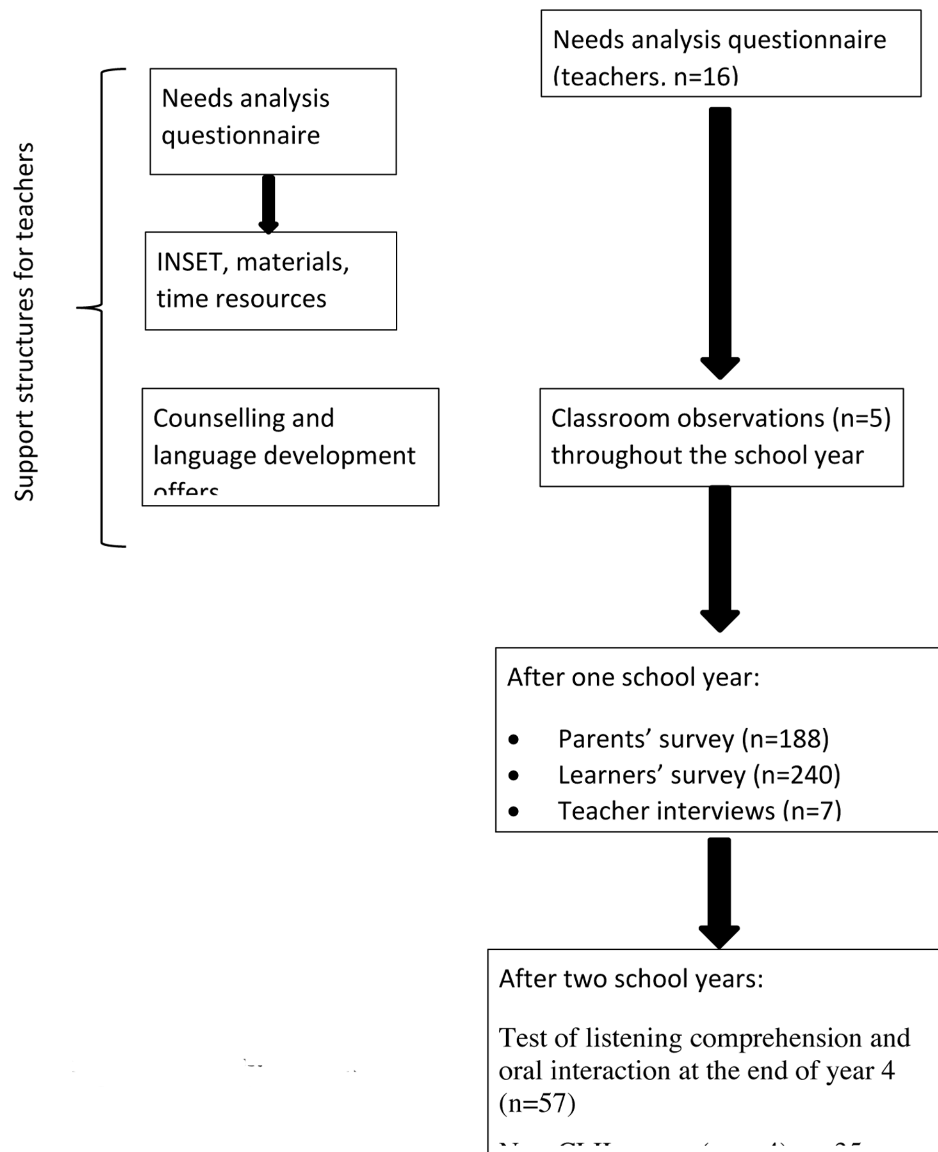
*Figure 1. Study timeline*




## Sample

The sample can be called purposive sampling, since the purpose of the study was to illuminate the perceptions of stakeholders at a specific school, so these different stakeholders had to be included in the sample. 7 out of 16 teachers involved took part in the interviews on a voluntary basis. All teachers were trained primary school teachers, but none of them had trained in English as a Foreign Language at university. None of the teachers had specific CLIL education before the project, however, teachers took part in an in-service teacher training before the start of the CLIL modules. 188 parents of learners from grades 1 to 4 were surveyed and 240 learners from grades 1 to 4 were administered a questionnaire



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after one school year. After two school years, 57 learners in year 4 were tested using part of a test that was used for a large-scale proficiency testing of 4th graders in a different part of Germany in order to establish some comparisons. In addition, 35 4th graders from a comparable primary school without CLIL instruction were tested using the same test. Participation in the study was voluntary, written consent was given by the participants or their parents or guardians and withdrawal was possible at any time of the study without any consequences.

## Data Collection

The data collection instruments consisted of quantitative and qualitative instruments. Quantitative instruments included questionnaires for teachers and for learners. Questionnaires can be characterised as an effective and versatile research instrument (Dörnyei, 2010) that might reduce researcher bias and the Hawthorne effect particularly with the learner questionnaires in this study. **Learner** questionnaires (n=240) were administered to pupils from grade 1 to 4, and were very brief in order not to overtax the children. Before administering them, teachers went through the items with the learners, making sure that they understand them. For practical reasons, no learner interviews were possible. **Parents** were also administered a questionnaire (appendix 1) as an effective way to reach as many respondents as possible (n=188). Learner data and parent data were not linked due to anonymisation of the data.

In order to gauge the progress that learners had made during their CLIL instruction, a test was administered to 57 learners of year 4, at the end of primary school. The chosen test is part of a test that was used in a large-scale survey of communicative competences, both receptive and productive, in English as a Foreign Language (Engel et al., 2009) in the largest federal state in Germany. Parts of the same test were also used throughout Germany in a study co-ordinated by BIG-Kreis, a Germany-based working group concerned with language learning and teaching in primary (Barucki et al., 2015). Since the focus of the study is on the development of oral skills, one test of listening comprehension and one dialogic speaking test were selected. Time constraints were also a reason to use only selected parts of the test. Nevertheless, it was important for us to use an instrument that would be suited for young learners and that would enable some degree of comparison to a larger population of test takers. In addition, a smaller group of learners from year 4 from a different primary school that had received regular EFL instruction was chosen. 35 learners took the same parts of the test as the group which had received CLIL instruction.

**Teachers** (n=7) were interviewed in order to clarify points, ask further questions or request that informants elaborate on certain aspects. They were conducted in semistructured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007) in their role as experts (protocols in appendix 2). Additionally, five lessons were observed and recorded. The video observations (Cohen et al., 2018) were supposed to give insights into practices of CLIL with young learners. As the participation in the observations was voluntary, teachers tended to be reluctant to have their teaching recorded, which accounts for the low number of recorded lessons (n=5).

## Data Analysis

The questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics, mainly percentages. Teacher interviews were content analysed with inductive categories. The categories were identified independently of each other by the two researchers. Video observations (Cohen et al., 2018) were recorded and transcribed with a verbatim transcription and content analysed for instances of stimulating interactions and student output with a focus on very young learners. After finalising the transcripts, these were content analysed using



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open and axial coding and categorization (Lamnek, 1995). The interview transcripts were coded using an inductive approach focusing on interaction and student output with a focus on very young learners.

The data from the tests conducted at the end of year 4 consisted of raw test scores and were transferred into percentages of appropriate or correct answers. These test data were compared to the overall results of the large-scale tests and to the results of the year 4 group that had not received any CLIL instruction.

## RESULTS

The results will be presented with regard to the research questions, relating to the perspectives of the different stakeholders, which are learners, parents and teachers.

The **learner perspective** was looked into by way of a 3-point Likert questionnaire that included learners from year 1 to 4 (n=240). Therefore, the questionnaire itself was kept brief and simple and when administered to the children, its items were explained by their teacher. The items in the questionnaire asked for a general evaluation of CLIL instruction (“CLIL is fun”), their progress in oral skills (“I can understand…”, “When I sing, I know what it means”, “I can say many things in English.”) and communication strategies (“What do I do when I do not understand?”). The focus of the questionnaire was on the children’s general evaluation of CLIL modules and their self-reported achievement in oral skills, with English being the focus of inquiry in this study. The results are reported in percentages in table 1.

*Table 1. Selected questionnaire items*

| Questionnaire item | | | Percentages | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CLIL is fun. | | never | sometimes | always |
| | N=240 | 12% | 46% | 42% |
| I can understand… | | nothing | a lot | almost everything |
| | N=237 | 8% | 51% | 41% |
| | | no | about some topics | yes |
| I can say a lot of things in English. | N=236 | 9% | 45% | 46% |
| What do I do if I do not understand | | switch off | ask teacher | find out by myself |
| | N=234 | 5% | 57% | 38% |
| | | | | |

The focus on target language development is reflected in the questionnaire items. Learners were generally positive about CLIL teaching; however, it is also striking that 12% never think it is fun. In terms of learner enjoyment, the results are comparable to Massler’s (2012) survey of learners.

Learners feel that they are effective listeners, e.g. when listening to teacher instructions. 82% of the learners in the study report that they understand a lot (51%) or almost everything (41%) while 8% do not understand anything. They seem to be a little more confident in oral skills, with 46% confirming that



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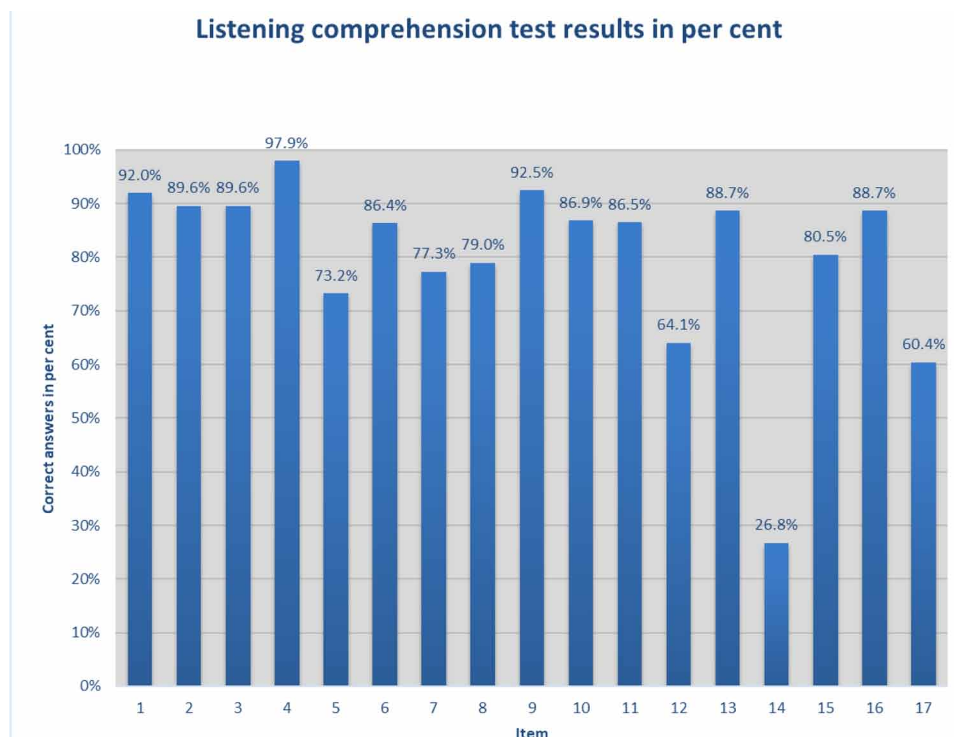
they can produce a lot in the target language and 45% claiming that they can communicate in the target language when familiar topics are dealt with. When asked what they do if they do not comprehend the contents of the lesson, only 5% of the learners asked respond that they switch off and do not follow the lesson any more. The majority (57%) would ask the teacher as a resource, but it is remarkable that 38% try to find out the solution to the linguistic problem themselves, in an attempt to apply strategies (Ball et al., 2015). Due to the nature of the questionnaire data and the brevity of the questionnaire, we cannot ascertain the exact type of the strategy the children employed. However, this result is in line with studies that suggest that learners in bilingual teaching contexts use strategies like peer-to-peer scaffolding (e.g. Becker, 2014).

At the end of the second year of CLIL instruction with modules, 57 learners in the year 4 cohort were tested in order to gauge their **proficiency in the foreign language**. The focus was on the proficiency development in the foreign or second language and not so much on the content of the subjects. Although the latter was assessed as well by the teachers, the results did not form part of the present study.

In order to answer the question to what extent the language has developed after two years of CLIL instruction with modules, parts of a large-scale test for German fourth graders at the end of primary (EVENING study on Evaluation of English in primary, Börner et al., 2013; Engel et al., 2009) were administered for listening comprehension and dialogic speaking. The listening tests were used in an adapted form in another large-scale test of 4th grade learners in all of Germany (BIG study, Barucki et al., 2015). Due to limited time available, only one listening comprehension test and an interview as the speaking test were chosen.

*Figure 2. Listening comprehension results per item in per cent*



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All in all, learners achieved a mean of 13.69 correct answers with a range from 6 to 17. On average, 80% of all children participating in the study were able to decode the content of an English utterance and assign it to a corresponding pictorial representation. In Table 2, the results of the two large-scale studies for this part of the listening comprehension test are given. The learners who had CLIL instruction seem to slightly outperform the year 4 learners in both studies as the mean of correct answers and the percentage of learners who chose the correct answers in the test population was higher than in the other studies. However, one needs to be cautious about a direct comparison due to varying sample sizes and different ways of implementation. By no means can a better performance by the learners in the present study be directly attributed to CLIL instruction. Having said that, the listening comprehension results in the present study are good with only three items below 70%. The small non-CLIL group at a different school that was administered the same test as the CLIL group performed slightly better with 85% of children being able to decode the content of an utterance in the target language and assign it to a corresponding picture, with a mean score of 14.40.

*Table 2. Results from EVENING, BIG and the present study*

| Study | Mean | Max | Learners having chosen correct answer in per cent |
|---|---|---|---|
| EVENING (n=1400) | 11.5 | 17 | 67.6% |
| BIG study (n=2148) | 7.53 | 10 | 75.3% |
| Present study (n=57) | 13.69 | 17 | 80.5% |
| Non-CLIL group (n=35) | 14.40 | 17 | 85.0% |

The speaking test was a dialogic speaking task which was contextualized with a picture of a new student in class and the new "teacher" (interviewer) asking him/ her questions. The focus test was on the elicitation of appropriate answers to 12 questions concerning their family, everyday life, hobbies etc. Correct answers were differentiated in answers with appropriate content and appropriate language, for which one point each was given. The mean score of this dialogic part was 17.9, with a range from 3 to 24. The percentage of children being able to respond appropriately to questions in the interview was 74.58%. 81% of the answers were appropriate in content while 69% of the responses given were linguistically appropriate. A direct comparison to the large-scale studies is not feasible because of different test tasks and/ or different scoring methods. On the whole, the majority of the children in the study can be characterised as effective communicators, even though many of them remain on the one-word sentence or two-word sentence levels in their utterances. The CEFR / Companion Volume descriptor from the scale "Interviewing and being interviewed" on level A1 appropriately describes these learners (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 80): "Can reply in an interview to simple direct questions, put very slowly and clearly in direct, non-idiomatic language, about personal details".

The question remains of how interaction and learner language output are stimulated in CLIL classrooms with very young learners in particular. The number of video observations is, unfortunately, limited because teachers were reluctant to open their classrooms to colleagues and researchers. Therefore, a systematic observation of the development of target language proficiency and subject competence was



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not possible due to the scarcity of the data. The five lessons that were videotaped, however, were used as supplementary data. One sequence from a CLIL PE lesson for year 1 helps to illustrate the teaching strategy employed by the teachers. The concrete and action-oriented character of PE meets important requirements of CLIL. The lesson sequence features games as a part of the PE curriculum and the teacher integrates the different modes of movement in the game.

*L OK. So, please don't cheat. (--) OK.(--) Are you warm now (?) Are you warm(?) Warm(?) (indicates sweating with her hand wiping her forehead)*

*SS Yes.*

*L OK. I've got another game. It's fire water and ice.*

*S Was? [What?]*

*(other students are joyful)*

*L* Fire water *and* ice.

*S Feuer Wasser Eis (.) [Fire, water, ice]*

*S Yes! (happy)*

*S Yes!*

*L But (')*

*L Oh yes (.) But do you remember(?) You fly like a bird(?) (moves arms like wings) Can you remember (?) You fly like a bird. And you swim like a (?)*

*Ss (name different animals)*

*S Frog (?)*

*L You swim like a fish. (makes swimming movements)*

*S Frog(?)*

*L And you jump like a (?) (turns to student who had said 'frog')*

*S* Frog(.)

*L OK (.)*



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*S Und dog (?) [And dog]*

*L And you stand like a dog of course.*

*S Und eine Katze(?) [And a cat]*

*L You walk like a cat (-)*

*S Und ein (,) und ein (,) und ein Pferd (.) [and a (,) and a (,) and a horse(.)]*

*L I think it's too much (.) I think we only need five (shows five fingers of her hand) things (.)*

*OK. Are you ready (?) (starts beating a small drum, Ss start running)*

*Fly like a bird. Fly like bird. (S make flying movements).*

*(Beats drum again, stops)*

*L Walk like a cat (-) (Ss imitate cats, miaw)*

*(…)*

The learners use the language to communicate in simple situations, and although they mostly only use one-word sentences or codemix ("Und dog?"), the teacher provides the scaffold that enables exposure and active completion of the structure "You [mode of movement] like a [animal]" and integrates them in a game that enhances movement. The children retrieve words from the word field "animals" and use German as a resource as well. The teacher takes up the German word and scaffolds the structure. At one point, she expertly integrates the student's utterance (frog) which was previously semantically inappropriate in a new, appropriate structure. The target language is efficiently used to integrate content on a very simple level, with verbal and non-verbal scaffolding like modelling or mime and gesture.

**Parents** are important stakeholders in educational settings, and the response rate of the questionnaire for parents at the school was considerable and is indicative of the parents' interest in CLIL. Parents were asked about their own views on CLIL but also about the reactions that children showed at home or communicated to them. On a 4-point Likert scale, with options from "don't agree at all" to "totally agree", their own view on CLIL instruction in general was investigated with questions like "Do you appreciate the option of CLIL instruction for your child?" or "Do you think that bilingual modules give your child better chances in the future?". Parents in the study seemed to have a positive perception of CLIL instruction in general, with 77% replying that they totally agree and 15% who agree, with only 8% voicing a negative opinion. When asked whether CLIL instruction enhanced their children's opportunities in later life, 74% agreed, only 9% completely disagreed and 17% rather disagreed. Parents' answers related to their children's reactions to CLIL instruction was positive (59%), while 41% did not confirm this. Insights from the answers to the open-ended question "What does your child tell you about CLIL instruction?" include negative comments concerning the lack of motivation that their child reported or frustrations in the learning process, but also reactions such as positive motivational effects, the learners' appreciation



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of songs and a positive feedback in general. 92% said their child did not feel overtaxed by CLIL and only 8% confirmed that their child struggled with CLIL instruction. Since the school is located in an upmarket area of the city with a large percentage of academics, this very clear result could be a socially desired answer, with parents not wanting to openly admit their children's difficulties. More (qualitative) data would be needed to verify this mere speculation, however. 85% of the respondents felt that the content side was not neglected whereas 15% said it was. One question concerned the use of the target language outside of school. Parents were divided on this. While 57% reported that their child liked putting his / her English language proficiency to use outside of school, 43% said their child did not.

In order to shed light on how **teachers** perceive teaching content in the target language to young learners concerning assets, challenges and outcomes and how they describe their learners' reactions and progress in the course of the school year, interviews were conducted with roughly half of the teachers at the school. The interviews took 20 to 30 minutes and the interview protocol can be found in the appendix. The inductive coding categories comprise teacher perceptions of CLIL modules in general, their assessment of learner progress in the target language and in the subject, their perception of the workload related to CLIL teaching and teacher self-concept as CLIL teachers.

Teacher perceptions of CLIL modules

Teachers in the interviews appreciate CLIL as a natural, unselfconscious approach to the target language outside of EFL instruction, which the teachers describe as "more structured" (Interview 3, l. 27). Teachers appreciated CLIL as an opportunity for target language immersion on a small scale (e.g. Interview 5, l. 19ff.), echoing teacher comments in Massler's (2012) study. The teachers interviewed mentioned the lack of shyness to use the target language and to make mistakes on the part of the learners (Interviews 1,6), However, not all teachers were overly positive when asked about their general perception of CLIL modules after one school year ("I'm sceptical.", Interview 4), and often linked this judgement to the perceived outcomes of CLIL instruction in terms of target language competence and subject-related competence.

Assessment of learner progress

Teachers seem to agree on a positive development in the language overall but mostly in listening skills. Unlike the teachers in Massler's (2012) study, for example, not all of them think that there has been a significant development in productive discourse skills, as one teacher explains (Interview 5, PE taught in 3rd year, l. 30ff.):

"Certainly not success in the sense that children are much more eloquent in the [target] language but that they have a sense of achievement. Well, listening comprehension. That is of course (…) Yes, that's been successful. But it is not as if they have become a lot better in communicative terms."

Other teachers stress the self-perception of the learners as effective communicators who feel competent and not inhibited to use the target language despite mistakes or a limited linguistic range as an important motivational factor, which is appreciated as such by the teachers.

They describe the initial reactions of the learners to CLIL instruction as surprised at first and then very positive (Interview 6, l. 8: "Meanwhile, the children are making a point of my speaking only English in CLIL."). However, they also mention the effort that the children had to muster in following the subject content in the target language (Interview 7, Music taught in 1st year, l. 8ff.: " (…) their attention is very



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high, higher than when I speak German in class.") The teacher also mentions routines as a scaffold, and teachers in the study identify other strategies as support structures such as modelling a task several times using different modes, peer scaffolding (cf. Becker, 2014), using native speakers of the target language as resource, e.g. for modelling a task instruction.

In terms of subject competence development, teachers seem to be more critical due to the lack of learners' language proficiency. They mention increased efforts such as several repetitions, small-step procedures or simplifications that might slow down the progress in the subject, as one teacher (PE taught in year 2, Interview 1, l. 11f.) suggests: "[The integration of content and language is] difficult. I think the content suffers. (…)". Several teachers see the danger of losing learners with special educational needs because they are overburdened with the need to process content and language simultaneously, a view that is shared by the teachers in Massler's (2012) study as well.

Struggling with the linguistic complexity of a topic happens to teachers, too, who might not feel linguistically competent enough to teach more complex topics (Interview 1, l. 12ff.). One teacher (Interview 4, PE taught in year 3) remarks: "I am simply not confident enough in the language". The self-perceived target language competence of teachers seems to play a critical role (Perez Cañado, 2018), also when it comes to constraints related to CLIL. Teachers who were not trained in the target language might not be linguistically versatile enough to break down more complex subject matter and impart it effectively.

Perception of workload related to CLIL teaching

The time that teachers invest to prepare their CLIL lessons varies and seems to be at least partly dependent on their target language competence. Some CLIL teachers find it challenging to plan a suitable language and content integrated lesson and identify content as well as language-related objectives in it (cf. Cammarata & Haley, 2018). This is also the case with some teachers in the present study, as one interviewee suggests (Interview 3, PE taught in year 1, l. 20ff.: "When content-related aspects are concerned, I quickly reach my limits (…) So preparation is of course more time-consuming than for a regular EFL lesson."

Teacher self-concept as CLIL teachers

The self-perceived target language competence seems to impact on teachers' self-concept (understood as qualities present in a person in a mental picture of oneself, Bailey, 2003, p. 385) and on their perception of the CLIL approach in general. Teachers with a low self-reported target language proficiency level tended to perceive the integrated instructional planning as more challenging ("I reach my limits", Interview 1) and found it more time-consuming than teachers with a positive self-concept with regard to the target language, and tended to evaluate the outcomes more critically.

The above observation in the interview data can be linked to the changed teacher roles in CLIL and how non-native primary school teachers, all of whom did not train in teaching English as a foreign language, deal with the change. One of the interviewed teachers feels very inhibited when target language native speakers are among her students (Interview 4, l. 45): "I hardly dare to say a sentence. I find that very unpleasant.", while another thinks of native speakers as a resource (Interview 6, l. 28): "I can use them wonderfully.", e.g. for learner-centred modelling of a movement in PE or for peer scaffolding. As Lo (2020, p 21f.) suggests, CLIL teachers might experience a process of identity (re)negotiation because they have to fit two roles (content teacher / language teacher) in their self-concept. None of the teachers



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interviewed studied English as a Foreign Language because it was not offered as a course at the time of their teacher training. CLIL could engender a conflict in their teacher self-concept when they do not feel competent enough in their new role as language teacher.

## DISCUSSION

In this section, the triangulated results of the study will be discussed along the lines of the research questions.

The **parents** in the study generally support CLIL modules for their expected added value on target language competence. They are not too concerned about a potential neglect of the subject content. Some are critical of the linguistic competence of the teachers and very few wish for native speakers of the target language, seriously underestimating the methodological and subject competence necessary for CLIL teachers. A majority of parents appreciates the teachers' methodological approach to CLIL. The approach to CLIL taken at the school can be classified as a minimal input context, and so it is not surprising that some parents wish for an extension of CLIL instruction in the open comment section. Parents report predominantly positive reactions on CLIL from their children. Negative comments would focus on frustrations in the learning process that children feed back to their parents, as well as a lack of motivation. Whether the lack of motivation results from previous frustrations could not be traced in the available data, but the concern for their learners who were struggling or who had specific learning needs that was voiced in the teacher interviews does seem to be relevant with a part of the learners.

The **learner performance** of year 4 (9-10 years) learners after two years of (albeit minimal) CLIL instruction in listening skills and oral interaction was overall good. The listening comprehension test that was in part taken from a large-scale test of year 4 learners yielded good results which were slightly better than the average of the large-scale test, but not as good as the small non-CLIL group at a comparable primary school in terms of location, socio-economic background etc. However, one needs to be cautious to directly compare the mere results as the sample sizes are rather different. In particular, in the non-CLIL group selection effects might have influenced results as many parents had not given their permission to test their children in this group and so the distribution in the group might have been skewed in addition to the smaller (n=35) sample size. Taking all these aspects into consideration, one can tentatively deduce that the linguistic effects of CLIL on the target language development have been positive particularly in oral receptive skills, but not overwhelmingly so. This is not surprising given the lower intensity and duration of CLIL modules in comparison to immersion programmes, corroborating the findings by e.g. Pladevall-Ballester and Vallbona (2016) of CLIL target language outcomes for minimal input contexts. The learners' view garnered from the questionnaire data has to be contrasted with this finding. The questionnaire had to be brief and simple in order to include the youngest learners as well, which might have resulted in rather coarse data. However, they clearly show the positive motivational effect of CLIL instruction, in line with e.g. Pladevall-Ballester's study (2019). The children state that CLIL is fun in their view and the parents report that their children are motivated enough to use their English outside of school. So CLIL can be seen as a way to enhance learners' readiness to engage with the language in a different way, e.g. Massler's (2012) study in which the teachers said that CLIL provided a more cognitively, content-based access to the foreign language. However, not all learners appreciate CLIL instruction and parents also report frustration and lack of motivation with a minority of children. This minority, however, has to be taken seriously and it does make teachers concerned, as the



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interview data suggest. Teachers report that struggling learners might not profit too much from CLIL. It follows that more linguistic support structures must be implemented so that a lack of language does not hinder content development (cf. Apsel's (2012) study on dropouts in a German CLIL programme). This is also a challenge for **teachers** in the study, one of the various challenges that they perceive. Imparting the content in a CLIL context involves a small-step procedure, particularly for very young learners, which has to planned meticulously while integrating the target language. Identifying objectives and methodological procedures for integrated instruction poses a problem for some teachers, in line with Cammarata and Tedick (2012). However, the scope of the problem seems to depend on the subject and on the cognitive development level of the learners. Teachers with action-oriented and concrete subjects like music identified fewer problems as well as teachers who taught younger students because the level of complexity of the content was not deemed suitable for teaching in the target language. As mentioned above, concern is expressed for struggling learners whose access to a problem or subject matter is not predominantly cognitive, who have short attention spans or trouble in retrieval, or other diverse learning needs. In terms of the target language development, the teachers interviewed stressed the sense of achievement and the competence as target language speakers that CLIL has instilled in them. Linguistic skills that they thought that were developed most were listening comprehension skills, which is confirmed by the test results, and not so much extended discourse skills.

Teachers' self-efficacy and self-concept as CLIL teachers is a central category in the interview data. It seems to be connected to teachers' perceived target language competence and seems to influence their perceptions of the CLIL approach in general, the way they perceive native speaker students in their classes and how they deal with them. Teachers' perceptions of their own workload related to CLIL instruction also seems to relate with their self-concept and self-perceived target language competence. Some teachers deplore excessive workloads, particularly with less common subjects or topics like crafts for which materials are scarce, some less so. The integration of content and target language planning decisions and objectives down to the formulation of instructions are perceived as a challenge to some teachers (Cammarata and Haley, 2018). Lo (2020) relates these challenges to teachers' beliefs, more precisely their knowledge and understanding of CLIL as well as about their roles in CLIL as content and language teachers.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of the chapter was to explore the perspectives of the relevant stakeholders with regard to learning and teaching CLIL in minimal input contexts. To this end, data in the mixed methods study were triangulated. Although important stakeholders like parents and learners evaluated CLIL modules mostly positively, teachers presented more differentiated views. Parts of a large-scale proficiency study indicated a favourable development of listening comprehension skills, but not particularly of extended oral discourse skills. While the target language output seems to be relatively modest, learners, teachers and parents registered a positive development in attitudes and access to the target language, with CLIL instruction enabling a sense of achievement with students and a feeling of competence with regard to the target language. Teachers' self-perceived target language competence seemed to impact not only on their teacher self-concept but also on the way they perceive their workload, on instructional decisions regarding integrating content and language and on the way they judge the CLIL concept in general.



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While it is true that classroom research is multifaceted and has to take account of numerous contexts, one limitation of the study is that it took place at one school and therefore had a limited focus on one single context. This naturally has an impact on generalisability of the study, which is not given and therefore the study can only be called a small-scale study. In order to shed light on the learners' perspective, learner questionnaires and tests were chosen as data collection instruments. Deeper insights into learners' views would have been provided by e.g. additional learner interviews; however, this was not possible for organisational reasons. As a consequence, the data from the learner questionnaires cannot give in-depth insights. The focus of the study in terms of learning outcomes was on the target language. It would have been interesting for the study to yield systematic insights into the content part of teaching and the type of integration as well as forms of assessment of learner progress in the subject.

Regarding future research, in-depth insights into learners' development in terms of a process-based approach are called for with learner questionnaires, focus group interviews, case studies, and more comprehensive testing in the target language and the subject as well as systematic video observations. This comprehensive approach would allow a thick description of learner perspectives and learner progress. More insights into the connection between teachers' self-perceived target language competence and teacher self-concept, as indicated in the teacher interviews, would definitely merit further investigation.

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## ENDNOTE

[1] Genesee (1987, p. 1) defines immersion as "a form of bilingual education in which students who speak the language of the majority of the population receive part of their instruction through the medium of a second language and part through their first language".



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## APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONS FOR PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

(approximate translation from German)

1. What language(s) do you speak in the family?
2. Do you think it is good that your child has the opportunity to participate in CLIL modules?
3. Do you think that such modules offer your child better opportunities in the future?
4. Do you receive positive feedback on these lessons?
5. What does your child say about the lessons?
6. Do you have the impression that your child feels overwhelmed?
7. Do you have the impression that the subject matter is neglected in favour of English?
8. Does your child like to try out his or her English skills during leisure time?
9. Other comments / criticism / suggestions from your side?

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

(approximate translation from German)

1. What is your assessment of the bilingual lessons? Where do you see positive aspects, where do you see difficulties?
2. How did you feel during the implementation?
3. How would you describe your goals? What did you want to achieve? Were you successful?
4. How would you describe your development during the school year? Do you have support from colleagues?
5. How well did you manage to link the content of the subject with the target language?
6. Did the preparation of CLIL modules mean additional work for you?
7. In your opinion, how were these lessons received by the pupils?
8. Were the pupils able to register progress (in the target language, in the subject)?
9. What would you change / keep?
10. What further support would you need?



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# Chapter 2
# The Role of Delayed Output on Second/Foreign Language Pronunciation in Children

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## ABSTRACT

*Effective language teaching can provide children with the satisfaction of succeeding in the challenge of learning a foreign language. All these issues must be taken under consideration when researching children and their teachers. Production training is under-investigated in L2 training studies, and despite the small number of studies with adults, there are very few studies of children. Even fewer attempts have been made to compare classroom instruction with computer-assisted training. The results show that output practice has an advantage over delayed production after only three weeks of training particularly in less marked sounds. Findings also show that learning English before the age of puberty does not warrant accent-free pronunciation.*

## INTRODUCTION

Understanding L2 speech has been a pressing issue for researchers and educationalists. Influences include age of initial exposure, the learner's first language (L1) and various universals (Colantoni & Steele, 2008).

The literature on L2 phonology has focused to a great extent on the age of acquisition factor in phonological acquisition considering it the most crucial factor after L1 influence (Ioup, 2008); see Lenneberg

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(1967) on the critical period. Findings indicate that an earlier age of acquisition correlates with more successful second/ foreign language acquisition. However recent findings (e.g. Pfenninger, 2016), suggest that age is less important than thought, and that starting an L2 before puberty in a foreign language classroom does not warrant better L2 phonology. The age factor – in populations where learners reside in the L2 country – is confounded by the fact that younger learners often have better opportunities for exposure to the L2 from native speakers (Mack, 2003; Young-Scholten, 1995).

In the Output Hypotheses, Swain (1985, 1995, 2005) and Mackey (2007) argue that production is the tool for prompting the cognitive processes that enable learners to notice differences between theirs and others' production to create novel linguistic knowledge. Feedback through speaking practice is argued to allow the learner to reflect on his/her performance. This then encourages the learner to revise and correct his/her production in a continuous process to match the target language. This process is ongoing until the learner feels that his/her production matches the model input. Colantoni and Steele (2008) specifically propose a model for L2 phonology under which learners continue to modify their phonological system in the L2 comparing their output to a model input. Krashen (1985) argues that comprehensible input alone, without production is sufficient. For him "when acquirers are forced to produce language that they have not yet acquired, known as "forced speech" […] "makes no direct contribution to language acquisition" (Krashen, 2018, para 1). There has been little research on delayed oral production.

Moreover, oral production training has rarely been investigated in L2 experimentation (e.g. Kartushina et al., 2016; Kartushina & Martin, 2019) and even more rarely in children or by comparing classroom instruction with online instruction. This chapter accordingly reports on a study of children learning English as a foreign language which examined input type (including computer-assisted instruction) and delayed production.

## BACKGROUND

Children's acquisition of phonemes shows some similarities across languages among other things.[1] For example /ð/ and /ɹ/ are late acquired in some languages and are considered 'typologically marked' (Mcleod & Crowe, 2018; Ohala, 2008). That universals are at play has also been taken up by in L2 phonological acquisition for example by Eckman (1977) in his Markedness Differential Hypothesis. L2 sounds and sound structures absent from the learner's L1 and which are typologically marked are predicted to be more difficult, that is, a " phenomenon A in some language is more marked than B if the presence of A in a language implies the presence of B; but the presence of B does not imply the presence of A." (Eckman, 1977, p. 320).

Eckman (2008) argues for universal tendencies as an explanation for the observation that L2 development can resemble L1 learners' development. For syllables, Kløve and Young-Scholten (2008) conclude that L2 learners simplify consonant clusters not only to conform with their L1 syllable structures, but also with language universals. There are age differences: children favour deletion of consonants when fronted with clusters (Pater & Barlow, 2003) but adults favour insertion of vowels to break up clusters (Broselow & Finer, 1991; Fantazi, 2003; Hancin-Bhatt & Bhatt, 1997; Karimi, 1987; Kwon, 2006; Major, 1994).[2] Here markedness also plays a role in the form of the Sonority Hierarchy which governs how consonants in clusters arrange themselves (Broselow & Finer, 1991).

When it comes to training in pronunciation, Piske (2012) discerns several factors which influence acquisition and along with L1-L2 differences and quality and quantity of the input (see also Young-



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Scholten 1995), they include training tasks in perception and production which target structural differences between the learner's L1 and L2.

Few studies have explored the effect of training on production of consonants (Bradlow et al., 1997) or vowels (Thomson, 2011). While studies have examined the effect of various types of training, none have compared the effect of delayed production. Studies have indeed found that training in perception and production has positive effects and a number of experimental studies have used computer-aided pronunciation training software using native speaker input after which learners were asked to imitate the input (Kissling, 2013; Lord, 2005; Pearson et al., 2011; Weinberg & Knoerr, 2003). In such studies imitations were recorded to allow learners to compare their productions against native speaker models. This technique was also used to teach suprasegmentals (Chen et al., 2019; Chun et al., 2013; Hardison, 2004) and global speech aspects (Tanner & Landon, 2009). In other computer-assisted pronunciation training studies, training involved automatic speech recognition feedback (e.g. Neri et al., 2008).

There are opposing views as to whether to practice output or delay it. Colantoni and Steele (2008, pp. 522–523) incorporated aspects from principles of L2 speech learning, aspects of perception models, and principles from phonetic production research into hybrid schemata of segmental acquisition. They argue that even if the learner has target-like representations and accurate motor planning, target-like productions cannot be guaranteed because articulation is shaped by L1 articulatory patterns as well as universal articulatory constraints. They put forward that a learner's output is either more or less accented and feeds back into his/her perception alongside other native input. This allows the learner to continue to finetune his/her productions and the mental category continues to evolve accordingly. If feedback from the learner's production is perceived as being no different from the model input, the categories become fossilised and thus will no longer evolve. In this case, it is said to have reached an end state. Krashen (1982) argues that the pressure to perform results in premature use of L2. Even though Krashen did not specify this for L2 pronunciation, it seems to be compatible with the role of the learner's output in his/her perception and phonological learning. If a learner does not practise speaking, there will essentially be no output and, thus, he/she will not have the opportunity to modify his/her productions to match the input.

To evaluate the role of production training and that of input, the study was designed in the following steps:

Step 1: The questions this study sought to answer were whether and, if so, participants' pronunciation varies as a function of 1) presentation method, that is perception-only practice vs. perception-and-production practice, and 2) input type, that is native English vs. Arabic-accented.

Step 2: Arabic was the L1 spoken by the participants in the study. The many differences between the phonology of the variety spoken in Misrata, Libya, and the Received Pronunciation English to which learners are exposed provide an ideal ground for investigating language learning. Table 1 shows the L1 inventory of 25 consonants excluding the voiced labial-velar approximant /w/ (Ehbara, forthcoming) and the target language (TL) additional sounds (boldfaced) excluding affricates. Consonants found in RP English but not Misrata-Libyan Arabic are the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/, affricates /ʧ, ʤ/, dental fricatives /θ, ð/,[3] the voiced labiodental fricative /v/, the velar nasal /ŋ/ and the rhotic approximant /ɹ/.

Additionally, the r-sound in the L1 is a tap everywhere except when geminated. In RP English, the r-sound is a rhotic approximant word-initially and medially but is not realised post-vocalically.

There are two L1 diphthongs: word-final [aw] and [aj] compared to RP English's /ɪə, eə, ʊə, eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ, əʊ, aʊ/. The L1 also has a less complex syllable structure C(C)V(CC) than English: (CCC)V(CCCC). There are also phonotactic restrictions on consonant allowed in clusters (e.g. Roach, 2009).



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*Table 1. Consonant inventories of Misrata Libyan Arabic (Ehbara, forthcoming) and English*

| | Bilabial | | Labio-dental | | Dental | | Alveolar | | Post-alveolar | | Palatal | | Velar | | Uvular | | Pharyngeal | | glottal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plosive | **p** | b | | | | | t | d | | | | | k | g | | | | | ʔ |
| (Emphatic) | | | | | | | tˤ | dˤ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nasal | | m | | | | | | n | | | | | | **ŋ** | | | | | |
| Tap/trill | | | | | | | | ɾ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fricative | | | f | **v** | **θ** | **ð** | s | z | ʃ | ʒ | | | | | x | ɣ | ħ | ʕ | h |
| (Emphatic) | | | | | | | sˤ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Approximant | | | | | | | | **ɹ** | | | | j | | | | | | | |
| Lateral approximant | | | | | | | | l | | | | | | | | | | | |

Step 3: It is hypothesized that participants' pronunciation will vary as a function of 1) presentation method, that is perception-only-practice vs. perception-and-production practice, and 2) input type, that is native vs. Arabic-accented.

Step 4: Experiment:

· **Participants:**

The choice of children – and not adults – is twofold. First, seven-year-old children are prepubescent, which minimises the potential effects of the age factor. Second, the chances of finding child participants with no prior instruction in English are higher than those for adults, whose aspects of L2 language can potentially be fossilised.

The participants were 58 Libyan-Arabic children aged between 6;11 and 8;0 (+2 months in the delayed post-test). All were reported to have had no prior instruction in English before the training. Second language researchers (e.g. Flege, 1987) emphasise the significance of having homogeneous participant groups owing to the inherent variability of speech in general and L2 speech learning in particular and all were born and had been raised in Libya. Because gender could be a potential variable, both boys and girls were included as equally as possible in each condition. The participants were then divided into the three condition groups who were randomly placed into these, shown in Table 2. The Traditional Teaching participants were drawn from the school where the Traditional teacher worked. They were all pupils from the same class attending year two in that school.

· **Procedure**:

*Table 2. Number of participants per condition, time of test, and gender*

| Post-test | Males | Females | Delayed post-test | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listen and Speak | 9 | 11 | Listen and Speak | 7 | 7 |
| Listen Only | 10 | 8 | Listen Only | 9 | 8 |
| Traditional | 11 | 9 | Traditional | 9 | 9 |



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Deciding on amount of L2 input was informed by studies, although amount varies drastically. Duration of training in computer-assisted pronunciation training studies is relatively shorter than other interventions (Thomson & Derwing, 2014): one computer-assisted pronunciation study lasted 20 minutes (Guilloteau, 1997) and some classroom studies lasted many hours, e.g. 70 (Parlak, 2010). Studies do not always use control groups to separate the effect of input amount from input type.

It was decided to deliver the training for three weeks, five hours per week. For Listen and Speak, each word was allocated a three-minute listening practice and one minute of speaking practice.[4] For Listen Only, each word was allocated an additional listening minute instead of the minute speaking practice. This was to eliminate the impact of differences in time allocated for each word between the Listen and Speak and Listen Only conditions. This yielded a total of four minutes of listening practice for each item, but children were not required to produce the words. The Listen and Speak and Listen Only used native speaker input provided by a programme called the Digital Literacy Instructor (DigLin) (Overal, 2014). For the Traditional condition, teaching was carried out by a typical 'traditional' Libyan teacher of English. The teacher spoke Libyan-accented English, which is common in Libya and was instructed to provide a three-week course to the children and include the test words and the same pictures as the experimental conditions within her teaching. The teacher was free to include, for example, grammar tasks or alphabet drills, as are typical of traditional classroom teaching but not to use any electronic devices as traditional classrooms never use them.

· **Design:**

The productions of the target words were compared using the same tasks immediately after the training (post-test) and 10 weeks later (delayed post-test) and across the three conditions. Because the children had no instruction in English before the training a pre-test was not possible (English is introduced in the national curriculum when pupils are between nine and ten years old). To eliminate the possibility of exposure to English, it was confirmed that none had had any by asking their parents.

· **Testing:**

Three tasks were used to elicit data: picture-naming, read aloud and delayed repetition. Stimuli were presented individually on PowerPoint slides and randomised to elicit two tokens from both tasks yielding two tokens per test word, with a total of 150 expected tokens. The stimuli comprised monosyllabic words containing sounds problematic for Libyan-Arabic speakers (see above) (Ehbara, forthcoming). Items were grouped on the basis that the target English and the L2 English counterpart as produced by Libyan adult speakers are not the same phoneme. In the L1, English /ɹ/ is typically produced [ɾ], /θ/ as [t], /ʧ/ and /ʤ/ as /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ respectively. As with diphthongs, they are monophthongal and coda clusters usually exhibit epenthesis. Thus, impressionistic transcription should be able to reveal differences in production. However, for phonemes transcribed the same across the two languages, such as plosives, transcription was not sufficient and further acoustic analyses of VOT was deemed necessary. Arabic data (see Ehbara (forthcoming) for stimuli items) were also elicited from the participants to allow comparison with English production using a direct comparison of the results across languages. Thus, the stimuli were subdivided into Arabic and English, composed of monosyllabic words consisting of a bilabial or coronal plosive syllable-initially followed by each of the high front vowel /iː/, high back vowel /uː/ and low front vowel /a/.

Five seconds were allowed for each slide. Visual stimuli (photographs) for the delayed post-test were different from those for the post-test and the training visual materials to avoid task familiarity.

In the delayed repetition task, an intervening phrase was used to prompt production. Flege et al. (1995a) note that the intervening phrase reduces reliance on short-term memory and merely imitating.



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In this task, participants heard an audio clip of each item followed by an intervening phrase in Arabic */ taw:a ʕawədha mar:a ta:nja/* 'now repeat it one more time'. This task yielded the vast majority of tokens. Because some children in this sample had not yet acquired literacy in Arabic to read the words, a similar delayed repetition task was used to elicit the Arabic data. The data for each speaker were collected in a single session lasting approximately between 20–30 minutes. The procedure carried out to elicit data during the delayed post-test was the same as that in the post-test.

· **Instrumentation**

To answer the research questions, every token was assigned a label 'target-like' if its transcription holistically matched the IPA transcription for the item, or a 'non-target-like' if it did not, irrespective of the type of input received by the treatment condition with a few exceptions. Mismatches in final voicing were not considered errors because final devoicing in L1 is well-documented in children's speech (Jakobson, 1968; Stoel-Gammon, 1987; Templin, 1957). Additionally, /l/ vocalisation is not considered an error either because /l/ vocalisation is very common in children learning languages that employ velarised post-vocalic /l/ (Grunwell, 1985; Hodson & Paden, 1981; Stoel-Gammon & Dunn, 1985). When a speaker had an overall lateralisation and/or a lisp in all words including Arabic, this feature was not considered in the decision whether the production was 'non-target-like'. These points aside, for a token to be rated target-like, the segments must match for place and manner of articulation as well as voicing in word-initial and word-medial positions.

Step 5: For each task, each participant was presented with 75 test items, as written words in the read aloud task, pictures in the picture-naming task, and audio clip of the word (from DigLin (Overal, 2014)) in a carrier phrase. This culminates in 225 English stimuli per participant per test; 13050 target words in the post-test (58 participants) and 10800 in the delayed post-test (48 participants).

In the delayed repetition learners could *generally* produce what they had heard from the audio prompt. This differed in memory recall tasks – read aloud and picture-naming – because learners could only produce the words they learned, and not all had learned all the test words, as shown in Table 3; 15 hours were insufficient for seven-year-olds to learn all 75 words.

The following patterns can be observed here: there is a considerable difference in words produced during the delayed repetition task and those of the memory recall tasks and the effect of the test interacts with both task and training condition and this diverges more in the delayed post-test. This also varies with training condition, increasing slightly for the Listen and Speak condition, remaining the same for Listen Only and decreasing for the Traditional condition. Traditional Teaching, however, shows the highest rate in the picture-naming task whereas Listen Only the lowest. In the delayed repetition task, Traditional Teaching had the lowest rate of fully produced words. For the two memory recall tasks, picture-naming task yielded consistently a marginally higher rate of words than the reading aloud.

The following sections show results for the two phases of the analyses; target-likeness rating scores and voice onset time durations.

**Phase One:** Target-likeness results

Turning to the research question, whether training condition had an effect on the phonology of what the children produced, Table 4 shows the percentages of average target rating scores by problematic sound class and by task for each training condition in both tests.



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*Table 3. Mean number of words produced stratified by test, group and task.*

| Test | Training | Task | Mean out of 75 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Post-test | Listen and Speak | Picture-naming | 3.85 |
| | | Read aloud | 2.00 |
| | | Delayed repetition | 53.60 |
| | Listen Only | Picture-naming | 1.83 |
| | | Read aloud | 1.00 |
| | | Delayed repetition | 44.30 |
| | Traditional | Picture-naming | 8.35 |
| | | Read aloud | 5.00 |
| | | Delayed repetition | 24.30 |
| Delayed post-test | Listen and Speak | Picture-naming | 2.00 |
| | | Read aloud | 5.00 |
| | | Delayed repetition | 54.50 |
| | Listen Only | Picture-naming | 1.62 |
| | | Read aloud | 1.00 |
| | | Delayed repetition | 48.10 |
| | Traditional | Picture-naming | 7.13 |
| | | Read aloud | 1.00 |
| | | Delayed repetition | 24.90 |

The figures show that target rating scores varied between training conditions in terms of averages and rank. Cross-problematic sounds averages varied by training condition, test and task. For the delayed repetition task, Listen and Speak exhibited the highest average target rating scores during the post-test, followed by Listen Only. Traditional training condition had the lowest.

In the delayed test, the Traditional condition target ratings for coda clusters (19%) and dental fricatives (22%) exceeded those for the Listen Only training condition (15%, 17% respectively). Additionally, the rank of difficulty for the Listen Only and Traditional training condition changed. For the Traditional training condition, in the post-test, the highest score was evident in affricates followed by plosives, clusters and dental fricatives (same score), diphthongs and finally rhotic approximants had the lowest score. In the delayed test, this changed for clusters. Similarly, the ranking of clusters and dental fricatives for the Listen Only training condition varied by test.

For the picture-naming task, scores varied considerably. The highest average target rating score for Listen and Speak during the post-test was plosives (70%). In the delayed test it was diphthongs (100%). As for Listen Only training condition, the highest score was also evident in the class of plosives (56%) during the post-test. In the delayed test, it was rhotic approximants (25%). The highest average target rating score for Traditional training condition during the post-test was affricates (24%). In the delayed test, it was clusters (29%).

Materials from the read aloud task were scarce and figures did not represent scores very accurately as in the other elicitation materials. The Listen and Speak condition yielded tokens containing affricates, plosives and clusters in the post-test and plosives, diphthongs, and rhotic approximants in the delayed



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*Table 4. Average target rating score per test, training condition, problematic sound class and task*

| | Post-test | | | Delayed post-test | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Listen and Speak | | | | | |
| | **Picture-naming** | **Read aloud** | **Delayed repetition** | **Picture-naming** | **Read aloud** | **Delayed repetition** |
| Affricates | 43% | 0% | 80% | 0% | | 75% |
| Plosives | 70% | 56% | 62% | 29% | 67% | 55% |
| Diphthongs | 50% | | 41% | 100% | 0% | 43% |
| Clusters | 22% | 40% | 30% | | | 33% |
| Fricatives | 12% | | 28% | 0% | | 28% |
| Rhotics | 0% | | 20% | 0% | 100% | 19% |
| | **Listen Only** | | | | | |
| | **Picture-naming** | **Read aloud** | **Delayed repetition** | **Picture-naming** | **Read aloud** | **Delayed repetition** |
| Affricates | 33% | | 62% | 0% | | 58% |
| Plosives | 56% | 50% | 54% | 20% | 33% | 44% |
| Diphthongs | 0% | 0% | 36% | 0% | | 42% |
| Clusters | 0% | | 23% | 0% | | 15% |
| Fricatives | 0% | | 22% | 0% | | 17% |
| Rhotics | 0% | | 12% | 25% | | 9% |
| | **Traditional** | | | | | |
| | **Picture-naming** | **Read aloud** | **Delayed repetition** | **Picture-naming** | **Read aloud** | **Delayed repetition** |
| Affricates | 24% | 0% | 46% | 19% | | 46% |
| Plosives | 21% | 0% | 39% | 27% | 50% | 34% |
| Diphthongs | 0% | 0% | 12% | 0% | | 19% |
| Clusters | 14% | 33% | 18% | 29% | | 19% |
| Fricatives | 0% | 0% | 18% | 0% | | 22% |
| Rhotics | 0% | 0% | 02% | 0% | | 3% |

test. Listen Only training condition yielded tokens containing plosives and diphthongs in the post-test and only plosives in the delayed test. Traditional training condition on the other hand yielded tokens containing all of the sound classes in the post-test and only plosives in the delayed post-test.

For Listen and Speak training condition, plosives received the highest average target rating score in the read aloud task during the post-test (56%). In the delayed test, the class of rhotic approximants received the highest average target rating score (100%) within that group. Listen Only training condition exhibited a score of 50% for plosives in the post-test, whereas in the delayed test, this score declined to 33%. Traditional training condition exhibited the score of 33% for plosives in the post-test, which increased during the delayed test to 50%. It is clear from the above the interaction of the effects of training condition, test, sound class and task.



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The data showed an interaction between gender and literacy – measured based on the ability to read the Arabic stimuli – that was consistent regardless of the training condition. Within literates, males performed better than their female counterparts. Within illiterates, females outperformed their male peers. For the Traditional Teaching condition, such comparisons were not possible as it did not have illiterate females.

Based on these observations, a generalised linear mixed effects model was built to capture these interactions in order to yield more accurate predictions. To this end, the following model was built:

Target ~ Condition*Test*Sound + Task + Literacy*Gender + Age + (1 + Test | speaker) + (1 | item)

The output of the model includes coefficients for the simple effects and two-by-two and three-by-three interaction terms. Therefore, differences between these levels are examined using post-hoc tests to extract model-predicted probabilities of target-likeness rating for each training condition, in each test by sound class. The function emmeans (Lenth, 2019) in R was applied and the following code was used:

emmeans(mdl, pairwise ~ Condition * Test | Sound, type = 'response')

Figure 1 shows model-predicted probabilities of target-likeness grouped by sound class, training condition, and time of test. The line with an 'x' depicts predicted percentage rating during the post-test and the line with dots depicts that in the delayed post-test. Affricates were the least challenging sound class, followed by plosives, and then diphthongs. The most challenging sound class was rhotic approximants especially for the Traditional Teaching condition. The figure also shows that overall, the Listen and Speak condition outperformed the other two training conditions across almost all the sound classes in both times of testing (an exception being in the class of diphthongs in the delayed post-test).

The post-hoc within-test pairwise comparisons by training condition show that in the post-test, although the Listen and Speak condition outperformed its Listen Only counterpart, this difference was only statistically significant for the group of affricates ($p < .03$). The Listen and Speak condition also outperformed its Traditional counterpart and this difference was statistically significant for the group of affricates ($p < .0001$), coda clusters ($p = 0.0157$), diphthongs ($p <.0001$), plosives ($p <.0001$), and rhotic approximants ($p <.0001$), but not for dental fricatives. Finally, the Listen Only condition outperformed its Traditional counterpart during the post-test and the difference in the predicted probability of target-like rating between them was statistically significant for the group of affricates ($p = 0.015$), diphthongs ($p <.0001$), plosives ($p = 0.003$), and rhotic approximants ($p <.001$), but not for coda clusters, or dental fricatives.

Within the delayed post-test, the Listen and Speak condition once again outperformed its Listen Only counterpart – an exception was the class of diphthongs where their predicted probabilities of target-likeness rating were matched. However, this difference was statistically significant for the group of coda clusters only ($p <.001$). The Listen and Speak condition also outperformed its Traditional counterpart and the difference was statistically significant for the group of affricates ($p = 0.0001$), diphthongs ($p <.0001$), plosives ($p = 0.0083$), and rhotic approximants ($p = 0.0001$), but not for coda clusters, or dental fricatives. Finally, the Listen Only condition was outperformed by the Traditional condition in the delayed post-test within the groups of coda clusters and dental fricatives. However, this decline in performance did not illustrate a significant difference compared to the Traditional condition. The difference in the predicted probability of target-likeness rating was statistically significant between those latter condi-



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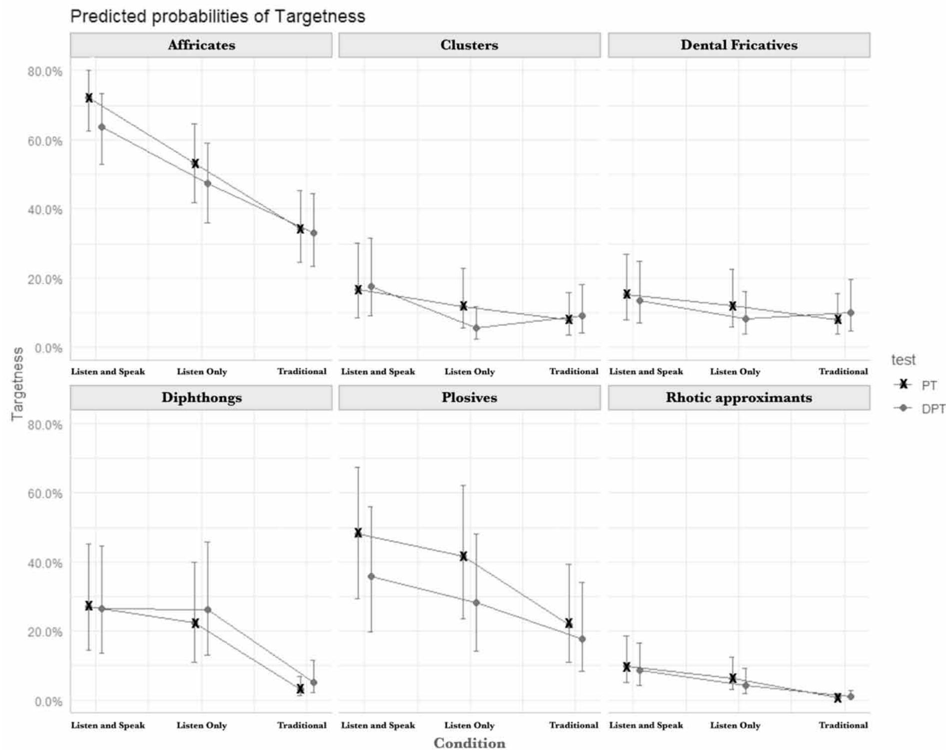
*Figure 1. Model-predicted probabilities of target-likeness rating*




tions for the group of diphthongs only ($p$ <.0001), where the Listen Only condition outperformed its Traditional counterpart.

Some common phonological processes observed in the data were mainly substitution, including de-affrication in affricates and th-fronting in dental fricatives, and cluster reduction. In plosives, the main process observed was voicing. In diphthongs, the most common process was monophthonging mainly with /əʊ, eɪ/ for all groups and /ɪə/ for the Traditional condition only. The case for the latter group reflects their traditional teacher's pronunciation.

**Phase Two:** VOT results

VOT measurements for L2 English /p, b, t, d/ were also extracted using Praat (Boersma & Weeninck, 2016) and compared to L1 Arabic /b, t, d/ as well as English /p, b, t, d/ from each training conditions' respective input.

Table 5 shows mean VOT durations by plosive for the target input for the experimental groups and the Traditional condition. The traditional teacher clearly shows non-English VOT durations.

Figure 2 shows VOT durations for L1 and L2 as produced by the participants. Although overall L2 VOT values are higher than those for L1 (exceptions are voiced categories in Listen and Speak voiceless categories in the Traditional both during the delayed post-test), they do not seem to vary considerably from one another. It is also noticed that the L1 VOT durations for the experimental groups, and more notably for Listen and Speak, are longer on the positive side and shorter on the negative side.

Linear mixed effects models were used to compare the measurements in the three language groups; L1, L2 and target language TL to examine whether the learners in each training condition established



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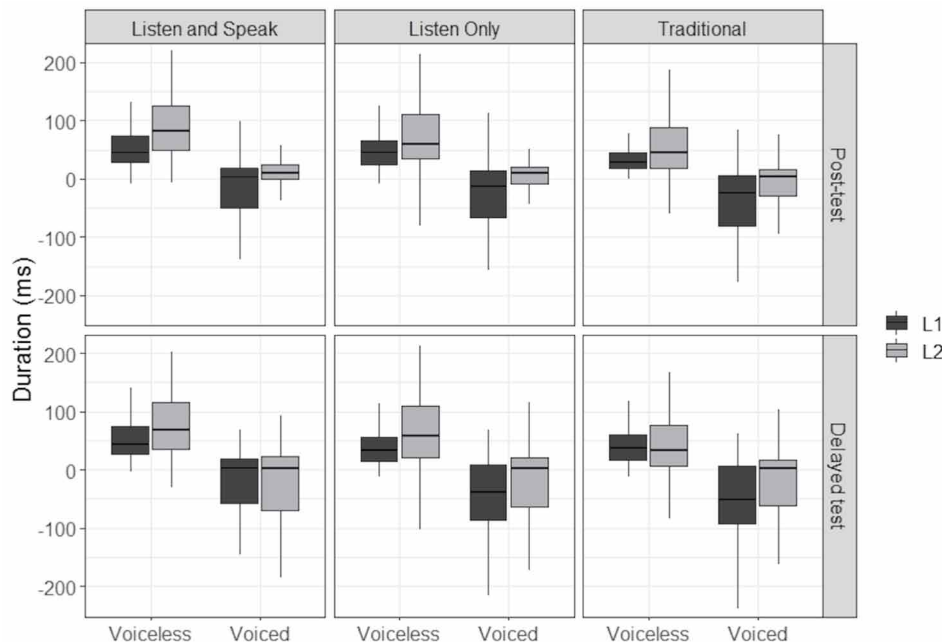
*Table 5. Mean voice onset times (ms)*

| | | DigLin | Teacher |
|---|---|---|---|
| /p/ | (+) | 103 | 27 |
| /b/ | (+) | 6 | 3 |
| | (-) | | -76 |
| /t/ | (+) | 125 | 35 |
| /d/ | (+) | 19 | |
| | (-) | | -65 |

L2 VOT categories *statistically* independent of their L1. It was not possible to include the three training conditions in a single model given the Traditional Teaching condition received Arabic-accented English compared to the experimental conditions. To control for potential speaker-related effects such as gender and literacy, as well as VOT-related effects such as place of articulation, vowel context, and voice (voiceless plosives were pooled together and so were voiced ones), these were incorporated in the linear mixed effects model. The model added by-speaker and by-item random intercepts and by-speaker random slopes for voice, place, and vowel context. Adding the effect of test was not possible for the TL data. Therefore, data were examined for each test individually. The following model was built:

Duration ~ Language*Voice + Gender*Literacy + Place + Vowel + (1 + Voice + Vowel + Place| speaker) + (1| item)

*Figure 2. VOT durations (ms). The line inside the boxplot represents the mean*



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The outputs of the models include coefficients for simple effects and interaction terms. Therefore, differences between these levels are examined using the post-hoc tests emmeans using the following code:

```
emmeans(mdl, pairwise ~ Language * Voice)
```

The results show that overall, none of the training conditions managed to establish L2 categories that are statistically independent of either their L1 counterparts or the TL categories for either within-voiceless or within-voiced plosives. An exception is the Listen Only condition whose L1 VOT category for voiceless plosives (/t, d/ values pooled together) was statistically ($p = 0.045$) 75 ms shorter than the TL counterpart in the post-test but not in the delayed post-test. This does not mean that learning did not take place as the L2 categories were mostly indistinguishable from the TL categories. Moreover, they have all successfully managed to statistically distinguish their voiced and voiceless categories including bilabial plosives. This is surprising given /p/ is absent in Libyan Arabic and native English speakers find it difficult to identify it when produced by Arabic speakers (Flege & Port, 1981).

**Step 6:** Findings

**Hypothesis One:** The hypothesis was only partly confirmed for target-likeness rating results. Whilst the Listen and Speak condition outperformed the two other training conditions, this difference did not reach statistical significance consistently across all the problematic sounds in both tests. This is because not all sounds are equal in their degree of difficulty in production (Diehl & Lindblom, 2004) even within the same training type.

The difference between the Listen and Speak and Listen Only condition was only statistically meaningful in affricates in the post-test and coda clusters in the delayed post-test. The Listen Only did not exceed the Listen and Speak in any sound class despite the two training conditions receiving the same type of input. These results reveal that overall, delayed speaking (Listen Only) does not have an advantage over *pressure* to speak (Listen and Speak) when it comes to target-like realisations for this amount of training. Although in many cases the experimental conditions were not statistically different, overall oral production practice does have an advantage over delayed production either. Furthermore, the Listen Only condition, despite receiving native input, was outperformed by the Traditional condition, who received Arabic-accented input, in coda clusters and dental fricatives over time. It is suggested that this might also be due to an interaction between input type (native vs. accented) and training type (output vs. no output practice). The only sound class whereby no statistical difference was observed between any pair of conditions in either time of testing was dental fricatives.

Studies of child language acquisition indicate that rhotics and dental fricatives are among the *late* acquired sounds, that is acquired after the age of five (Mcleod & Crowe, 2018). This is due to their relative markedness based on cross-linguistic typology compared with the other sound classes involved in this chapter. According to Shriberg (1993) native English children do not fully master the production of the rhotic approximants until the age of eight and seem to be one of the most problematic sounds for them (Shriberg & Kwiatkowski, 1994; Smit et al., 1990). For British-English children, in particular, the rhotic approximant /ɹ/ is mastered by the age of 6;0 to 6;5 and the dental fricatives are mastered *after* the age of 7;0 (Dodd et al., 2003, 2013). McLeod and Crowe (2018) further reanalysed the data of English-speaking children from various studies (including Dodd et al., 2003, 2013; Shriberg, 1993) and applied 75-85% percentage of consonant correct (PCC) criteria from nine studies and 90-100% PCC from eight studies. Their findings indicate that these sounds are acquired between the age of 5;0 and 7;0 with the voiceless dental fricative being, on average, the last-acquired consonant. The th-fronting process experi-



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mental conditions exhibited for this sound class is typical of English-speaking children. The Traditional Teaching learners exhibited stopping instead, a process also found in Arabic adult L2 learners of English. This is due to the accented input adults typically receive as is the case for the Traditional teacher's production. In Educated Spoken Arabic, (inter)dental fricatives were also among the late sounds to be acquired (Amayreh, 2003). Amayreh (2003) provides two explanations for this: one is the lack of input from Educated Spoken Arabic given that this sound is introduced in school when children are six years of age. However, he does not rule out the potential of Arabic children being exposed to the sound from sources other than school. In schools, it is highly likely that teachers also use colloquial variants [t] and [d] for /θ/ and /ð/ respectively instead of Modern Standard Arabic reflecting substitution patterns found in the children's data. The other reason he suggests is the relative markedness of (inter)dental fricatives based on cross-linguistic typology.

The Traditional Teaching learners' pronunciation showed a general improvement in the delayed post-test. This seems to result from the input they received from the native audio clips during the delayed repetition task during both times of testing.

The merger VOT categories are also an indicator of learning even for the Traditional condition whose members received very minimal native input during both times of testing and further supports backward transfer (Kartushina et al., 2016).

Finally, the findings on word learning implicate that a 15 hour course for learning 75 novel words was insufficient. Children in the three conditions failed to retrieve the majority of words especially during the memory recall tasks.

## SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings implicate that a 15 hour course for learning 75 novel words was insufficient. It is well-known that hours dedicated to L2 teaching in school classrooms is insufficient for intensive language training. The use of computer-assisted pronunciation training software can help with this by allowing learners to work independently at their own pace. Moreover, second language teachers should focus on the importance of oral practice and supplying lessons with native speaker input. Interlanguage phonological processes are to be expected. They are evident in English-speaking children and thus, do not necessarily reflect a lack of learning.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Whilst the examination of oral production was appropriate, it is worthwhile to examine perception in future studies. This is to ascertain whether the participants' performance in perception tasks would match that of their production. Further research is also required to examine traditional foreign-accented teachers' productions during the classroom-based instruction to capture the actual input learners receive during training. Further research is also needed to examine the long-term training effect on perception and production. Moreover, further research is required to determine the amount of training child learners require to develop literacy decoding and to learn test words efficiently. Moreover, research on the acquisition of L2 phonology by children are relatively rare compared to other domains of L2 acquisition. The ones that do exist rarely cover lexical learning in any depth. There are few studies of children's early



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learning of vocabulary in the classroom (an exception is Heimbach, 1994 for example). This should not be the case, so it needs to be pursued.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, results for the segmental and lexical learning domain show a disadvantage for the delayed production practice (Listen Only) in comparison to the Listen and Speak training. This indicates the importance of output practice in second language speech learning contrary to Krashen's claim that output does not contribute to L2 learning. Results also show an advantage for native input. Younger learners do not automatically develop accent-free pronunciation. Results from phonetic learning (VOT) show that neither of the training conditions created statistically independent L2 phonetic categories. Instead, all of the three conditions created merged L2 categories that reflect L1 and TL values – except for TL and the Listen Only's L2 VOT categories. Despite the lack of data from learners prior to the training and the relatively short period of training, it is argued that the experimental learners' L1 are altered as a result of the merger category supporting the findings by Flege (1995) and MacKay et al. (2001) on Italian-English bilinguals. They argue that the effect of one language on the other is bidirectional. The effect of L1 on L2 is known as forward transfer whereas that from L2 on L1 is known as backward transfer (Kartushina et al., 2016) and it is reported in adults as well. The learners have successfully distinguished their voiced and voiceless categories despite the lack of a voiceless bilabial plosive in their L1, an area which has been reported as problematic among adult Arabic L2 learners.

The results also vary as a function of problematic sound class. Colantoni and Steele (2008) assert that not all sounds are equally difficult because articulatory constraints and typological markedness also play a role in L2 acquisition. Affricates are the least marked sounds in the study set and this is where statistical differences were observed, whereas dental fricatives are one of the most marked sounds and there was no statistical differences in target-likeness ratings between any of the conditions.[5] In terms of the lack of statistical differences in VOT patterns between the training conditions and the Traditional condition's patterns resembling more of those from DigLin than their teacher, it is argued that some foreign TL sounds are readily perceivable to naive listeners without any training necessary (Best, 1994, 1995; Best & Tyler, 2007).

Indeed, as proponents of output practice such as Swain (1995; 2005) for general L2 learning and Colantoni and Steele (2008) for L2 speech learning postulate, output practice allows learners to reflect on their productions, comparing them to the TL in a continuous refining process. Output also allows learners to develop articulatory muscle memory for the target sounds and structures with more practice comes better tuning of articulatory-motor skills. Differences between child adult L2 learning cannot be explained merely by age as previous studies mostly emphasise but rather on type of input. It was demonstrated how learners of the same age (prepubescent) can have different performances resulting from differing types of input. Not all L2 phonology is governed by backward transfer. Some aspects are explained by universal language acquisition tendencies regardless of the age group. Universal tendencies also relate to acoustic salience and articulatory settings. It was demonstrated that in the delayed test, whereby the Listen and Speak condition maintained its rank in target-likeness and the Listen Only condition's performance levels out with that of the Traditional condition who received accented input.



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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**/l/ Vocalisation:** A phonological process involving the change of velarised /l/ into a (semi)vowel.

**Backward Transfer:** An influence from L2 on L1.

**Deaffrication:** A change of a feature in the affricate.

**Final Devoicing:** A phonological process by which voiced obstruents occurring word-finally become (partially) voiceless.

**Forward Transfer:** An influence from L1 on L2.

**Markedness:** A relationship between elements of phonological class based on their degree of complexity.

**Th-Fronting:** A phonological process involving the substitution of [f] or [v] for /θ/ and /ð/ respectively.

**Voice Onset Time:** The duration between the start of the release of a plosive and the onset of glottal pulsing.

## ENDNOTES

1. Differences across languages can be explained on the basis of frequency effects (Zamuner, 2003) among other things. Role of input is important, and some children may still acquire this sound earlier if it is used often. When the acquisition of /v/ for example was compared between English, Bulgarian, Swedish and Estonian children, it was found that it was acquired earlier in all languages but English. English children were relatively late to acquire it. Ingram (1999) concluded that the reason for this was that the occurrence of /v/ in English was relatively less frequent compared with the other languages from the study. However, the role of frequency will not be further explored here.
2. A study by Young-Scholten, Akita, and Cross (1999) compared two groups of adult L2 learners, one presented with orthographic input simultaneously with auditory input, and the other presented with auditory input only. In examining their production of L2 complex consonant clusters, participants in the former condition (auditory and orthographic input) exhibited epenthesis whereas participants from the second condition (auditory input only) exhibited productions reflecting those found in L1 child acquisition, that is cluster simplifications.
3. Although the voiced affricate and the interdental fricatives are part of Modern Standard Arabic, /ʤ/, is realized as [ʒ] and /θ, ð/ are realized as [t, d] respectively.
4. The speaking practice inherently involved the participants listening to their own output. This allowed the participants of this group to reflect on their output and potentially modify their speech production throughout the treatment period as suggested by the Hybrid model in (Colantoni & Steele, 2008).



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[5] See Maddieson (1984) for the distribution of affricates and dental fricatives in the World's languages.



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# Chapter 3
# Assessing Young Language Learners:
## Sorting Challenges in Chilean Public Primary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

*In Chile, as in other countries that have been following an international trend the past decades, the age children start learning English has lowered. So, it has become imperative that teachers acquire the proper knowledge to instruct these young learners. However, it is common to find in language classrooms across the country teachers who do not have such training. This reality creates challenges in areas such as assessment, materials design, and professional development. This chapter presents a study that explores how Chilean teachers of English without previous experience or training in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) assess children in primary schools. Through an online survey, data was collected from 56 participants from the central zone of the country. The findings of this study are in line with those of previous studies conducted in different countries over the world, which suggests that the main issues regarding TEYL are cross-cultural.*

## INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, many countries have decided to lower the age of instruction of English as a second or foreign language (Nunan, 2003; Enever et al, 2009). Therefore, teaching English to young learners has become an increasingly important area. However, decisions regarding education policies have been made with an uncritical acceptance of the assumption that the younger children are, the better it is to teach them another language (Butler, 2009). These uninformed policy decisions have posed several challenges, particularly the lack of teachers trained to work with young learners (Nunan, 2003;

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Rixon, 2013): a challenge that has been commonly addressed by recurring to teachers that have no training working with children, or to primary teachers with insufficient command of the English language. All this in spite of the extensive research that has shown that superficial solutions like these, have led to further challenges, such as the need for a curriculum, materials and assessment design (McKay, 2006; Rixon, 2013; Copland & Garton, 2014; Barahona, 2016).

The issue of young learners has received considerable critical attention during the last decades. Nowadays, it has become imperative that teachers acquire the proper knowledge to instruct young learners. However, in language classrooms worldwide it is still common to find teachers who do not have such training. And a further difficulty is faced when the time comes to assessing young learners.

In Chile, research about English language teaching is focused on the beliefs and perceptions of pre- and in-service teachers. A search of the literature reveals that only a few studies have focused on the instruction of young learners in the particular context (Inostroza, 2015; Barahona, 2016; Avalos & Bascopé, 2017). This shows the need for more information about teaching practices with young learners and highlights the importance of the contribution of the present research.

This chapter reports on a study about how Chilean teachers of English assess English language learning in primary schools, despite having no training or experience teaching young learners. It is estimated that this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of teaching practices and young learners with a focus on assessment in the primary years.

## BACKGROUND

### Assessment in Language Learning

Assessment is an essential part of teaching. Whether it is to inform curriculum progress, effectiveness of the methods being used, or simply as a way to record progress, assessment provides valuable information: effective assessment is something that benefits students, teachers, school administration, and parents alike (McKay, 2006).

Assessment can also form and encourage learning by allowing both teachers and students to identify their strengths and weaknesses (Buck & Wightwick, 2013). However, a positive or negative experience with language assessment has the power to change student's perception of the language and of their own abilities. One of the results testing has on classroom teaching and learning is called Washback (Tsagari, 2017). Washback can have a positive influence, helping students to keep motivated with what they have accomplished; a negative influence, which can make students lose interest in the language they are learning, or it can have no influence at all (Cheng & Curtis, 2008).

Although "assessment" and "testing" are sometimes used interchangeably (Coombe et al., 2007), tests are only one form of assessment. Assessment involves gathering, analyzing and evaluating evidence about pupils learning (Blandford & Knowles, 2012). It is a cyclical process that can inform planning and can aid in evaluating teaching effectiveness (Brown, 2004) by providing feedback on pupils' learning (Cameron, 2001). Assessment can help teachers know if learning is taking place, by providing feedback on their teaching; besides, assessment can also help to know whether students are making progress (Moon, 2008).



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## Types and Purposes of Assessment

The literature specifies formal (planned carefully, e.g. tests) and informal assessment (carried out during the course of teaching, e.g. asking a question to the whole class) (McKay, 2006), and a common distinction is also made between formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment is on-going, it informs teaching and learning by providing immediate feedback (McKay, 2006; Cameron, 2001) and can help teachers monitor learning and adapt their teaching according to the learner's needs. It can be formal or informal. Authors such as Maynard (2012) or Jones and Coffey (2013) refer to formative assessment as "assessment for learning". However, both terms may not always be equivalent. The term "Assessment for learning" gained recognition thanks to the work of Black and William (1998), and it relates to maintaining a collaborative work between teachers and learners, promoting a more personalized and active approach to learning (Blandford & Knowles, 2012).

Summative assessment measures students' achievement and it is a reflection of learners' knowledge at one particular point in time (Harmer, 2015). It is formal and usually involves scores or grades. In Chile, summative assessment is seen as the assessment carried out during the year to produce grades, while formative assessment is seen as less important mainly because it takes time and it does not produce grades (Diaz et al., 2015). This shows an apparent misconception of both terms, because teachers usually give feedback after what they call "summative assessment" and if the results are not as expected, they modify their lesson plans in order to reinforce what is needed.

Another important distinction between types of assessment is that of traditional versus alternative. A very good example of traditional assessment are paper-and-pencil tests. A form of assessment that is easy to mark, and that is time-efficient because of its ease to construct, to administrate and to score (Ghanavati, 2015). However, traditional assessment methods tend to focus on isolated skills or knowledge, usually involving lower-lever thinking skills. Alternative assessment, on the other hand, involve student's learning, achievement, motivation and attitudes, while performing task that are similar to daily life (Dier Abdullah, 2017). Unfortunately, these tend to be time-consuming when designing, administering, and scoring.

Teachers assess students for a variety of reasons (Coombe et al. 2007; Moon, 2010). Smith (2000) talks about three major functions for assessment: accountability, certification and to form and encourage learning. The latter is highlighted as the most important, because with assessment, teachers are able to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching, make changes to improve their methods and future planning, as well as giving an opportunity to learners to set goals for themselves and motivate them to improve (Brown, 2004; Cameron, 2001; McKay, 2006). Assessment for accountability purposes refers to the assessment conducted in order to inform educational authorities that learning outcomes have been achieved (Coombe et al., 2007). This can then enable schools and the Ministry of Education to evaluate the effectiveness of current methods, curriculums or materials, and make changes if necessary. This is the main purpose of assessing students for teachers in Chile. Assessment for certification purposes represents a high stakes form of assessment, where the results achieved can have a repercussion in learners lives; this is very common in different contexts around the world, such as Hong Kong (Lam, 2015), Taiwan (Chan, 2007) or Lebanon (Shaaban, 2000), but not in the case of Chile.



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### Teachers' Views of Assessment

Research shows that often, foreign language teachers do not consider assessment as a top priority (McKay, 2006), because they believe learning another language should be something fun, and for them, assessment represents the opposite of enjoying a lesson (Jones & Coffey, 2013; Maynard, 2012; Gatullo, 2000). This perception may be a result of the common idea that "assessment equals testing": these teachers may not realize that much of what they do in the classroom can be described as assessment: quizzes, questions, tasks and homework are just some examples (Jones & Coffey, 2013). Assessment should be a normal part of teaching and learning, not something foreign that is introduced with specific purposes (Buck & Wightwick, 2013).

In Chile, teachers of English assess their students to keep a record of their progress and achievement, but mainly assessment takes place for accountability purposes. A study in 2015 (Diaz et al.) found that most teachers focus on assessment that produce grades, because teachers need to prove they are covering the curriculum, which is evidenced by grades. This suggests that most Chilean teachers value the importance of assessment due to its accountability purposes, considering formal assessment more important than informal assessment. This focus on results was also found on a survey by Rea-Dickins & Rixon (1999), where despite claiming that the purpose of their assessment was helping student's learning, most teachers focus was actually on achievement, frequently using traditional methods.

Similarly, another Chilean study also mentions traditional approaches to assessment (Diaz et al., 2012) revealing that primary and high school teachers see assessment as something alien from the teaching and learning process. The majority of teachers in the study (85%) claimed to follow a communicative approach: however, their assessment methods reflected more traditional techniques. Similar results have also been reported in Turkey (Kirköz, 2008), India, Bangladesh and Hungary (Enever et al., 2009) where a study showed that teachers working in primary school still used a traditional approach, in spite of having an official curriculum promoting communicative, activity-oriented approaches, suitable for young learners. The evidence from such varied contexts may suggest that traditional methods, such as paper-and-pencil tests, are preferred by teachers because they are easier to mark and time efficient (Pinter, 2003; Phillips, 2000; Ghanavati, 2015). Unfortunately, they have more chances to produce negative Washback (Phillips, 2000).

Lastly, not all tests are suitable for all students, especially for young learners, who are still learning their first language and still developing cognitively. Teachers need to have an understanding of these factors in order to create effective assessment for children (McKay, 2006). The next section will further develop this idea.

## ASSESSING YOUNG LANGUAGE LEARNERS

### Teaching English to Young Learners

Young learners do not learn in the same way as adults. Since children are still developing, teachers must know their physical and cognitive abilities in order to set realistic goals (Pinter, 2006), and they need activities that are social, varied, and learner-centered. Teaching children requires different methods from those used with older learners, like games, songs and stories, a focus on oral skills and vocabulary development, and the use of language at discourse level (Cameron, 2001). When children begin school they



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have short attention spans and are easily distracted or bored (Cameron, 2001; McKay, 2006). Children that start attending public schools in Chile have not developed their literacy skills yet: they do not know the alphabet at this age. Nevertheless, the curriculum proposal, as well as the textbook issued by the government, expect these children to write sentences and read short phrases in tasks, and even in tests, which are beyond the cognitive abilities of children. Experts propose not to introduce L2 literacy until L1 literacy is well internalized in children (Moon, 2008; Pinter, 2006) and suggest that sometimes the activity of physically writing in a paper can be more demanding that practicing the language (Cameron, 2001; Phillips, 2000).

However, are there real benefits to start teaching English at a younger age? Some scholars believe that the advantages of learning another language at a young age are minimal (Pinter, 2006; Cameron, 2001) and mainly relate to motivation and pronunciation. Children are more motivated, less anxious and more willing to engage in social situations, which suggests it is possible that having a good experience in the early years can result in a better predisposition to continue learning the language in the future. Children are also sensitive to the sounds and rhythm of other languages, which can help them acquire a better pronunciation (Pinter, 2006). However, these advantages can easily disappear under unfavorable circumstances.

For children to effectively learn another language, teachers need to know about their cognitive development. Children also need a lot of input, a variety of learner-centered and social activities, and continuous motivation and encouragement. As Smith and Warburton (1997) argue, children need more attention from, and are more dependent on, their teachers.

## Assessing Young Language Learners

Young language learners need child-friendly assessment techniques because using inappropriate methods can discourage or demotivate children (Pinter, 2006). Activities such as songs, games and stories are used for teaching English to young learners, but they can be very difficult to assess, and switching from those types of activities to sitting quietly alone, with a 'paper-and-pencil' test, can result in negative Washback (Pinter, 2006; Cameron, 2001; Bailey, 2017). Assessment of young learners should be seen from a learner-centered perspective: considering the children willingness to take part in social situations, it should be an interactional experience (Cameron, 2001). Vygotsky (1962) emphasized the fact that by measuring what a child can do alone and without help, we cannot get a realistic assessment of his/her ability. Children need to co-construct meaning and constant scaffolding (Cameron, 2001),

Young learners need to be given a chance to do their best (McKay, 2006). For a child, a written or oral instruction for a test may be more difficult than the language being tested (Mifsud & Mallia, 2000; Phillips, 2000). Accordingly, it may be hard to identify if a child performed badly in a test because he/she does not know, or simply because he/she did not understand the task (Phillips, 2000). However, teachers can use other methods, such as portfolios, interviews, observation, or peer- and self-assessment (Cameron, 2001). Assessment can foster cooperation and self-esteem, while tests tend to be stressful and competitive (Pinter, 2006; Phillips, 2000, Shaaban, 2000; Wortham, 2012; Black & William, 1998). In order to maximize the benefits of learning English from an early start, teachers with proper knowledge about young language learners and about the target language are needed. But in reality, many teachers face different challenges.



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## Main Challenges

Some governments accept uncritically the assumption that "early is better" when they decide to create their policies to start teaching English to young learners (Butler, 2009, Enever & Moon, 2009; McKay, 2006). These new policies create significant implications for national resources as they rarely consider the challenges involved (Enever & Moon, 2009). Without the proper circumstances, these challenges may create more problems than benefits, and the advantages of teaching English to young learners could disappear if the context is not able to overcome these challenges.

### The Need for Teacher Training in TEYL

One of the biggest challenges to face is the lack of teachers trained to work with young learners (Nunan, 2003; Inostroza, 2015; Barahona, 2016; Pinter, 2006; Garton et al., 2011; Copland & Garton, 2014; Enever et al., 2009). In many contexts, when governments face the lack of trained teachers, "minimal solutions are paired with high expectations" (Nikolov, 2000: p.39). This often means hiring either specialist teachers of English with no training for teaching children, or primary teachers who often have little or no mastery of the target language. Research suggest that teachers of English working in Primary schools tend to retain the teaching approaches they had with older students and, instead of adapting to the needs of children, they continue to teach and assess in traditional ways (Stelma & Onat-Stelma, 2010; Kirköz, 2008; Enever & Moon, 2009; Diaz et al, 2012). These teachers may create tasks that are not appropriate for young learners, producing negative Washback, which can eventually demotivate children, or even lead them to dislike the language if they feel they cannot succeed in it.

As for primary teachers that have little or no command of the language, children may not get benefits from their natural ability to identify sounds and intonation. Listening to a teacher who conducts her lesson completely in L1, or that may not have a correct pronunciation, could lead children to learn incorrect pronunciation, as Barahona (2016) suggests when she refers to the unsuitability of primary teachers to teach English in Chile. This is particularly worrying in this context, where children do not have input of the foreign language other than what they have in school (Ministerio de Educación, 2012).

### Curriculum and Assessment Design

Given that many countries that start teaching English to young learners do not engage in previous teacher training (Pinter, 2006), having a detailed curriculum is indispensable for teachers. But many policy makers decide, apparently with little background research, that the best way to teach children is through CLT or TBLT (Enever & Moon, 2009), and they suggest, or impose, these methods in the curriculum. In Chile, these methods are suggested by the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación, 2012). However, research claims that, since these methods were designed for adult, western learners that had different resources available and small classes (Enever & Moon, 2009), they may not be suitable for classrooms such as those in Chile, China, or Thailand (Garton et al., 2011) for example. Policy makers should consider the reality of their contexts before making suggestions, creating and/or changing policies.



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### Textbooks

Sometimes, where there are no guidelines established, textbooks become the curriculum, which has been reported in Finland, North Cyprus and Russia (Rixon, 2013), among others. In the hands of inexperienced teachers, textbooks become a form of professional development or training (Mishan & Timmis, 2015). But sometimes the textbooks are not suitable, as happened in Chile, where they were too cognitively demanding for children. Having adequate teaching materials is necessary when teachers are not qualified and governments do not provide additional training for teachers with no experience working with children.

### Large Classrooms

The challenge of overpopulated classrooms has been mentioned by several authors (Garton et al., 2011; Copland & Garton, 2014; Ramirez et al., 2014; Inostroza, 2015). Classroom management is more difficult for teachers that are used to work with older children, who are more obedient and able to self-regulate (Stelma & Onat-Stelma, 2010). Children need social activities and a strong focus on discourse, which is a challenge when you have a classroom of more than 25 children. As mentioned before, children this age are more dependent on their teachers, and for a single teacher in a large classroom it is almost impossible to give attention to every single child (Smith & Warburton, 1997). A research of the challenges and complexities in Chilean primary classrooms determined that oral assessment and providing feedback to learners were the biggest challenges due to the large amount of students (Inostroza, 2015).

## THE RESEARCH

### Methodology

The aim of this research was to find out how Chilean teachers of English assessed English language learning in primary school students, despite having no training or experience teaching young learners. This researcher aimed at exploring what methods and resources the teachers used the first time they had to assess children. For this, the following research questions were developed:

**R.Q. 1:** What methods of assessment did teachers of English initially carry out when they started working in the first two years of primary school?
**R.Q. 2:** What were the main challenges they faced?
**R.Q. 3:** Where/who did they turn for help?
**R.Q. 4:** What do teachers of English consider important when it comes to teaching and assessing young learners?

This quantitative research sought to gather information about teachers' practices through a web-based questionnaire created on Google forms. Data was collected from 56 participants who worked in public schools in the central zone of Chile. This sample represented the 3.5% of teachers of English working in public primary schools in 2018. Data was coded and analyzed in an excel spreadsheet and using SPSS. All participants were volunteers and anonymous.



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The following criteria was used for the selection of the sample of participants. The focus was placed on teachers of English that, by the first time they worked in first or second year of primary school:

**Criteria 1:** Were in possession of a University degree of Teacher of English.
**Criteria 2:** Had no previous training or experience with young learners.
**Criteria 3:** Worked in a public primary school in the Central Zone of Chile.

The last criteria was conveniently chosen because public schools tend to present more issues to teachers than semi-private or private schools, particularly regarding teaching conditions, class size, and resources available.

## FINDINGS

This study includes data from 56 anonymous respondents to an online-survey. Participants were specialist teachers of English working in the first or second year of primary school, who had no prior experience teaching young learners. The following is a description of the research findings.

### Methods of Assessment Used by the Participants

Most methods for assessment reported by the participants involved some type of external help, either of a primary teacher, a textbook, or a website. This finding is not surprising, considering that the participants had no previous experience teaching children. Many teachers had to create their own tests (57%), some used tests suggested by textbooks (30%) or provided by other teachers, other options were observation, written tests, and oral tests when possible. No participants claimed to have continued assessing in the same way they used to, which is and interesting finding that is contrary to previous studies (Enever et al., 2009).

Class observation is an assessment technique suggested by many scholars (Cameron, 2001; McKay, 2006; Pinter, 2006) and it was interesting to find that some participants (19%) used this technique. Oral tests are also a widely suggested method, but it is difficult to implement in large classes; this may explain why this assessment method was used only by teachers with less than 30 students per classroom. Unfortunately, between large classes and long working hours, it is not easy to conduct either of these types of assessment in most Chilean classrooms.

Finally, it is interesting to note that none of the participants reported using Portfolio assessment, which is a highly recommended form of assessment for young learners (Jones & Coffey, 2013; Pinter, 2006; Mifsud & Mallia, 2000; McKay, 2006) and it is suggested by the Chilean curriculum proposal (Ministerio de Educacion, 2012). In Chile, teachers often use worksheets to make up for the lack of textbooks, but they usually end up pasted on the children's notebooks, which eventually turn into what Jones & Coffey (2013) call a simple "repository of work". With little effort, this situation could improve by transforming these notebooks into portfolios where teachers could keep track of students' performance.



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## Main Challenges Faced by the Participants

Similar to previous research, this study found that the most important challenges for Chilean teachers of English were the lack of previous experience and the lack of training. Other challenges identified were: working without a curriculum, the difficulty children have to understand instructions, large classes, and the lack of literacy skills in the second year of primary.

The findings support existing literature, and evidence such as this should be considered when new policies are created. Knowing what challenges teachers is an indicator of what needs to be improved.

### Teachers' Experience and Training

These were the highest rated challenges in this study, a finding that is consistent with previous research in Chile (Barahona, 2016), and several other contexts (Nunan, 2003; Garton et al., 2011; Copland & Garton, 2014; Enever et al., 2009, Rixon, 2013). All participants considered the lack of experience an important challenge, while the lack of training to work with children was considered important by 96.4% of the sample. The fact that experience was considered slightly more important than training makes sense if we consider that, overall, the participants claimed the experience of assessing young learners was not particularly difficult, since they were able to overcome the challenges they faced.

### Lack of Curriculum

The lack of a curriculum has also been reported in previous studies (Ramirez et al., 2014; Copland & Garton, 2014; Enever et al., 2009, Rixon, 2013). However, it is somewhat surprising to find that a majority of participants (92.8%) mentioned this, since in Chile there is a curriculum proposal available online and many schools were even provided with textbooks. Therefore, the large number of participants identifying the lack of curriculum as a challenge, is quite an interesting finding. It is possible that the participants' opinions may reflect a need for attention and support from the government. However, more information is needed to establish with certainty why the participants gave this answer.

### Understanding Instructions

The difficulty of children to understand instructions was a challenge mentioned by most of the participants and, according to the literature (Phillips, 2000), is directly related to the lack of training and experience with young learners. Teachers may have failed to adapt their language to the children's cognitive development, because they had experience only with older students. This can be related to findings from a previous study that claims that teachers of English working with children for the first time tend to retain the teaching methods they used before (Stelma & Onat-Stelma, 2010). Both findings are related to the idea that sometimes the instructions given can be even more difficult than what is being tested, which has substantial implications for assessment (Phillips, 2000).

### Large Classes

Consistent with previous research in Chilean classrooms (Inostroza, 2015), as well as with studies in different contexts (Ramírez et al., 2014; Garton et al., 2011; Copland & Garton, 2014) large classes were



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considered a big challenge by 82.1% of the participants. A possible explanation is the lack of experience with young learners, since the participants were used to work with older students, who may be more obedient and able to self-regulate, unlike children who are usually more temperamental and depend too much on their teachers.

Large classes also pose a problem for some of the activities recommended for young learners, such as games, songs, or activities that require physical responses. Policy makers often overlook the local factors when they decide to “import” methods from English speaking countries (Butler, 2009), encouraging the use of approaches such as CLT or TBLT, without considering the large classes, small classrooms and limited resources, among other factors. Such is the case of the Chilean context, disregarding previous research that has described the inadequacy of these approaches for some contexts (Enever & Moon, 2009; Garton et al., 2011).

### Literacy Skills

The last of the most important challenges identified was the lack of literacy in children. For the participants of this study, this was a bigger challenge in the second year of primary (82.1%) than in the first year (78.6%). This may be due to the fact that children in the second year are expected to be able to read and write. Some scholars claim that literacy does not need to be fully developed when children start learning a new language (Pinter 2006) and advise that children should have a foundation in L1 literacy before beginning with L2 literacy (Moon, 2008).

## Sources of Help

When participants needed help creating or conducting assessment, 53.6% of them reported using their creativity to sort it out, along with another source. The internet was a common resource, considered the most useful aid by a 46.5%. When they needed advice or ideas, consulting primary teachers (46.4%) was preferred over consulting other teachers of English (25%). Interestingly, this suggests the importance of the need for qualifications regarding young learners. Only six participants decided to engage in further formal training (course, seminar, workshop, etc.) although 32 of them showed interest in learning about young learners.

### Colleagues

As for the help of colleagues, the preference of the advice of a primary teacher (46.2%) over that of other teachers of English (25%) makes perfect sense considering the limited experience specialist teachers of English have with young learners. Primary teachers, are not only specialists in teaching children, but also know the groups they teach, and may offer suggestions that are specific for each particular group of children. The overall results of this survey suggest that Chilean teachers consider teacher collaboration as something important.

### Professional Development

From the 32 participants that showed interest in learning about teaching English to young learners, only six decided to enroll in some kind of formal training. The rest settled for looking for information



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online. At first glance, this could suggest that money may have been a factor to explain the low numbers of teachers engaging in more formal Continuous Professional Development (CPD). However, there are several free online courses available in websites such as www.futurelearn.com, where the British Council constantly imparts courses about different topics, including teaching young learners and Assessment.

The results may suggest two things: either only six teachers were so committed to their new experience with children that they invested time in learning about it, or many teachers are possibly not aware of all the instances available for professional development. It could be argued that the latter hypothesis may be closer to the truth if we consider, for example, that according to the British Council (2015) some schools remain unaware of government sponsored program such as the “English Opens Doors Program”, which has been working in our country since 2003, and holds free training instances for teachers. Unfortunately, without further information, it is not possible to make substantial claims about the reasons for the low numbers of participants engaging in more formal continuous professional development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Important Factors for Teaching and Assessing Young Learners

The findings of this research represent what teachers consider of importance when teaching and assessing young learners, hence this section can serve as a guide of what should be facilitated to teachers, or as ideas of how to help them.

#### Quality Materials

Textbooks have a major relevance in this context, considering that teachers with little or no experience rely heavily on them for guidance on how to conduct their lessons (Rixon, 2013). As Mishan & Timmis (2015) claimed, a good textbook can also act as teacher education. For a teacher that has no training for working with young learners, having an appropriate textbook can be lifesaving: not only could the teacher have ideas to apply in the classroom and a syllabus to follow, but they may also begin to learn and understand what type of methodology is needed for working with young learners.

#### Pre-Service Teacher Training

The vast majority of the participants in this study considered that it is very important to have pre-service training for teaching English to young learners, which broadly supports the findings of previous research in Chile (Barahona, 2016; Avalos & Bascopé, 2017; Inostroza, 2015), as well as research from different contexts (Rixon, 2013; Karavas, 2014; Garton et al., 2011; Copland & Garton, 2014). Preparing teachers of English to work with young learners can have a better impact on children than teaching English to primary teachers, which is what the government was offering at the time of the survey. Supporting the claims of Barahona (2016), the benefits of teaching English to young learners decrease with the presence of unsuitable teachers. This researcher cannot highlight enough the importance of appropriate teacher training: it is an investment that any country should make.



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## Continuous Professional Development

CPD was rated more important when it was government sponsored (89.3%) than when it was personally financed (78.6%). The preference towards something that does not involve a monetary investment (or spent) is understandable, particularly considering the low salaries of teachers: according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2017), Chile is the 6th country with the lowest salaries for teachers. Nonetheless, the overall high value given to continuous professional development by the participants of this survey shows that most of them are aware of its benefits, since no participants considered it irrelevant.

It is important that countries make an effort not only for providing professional development to their teachers, but also for generating awareness of the different offers that can be found online (and free) for teachers to learn something new, or to update their knowledge. This research suggests that the teachers are willing to take part in this, all they need is someone to show them the way.

## Online Communities, Reflection and Help From Colleagues

Online communities are a tool for teachers' communication and support, and provide a place for teachers to reflect on their practice, share tips, ideas, lesson plans, and useful websites, among others. It is no surprise then, that the majority of participants consider them important. This finding corroborates the results of a study in Greece (Karavas, 2014), where the government created a website for teachers when they implemented their policy for teaching English to young learners. Interestingly, in the case of Chile, groups of teachers have been created with no support or prompt from the government, but only thanks to the intrinsic motivation of those involved. These groups are very active and popular, for example, on Facebook.

Online communities are platforms with easier, quicker and more massive access than face-to-face meetings. This may explain the slightly higher percentage of participants considering online communities more important than reflecting with other colleagues (82.1%), which is something that they can already do online. Furthermore, the importance given to teacher reflection and online communities support the findings of a study (Avalos & Bascopé, 2017) of 1,000 Chilean teachers, which claims that, in general, they have positive beliefs regarding teacher collaboration (sharing ideas, discussing problems, etc.). In the present study, the help from primary teachers was rated as important as reflecting on teaching practices with other colleagues (82.1%), which is another demonstration of the value that participants give to teacher collaboration in general. This may suggest that teachers believe their colleagues have something to offer. These results are also in accord with findings from a study conducted in Romania, which reported that young teachers tend to use informal collaboration (Stan et al., 2013), similar to the methods previously mentioned in the Chilean study. Dialogic reflection is encouraged by Walsh (2018) who claims that analysis is easier when it is done with someone else.

Encouraging communities of teachers is another simple idea governments could use. In time, the communities gain strength, their members realize how useful they are, and everyone starts doing their part. It is another free, easy, online tool that should not be wasted.



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## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Despite all the challenges they faced, the participants of this study enjoyed teaching children, and most of them would like to continue working with them. The findings show that most teachers consider continuous professional development important, which is why it can be assumed that they would be willing to take part in these type of programs regarding young learners. However, this study unveiled that schools and the government offer very little help, which is what the participants claim. Apart from the lack of training, teachers do not have suitable materials. There is a need for better textbooks and/or a curriculum that matches the reality of our country. Today, teachers make do with what they can: using their own creativity, asking other colleagues or researching on the internet. Hence, it can be said that these teachers are mostly improvising their work with young learners.

The trust teachers have in other colleagues, and the willingness to help and work together, has helped the participants of this study in their difficult first experience. The importance of collaborative work should be recognized by schools and the government, and instances for teachers to meet and reflect with their peers should be available regularly.

This study provided a general view of the way Chilean teachers of English assess children. However, there is a growing need for research regarding teaching English to young learners in Chile. The findings of this research would benefit from further research regarding:

- What kind of knowledge teachers of English have about the different assessment methods recommended for children?
- Do teachers of English actually value experience more than training? If so, why? Will the answers change depending on teacher's age?
- What specific kind of help do teachers of English expect from schools?

Given that this field is in constant need of research, many ideas can be suggested. And considering the small amount of research in this particular context, any further study could provide useful information.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter explored how teachers of English, without previous experience or training for teaching English to young learners, assess children in primary schools. Through an online survey, data was collected from 56 participants from the central zone of Chile. The findings of this study are in line with those of previous studies conducted in different countries over the world, which suggests that the main issues regarding teaching English to young learners are cross-cultural.

Chilean teachers of English working with young learners face similar challenges to those found in contexts previously mentioned, the lack of training being the most important. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants enjoyed the experience and are willing to continue working with children. These teachers consider continuous professional development and teacher collaboration as highly important. Although they feel that schools and the government were not very helpful the first time they worked with young learners, their personal motivation drove them to make the best of their experience and find their own solutions to the issues they faced.



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Teacher collaboration is a tool that has no monetary cost, and that offers something to all those involved, and the fact that it was remarkably important for most participants is something quite interesting that should be acknowledged and addressed, in order to promote it.

The need for better materials will continue to be a top priority if the lack of training persists. The participants' opinions suggest that they would like more involvement in decisions regarding curriculum and materials design. The fact that none of the participants that used the government's textbook claimed it was of help, is something that should be considered as a sign that some work needs to be done.

Considering the positive view participants have about professional development, and the need for suitable teachers, the most important suggestion this study can make is to highlight the importance of government policies that focus on teacher training programs for those working with young learners, in order to maximize the benefits of an early start.

Finally, it can be said that it is a must for each government to contextualize and modify their policies before introducing them. Teaching English from a young age undoubtedly has its benefits, but they may be easily lost if the conditions are not ideal. Furthermore, according to the findings of this research, a first step towards improving the current situation of teachers of English working with young learners may be easier than it may look, and it may be considerably cheaper than expected: all that needs to be done is to encourage teacher collaboration, and promote CPD.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**CLT:** Communicative language teaching.

**CPD:** Continuous professional development. This can be any type of course of study in order to deepen one's knowledge about a subject. It can be an online course or seminar, a diploma, a master's degree, etc.

**Paper-and-Pencil Tests:** A traditional for of assessment. A type of test that is printed on a piece of paper and that is answered in the same paper with a pencil.

**TBLT:** Task-based language teaching.

**Teacher Collaboration:** Any type of contact between two or more teachers with the purpose of reflect or discuss their practice. It can be face to face or in online groups or message boards.

**Teacher Training:** For the purposes of this chapter, teacher training is understood as the training teachers have that allows them to teach young learners.

**Young Learners:** Children between the ages of five and twelve years old.



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# Chapter 4
# Source-Based Writing in Secondary School:
## Challenges and Accomplishments

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the instructional intervention aimed at enhancing source-based compare-contrast writing in the secondary school students. Conceptually, it relies on the schema theory as a cognitive basis for integrated reading-writing instruction. The theory asserts that writing and reading both generate meaning using similar cognitive processes and types of knowledge: meta-knowledge of reading and writing strategies in relation to communicative goals, domain and textual knowledge, procedural knowledge that involves integrating writing and processing information while reading the text. Methodologically, the instruction is based on read-write cycle and was carried out in a secondary public school of Kyiv, with the 10th-grade students being the participant (n=22). The general hypothesis about a positive impact of read-write cycle instruction is partially confirmed in the research, which is an indication of the necessity to give further insight into the issue.*

## INTRODUCTION

As a life-long skill, writing plays a crucial role in post-secondary education and career. In the 21st century, however, writing has become more cognitively demanding and complex, as in most job settings, it is based on multiple text comprehension and analysis (List & Alexander, 2017). Consequently, the

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instruction of writing has considerably changed over the last decades by shifting the focus onto integrated or source-based writing (SBW). With its emphasis on knowledge transformation instead of knowledge transmission, SBW has captured the attention of researchers and language trainers in many educational settings, including secondary school. The research of the phenomenon, though, was mainly limited to frameworks of teaching source-based synthesis or argumentation (Dunlop & Xhafer, 2016; Göktürk Sağlam, 2020; Hillocks, 2010; Luna et al., 2020; Nelson, 2008) and standardized assessment (Chan, 2013). Scarce research, though, is devoted to teaching source-based compare-contrast writing (Lynne et al., 2003). Moreover, the available studies focus on SBW in content-based academic disciplines rather than foreign language (FL) training. Therefore, this study purposefully aims to explore SBW instruction as part of FL training in secondary school.

In the Ukrainian context, SBW in FL education has been neglected on both theoretical and practical levels; as a result, it is excluded from most tertiary and secondary school writing courses as well as assessment. Meanwhile, in L1 educational tradition, SBW is extensively practiced in integrated Language and Literature classes as well as in a range of the Social Science subjects. The tasks mainly involve writing reflections on the pieces of fiction read and discussed or on additional reading as part of independent research of the students. Historically, this fact is rooted in the traditional focusing of a secondary school FL instruction on grammar and reading as stand-alone skills in the 1950s-1970s (Allen, 1987). The reading tasks of that period included reading with the aim to answer the questions on a reading passage or reading to retell (Chokwe, 2013). Teaching writing boiled down to polishing spelling and writing grammatically accurate sentences to practise grammar or answer the questions on a reading passage. In the 1980s-1990s, a greater emphasis was made on teaching speaking to provide the schoolers with the communication skills. However, the skills of written communication were either ignored or neglected.

The ***objective*** of this chapter is to examine the instructional intervention aimed at enhancing SBW in secondary school students in the context of FL learning. The authors are particularly interested in examining whether Read-Write Cycle instruction can considerably boost students' content integration and text structure organization as related to compare-contrast writing. Additionally, we intend to discuss the challenges encountered in the process of instruction design and implementation.

## SOURCE-BASED WRITING IN SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

### Pedagogical Values

In the context of this study, SBW is conceptualized as simultaneous processing of information from one or multiple sources of various modes (verbal, non-verbal, audio, video) and constructing the transformed meaning in a written text. Additionally, we regard SBW as an activity which is cognitively distinct from the reading only or writing only acts (Ansas, Sukyadi, 2019; Chan, 2013; Wette, 2019). Neither do we consider it as a mechanical combination of reading/listening and writing. Since this research focuses on writing based on reading, we intend to give a deeper insight into this process which is characterized by specific pedagogical and cognitive characteristics that can be interpreted as both benefits and disadvantages. The pedagogical values of SBW are likely to be displayed better if opposed to non-integrated (independent) writing.

First, compared to independent writing, integrated writing is more academically authentic, as it represents real-life academic writing tasks in both secondary and tertiary schools and thus reflects current



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instructional practices (Ansas, Sukyadi, 2019; Chan, 2013; Wette, 2019). As Hale et al. (1996) reveal, based on the analysis of 162 courses in 8 Universities, the most common real-life tasks are short written tasks that require to produce an essay, summary, report, synthesis or research report based on reading. Noteworthy is the fact that the improved task (situational) authenticity in the framework of testing and assessment leads to a better context validity. Context validity – situational validation being part of it – considers whether the test task is similar to real-life that might be encountered by the test-takers in the target language use context (Weir, 2005).

Second, in the secondary school FL classroom, the SBW is not affected by the topic effect to the extent the independent writing is affected. Since the independent writing relies on activating internal long-term memory resources, its quality is likely to be influenced by the tasks that provide no content input (Weigle, 2004). Apart from the internal resources from long-term memory, SBW also involves purposeful drawing on external resources which may supply the writers with content ideas necessary to complete the task (Carson, 2001; Celik, 2019; Grabe, 2003). Therefore, external resources in the form of reading input provide equal access to content knowledge, which is a significant factor in the educational context, as it contributes to fairness in testing and assessment (Chan, 2013).

Third, SBW has good pedagogical value for literacy development. In the context of secondary education, research findings indicate that young learners develop their spelling skills and improve punctuation entirely from reading. Moreover, literature review shows (Allen, 1987; Celik, 2019; Chokwe, 2013; Weston, 2015; Wette; 2019) that there is a direct correlation between reading proficiency and the student's syntactic maturity or the ability to use complex syntactical structures (Dunlop & Xhafer, 2016; Gholami & Alinasab, 2017). Calfee and Miller (2005) reiterated a likewise point that providing cross-learning opportunities for writing and reading together enhances more thoughtful consideration and better understanding of ideas than reading or writing alone. Graham & Hebert (2010) claim that SBW as an integration of writing and other skills – reading, for instance - enhances both skills; moreover, practicing writing together with reading develops rhetoric in learners (Flower et al., 1990).

Additionally, as a process of knowledge-transformation instead of knowledge telling, SBW contributes to enhancing critical thinking and critical reading. The knowledge telling approach is typically involved in independent writing based on linear text generation through telling the knowledge activated by the writing prompt (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987). This approach, though, might also be beneficial if the pedagogical goal is to test content knowledge (e.g. Social science or Science disciplines). Finally, if writing is based on multiple text comprehension or processing information from multiple sources of various modes (verbal/non-verbal texts, video, audio), the learners develop multi-tasking ability – a necessary prerequisite of a professional survival and success in the contemporary world.

## Cognitive Concerns

The pedagogical values of SBW discussed above seem unquestionable against the numerous evidence provided by the researchers worldwide. They are a good take-away for practitioners who are keen to design an SBW instruction model. However, if pedagogical benefits leave no ground for doubts, the cognitive characteristics of the SBW might lead to controversies regarding the instructional benefits of this type of writing. To our knowledge, there is little research of cognitive processes within integrated writing and reading. In this study, we rely on the model of SBW that was developed by Spivey (1997, 2001). According to the model, three major processes occur in the process of writing from multiple sources: 1) selecting relevant content from multiple texts; 2) organizing the content according to the



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writing goals; 3) connecting ideas from different sources and generating links between the ideas (Spivey & King, 1989). Although the model gives the most general understanding of how reading and writing interplay in a complex cognitive activity, it seems perfect to apply in the context of secondary school education. Given its minimalistic three-componential structure, it might become a convenient tool for modelling both instruction and assessment of SBW.

As numerous research show, SBW is much more cognitively demanding compared to independent writing. It is a non-linear, complex problem-solving process with generation of new ideas or knowledge enhancement (Hajovski, et. al, 2018; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987). Non-linear product generation in SBW involves a set of multiple recursive processes, such as reading comprehension, rereading, planning, organizing ideas etc. In our understanding, simultaneous moving forth and back between reading and writing adds significant cognitive dissonance to the process of text construction. Moreover, as it was mentioned above, SBW involves purposeful drawing on both external (input source) and internal resources, such as working memory and long-term memory resources (language and discourse knowledge). These resource variables are likely to affect the process of SBW in terms of the quality of a written product and performance efficacy as well as in terms of fair assessment.

The observations made above enable concluding that SBW differs significantly from independent writing: it is more cognitively complex and unbalanced, which makes it more challenging for the learners. The only common feature shared by both types of writing, though, is plagiarism concern which is believed to be a typical practice of schooling (Hajovski, et. al, 2018; Sormunen, 2012; Weston, 2015). To conclude, both pedagogical and cognitive characteristics have to be analyzed in order to decide on a suitable model of training and assessment.

## Compare-contrast Writing

Compare-contrast writing is considered the most complex type of expository writing for all age groups because of content and organization demands, where organization is part of content generation. To meet the content demands, students are required to fulfill a set of cognitive tasks, such as comprehending the information, selection and memorizing appropriate ideas for transforming them into compare/ contrast points in a written product. On the organization level, students struggle how to avoid listing points of compare or contrast sequentially; they should work with the knowledge acquired from the two texts simultaneously. To cope with the organization level demands, students usually answer the four questions: What two things are being compared? What are the points of comparison? How are they alike? How are they different? (Raphael & Kirschner, 1985). Major cognitive difficulties encountered in the process of compare-contrast writing are attributed to two facts: writers do not adequately understand the information of source texts (acquisition problem); writers do not possess knowledge of compare-contrast discourse type (production problem) or both. While addressing the problems in compare-contrast writing, writers apply top-level cognitive processing: understanding, application, analysis, creation, evaluation (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

In practice, these cognitive processes are carried out through the following steps. Students begin by reading two source texts to retrieve main ideas and supporting details for building the similarities/ differences arguments. To understand the compare-contrast points, students make cognitive connection between key concepts. Then students transfer retrieved ideas according to the compare-contrast structure, using one of the templates: point by point, similarities and differences clusters, or item by item (Spivey,



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1990, 1991). Knowledge transformation of compare-contrast structures utilizes planning, organization of ideas, and source use.

## Schema Theory as a Cognitive Basis for SBW Instruction

Despite the fact that SBW tasks are becoming more essential and common in secondary and tertiary schools, little is known about how to develop students' cognitive schemata to carry out SBW tasks in a variety of setting and subject matters (Gholami & Alinasab, 2017; Hajovski, et. al, 2018). In their understanding of how to develop the indicated schemata, the authors of this chapter rely on the schema theory as a cognitive basis for integrating reading and writing instruction. The schematic-processing approach asserts that in the process of reading, the reader creates meaning from the interplay of the text and the reader's existing knowledge of the content and language aspects of the text. Similarly, in the composing process, a writer constructs meaning, using knowledge of language conventions and prior knowledge of the topic of writing. Therefore, writing and reading processes both generate meaning using similar cognitive processes and types of knowledge: meta-knowledge of reading and writing strategies in relation to communicative goals; domain knowledge; textual knowledge and procedural knowledge that involves integrating complex writing processes and the strategies of processing information while reading the text (Allen, 1987; Calfee & Miller, 2005; Celik, 2019; Miller & Calfee, 2004; Weston, 2015; Xue, 2019).

According to the theory, prior knowledge plays a crucial role in the text production (Allen, 1987; Xue, 2019). However, as it was stated before, the impact of this internal resource variable is less observable in the context of FL instruction if prior knowledge implies content knowledge. Writing from sources, the FL students can produce an appropriate written product based on the ideas borrowed from the reading input. However, the fact that content schema (the reader's and writer's existing knowledge of the world in general) is an influential factor in SBW seems undeniable. In the context of this study, we are particularly interested in developing and boosting the skills of processing and integration of information. The impact of processing and integration of information on the quality of an SBW product is immense. In terms of approaches to information integration, the researchers distinguish between sequential, spiral, and recursive patterns (Lenski & Johns, 1997). Only a recursive integration approach results in appropriate synthesis, whereas sequential and spiral patterns correspondingly reflect summarizing basic information and paraphrasing the content with no new ideas generated.

No less significant for successful SBW is textual schema (knowledge of the writing process that includes knowledge of discourse-level conventions, different text structures, organizational patterns, rhetorical strategies etc). (Allen, 1987; Weston, 2015). Insufficient textual knowledge might either interfere with the development of ideas in writing or become the obstacle to critical reading. Having given insight into the schema theory, we intend to apply it to modelling the SBW instructional intervention based on the Read-Write Cycle that was developed within the theory.

The analysis of the available research and critical literature review have enabled formulating the hypotheses of this study.

**Hypothesis One:** The instructional intervention based on the Read-Write Cycle will result in the improvement of information integration in the compare-contrast writing of secondary school students.

**Hypothesis Two:** The instructional intervention based on the Read-Write Cycle will result in the improvement of textual organization in the compare-contrast writing of secondary school students.



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## METHODOLOGY

### Participants and Context

The participants of the study were 22 secondary school students of the 10$^{th}$ grade aged between 15 and 16 (8 males and 14 females). All of them are natural Ukrainian-Russian bilinguals and have similar cultural and experience backgrounds. They formed two groups – experimental (10 students) and control (12 students). The participants were not assigned to groups randomly, since the SBW intervention was part of a regular FL course. Additionally, a secondary school teacher who carried out the intervention as well as 17 teachers surveyed by the authors participated in the study.

Every week, the students have 3 hours (45 minutes per session) of English based on the course book *Gateway: Level B1, 2$^{nd}$ edition by David Spencer & Lynda Edwards, Macmillan*. The EFL course aims to provide language practice in speaking, writing, reading, and listening (taught separately) and enhance students' vocabulary and grammar. In terms of writing, according to the FL national educational standard, a 10th-grade secondary schooler is expected to complete stand-alone writing tasks that rely on students' prior experience. The activities involve: filling in forms with personal details; describing people, objects, events or phenomena; writing a personal letter, announcement; writing a narrative that gives account of the events; writing descriptive, narrative or opinion texts on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. At the same time, one of the goals of teaching writing at school is to accurately introduce in a written form the information that a student read or heard about.

### Design

First, the participants were asked to write a pre-test SBW (compare-contrast essay). Then, the participants of the experimental group were exposed to the SBW training, whereas the participants of the control group received training in writing according to the course book. Finally, the post-test writing was offered to the two groups and analyzed. Since the intervention was part of the regular school course, the authors of the paper introduced a Reading-Writing tutorial on the topic "Job hunting" (Unit 7) in the experimental group with no other interferences with the teaching process. One teacher carried out the instruction in both (experimental and control) groups and was observed by the authors of the study. The SBW intervention was implemented in 3 stages originally designed for the research: (a) selection of the target text, (b) development of the writing prompt, and (c) establishment of the reading-writing context (Calfee & Miller, 2005, p.210). The former two elements belong to the Preparation stage, whereas the latter element conceptually relies on the Read-Write-Cycle developed by Miller & Calfee (2004) with minor adaptations to the Ukrainian educational context. Every SBW tutorial lasted for a week, and the Read-Write Cycle was implemented into 4 lessons (4 x 45 min.).

### Material

Two expository source texts (ST) representing two different views on one problem were selected for the study (See Table 1). The texts discuss benefits and downsides of taking on part-time jobs by students of high school. (See Appendix 1). After abridging both texts, their mean word length was 433. The text level difficulty was measured by online Text Analyzer and Automatic Readability Checker. The results showed that text A fitted into CEFR level B2 intermediate (appropriate for 10$^{th}$ graders), whereas Text



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B fitted into CEFR level B2 upper intermediate (appropriate for 12th graders). The adaptations to text B were introduced for it to fit into the parameters of text A.

## FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

*Table 1. Source Text Analysis*

| Source Text Title & Type | No of Words & Origin | Content |
|---|---|---|
| **A** Should Your Teen Work During High School?<br>(*Expository*) | 432: Collegeville site | Fewer students take up part time jobs because of homework load and educational goals.<br>But reasons to work are:<br>- become financially independent;<br>- develop vocational skills;<br>- gain valuable work experience;<br>- learn how manage money. |
| **B** Saturday jobs can damage exam grades for teenagers.<br>*(Expository)* | 446: The Guardian | Public approval of parents who encourage their children to work:<br>-teens understand 'real' life;<br>- learn useful work skills;<br>- earn money.<br>But research data indicate:<br>- earned money can be spent on harmful habits;<br>- bring decrease in academic performance;<br>-impact girls' GCSE performance;<br>- girls become less motivated and study less. |

### Modelling the Instruction: Meeting the Challenges

The model described here was implemented in the experimental group and aimed to boost both reading and writing skills as well as rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, knowledge of both the writing process and the conventions of writing, along with the ability to present source material effectively with the appropriate integration of information. The intervention involved 2 stages with 6 phases (See Table 2) and was carried out by a secondary school teacher of English, with the authors observing the instruction process.

Below, the description of stages is given in detail.

### Preparation Stage

#### Phase 1: Selection of the Source Texts

While selecting the texts, the authors relied on the following criteria: reading level, text type, authenticity, topic/interest, cultural and experience background relevant for the learners.



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*Table 2. The structure of the SBW intervention*

| SBW intervention | | |
|---|---|---|
| Preparation stage | Selection of the target texts | |
| | Development of the writing prompt | |
| The Read-Write Cycle stage | Lesson 1: | Connect phase |
| | Lesson 2: | Organize phase |
| | Lesson 3: | Reflect phase |
| | Lesson 4 | Extend phase |

*Reading level.* According to the curricular requirements, the reading comprehension level of Ukrainian 10$^{th}$-graders is B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. The texts selected for the training were taken from the newspapers or websites and thematically aligned with the course book topic, the number of words ranging 410-440. The level difficulty was measured by online Text Analyzer tool and Automatic Readability Checker. Most texts fitted into CEFR level B2 intermediate, appropriate for the 10$^{th}$ graders. Several texts fitted into CEFR level B2 upper intermediate, appropriate for the 12$^{th}$ graders, so they were slightly adapted syntactically. No lexical adaptations were introduced, since the vocabulary was within the course book unit being covered.

The challenge faced during text selection was the fact that all selected texts required abridgement or adaptation to get the desired level of difficulty or readability. Surprisingly, neither the teacher who coordinated the instruction, nor 11 of the 17 teachers surveyed by the authors were aware of/used online tools such as Reading Level Test Tool, Text Analyzer or Automatic Readability Checker (Charyulu, 2018; Petersen & Ostendorf, 2007). The teachers claimed they either relied on the texts offered by the coursebooks or selected the texts based on 2 criteria: length and topic. However, in the context of secondary education, the tools are rather convenient: they are free and enable measuring an uploaded text against a set of parameters. Reading Level Test Tool and Text Analyzer among other parameters evaluate the generalized text level difficulty which is determined by full score like A1, A2 or by the intermediate score like A1/A2, B1/B2; Automatic Readability Checker also helps determine the grade level of the text.

*Authenticity.* In educational context, both authentic and abridged texts are used. However, many experts argue for the educational value of authentic texts that expose students to ‘real’ language and culture. Any editing or adjustment of the original text is challenging, as such adjustments may interfere with the text structure, clarity, or other essential elements of the text. Moreover, linguistic adjustments might appear challenging in an FL instruction context if they are made by a non-native speaker of English. Yet, such adjustments are necessary in many educational settings (Charyulu, 2018; Petersen & Ostendorf, 2007). Abridged texts are usually modified and adapted manually. Most frequent adjustments are modifications to the number of words, syntax of the text, or simplification of complex language structures and vocabulary.

In our case, it was important that students could complete reading comprehension tasks during in-class time. Therefore, to make the texts more applicable for the research objectives, we reduced the word count by deleting passages that reiterated similar ideas or presented paraphrase of previously mentioned points, dropped extensive appositions indicating locations or details of employment but did not change vocabulary or split sentences etc. Then, we launched a reading quasi-piloting by offering the texts to 35 students of the 10$^{th}$ grade that did not participate in the intervention. 10 texts were selected out of 18 based on a set on criteria, such as reading time consumption, readability level, content value.



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*Text type.* The choice of a text type appeared another challenge. The main text types that are typically used in middle and high schools for reading are descriptive, narrative, expository and persuasive texts. In this regard, Calfee & Miller (2005) admit that narrative texts are most common texts used for reading and writing instruction. Yet, they argue for expository text types as a more relevant reading source for academic and professional inquiry (Calfee & Miller, 2005). Sormunen et al. (2012) also conclude that descriptive texts introduce more superficial knowledge, whereas analytical texts offer opportunity for academic approach to learning. Also, students should be familiar with the text structure, genre or type (narrative, description, compare/contrast) of the ST which, according to schema theory, are important supports for comprehension. In other words, readers' schemata of the text structure help learners interpret the information presented in the text (Miller & Calfee, 2004). Students with knowledge of the basic rhetorical modes are better at detecting and proving problems with the organization of their own texts (Allen, 1987; Keh, 1990).

In the context of this research, the challenge of text selection is associated with the rhetorical type of the target writing – contrast and comparison essay. The authors' experience shows that providing two expository texts that could supply the writers with explicit ideas to turn them into points of comparison in a compare-contrast essay is a considerably time-consuming procedure. So is it a considerably effort-consuming undertake given the loading of schoolteachers in Ukraine. Not surprisingly, the intervention instructor as well as the surveyed teachers claimed they needed special training to enhance the skills of text selection and modification.

### Phase 2: Development of the Writing Prompt

After selecting 10 relevant texts the intervention instructor and the authors developed writing prompts for a compare-contrast essay. Conceptually, we relied on Calfee & Miller's (2005) detailed guidelines for effective SBW prompt development that reported positive effects on students' performance from teachers who used the guidelines in their practices. The suggested guidelines allow teachers create a prompt that activates student's prior knowledge; makes them reflect on the topic before writing by encouraging students to develop a writing plan or organizer; "slots" students' new knowledge with their prior schemata; informs them about the type, purpose and the audience of writing. The writing prompt below was used for the post-test SBR.

The writing prompts were a cooperative effort of the authors and the intervention instructor, as she confessed that she did not have experience in writing such prompts. Additionally, 13 of 17 teachers surveyed claimed they lacked skills and experience of writing prompts for SBW. Therefore, writing prompts appeared another challenge for practitioners in implementing the preparation stage. The challenges, observed by the authors in this stage, have added a lot to understanding of cognitive and organizational demands not only of the writing process but also of the instruction modelling and implementation.

## Stage 2: Read-Write Cycle

The Read-Write Cycle consists of four phases. Each of them utilizes scaffolding activities to critically read and understand ST as well as effectively summarize the information in a new text. The first three phases are in-class activities carried out individually, in pairs, or in small groups. The last one is a test assignment carried out individually.



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**Phase 1: Connect**. In the Connect phase, we aimed to find out what prior knowledge students had of the reading content by engaging them in active reflection, group sharing and pre-writing. This phase was supposed to pave the way for reshaping students' existing concepts about the source text topic during the Organize phase. Prior knowledge was activated by engaging the students with a range of activities described by Calfee & Miller (2005). One of them is W-K-L (What I *Know*-What I *Want* to Know - What I Have *Learned)* brainstorming on the suggested topic in pairs and small groups. Another activity is nonstop "fastwriting" that involves quick recording of everything related to the topic or expanding on the topic in writing, using the heading(s) and topic related vocabulary of the source texts. Originally, 'working out the meaning of new or unknown vocabulary' activities are introduced as part of the Organize phase (Calfee & Miller, 2005, p.207) to simulate the natural order of deriving unknown word meanings, which usually happens in a context.

**Phase 2: Organize.** During this stage, the students were assisted with the strategies to understand a source text both at the structural and semantic levels. Thus, the teacher pursued, two main goals: 1) familiarize students with the textual conventions after reading the text; 2) organize pre- and post-reading writing.

In this regard, it is important to explain the difference between a traditional writing instruction and the Organize phase. A traditional writing instruction is based on a combined process and genre approach. The method uses reading and deconstructing a relevant text type as a scaffolding activity for developing knowledge of textual conventions and rhetorical strategies of different text types. Though reading is part of the method, content of a sample text is not used as source information in building meaning. The provided text becomes a structural sample to organize students' ideas according to the suggested writing prompt.

In the Organize phase, though, students conducted analysis of the text structure, its purpose and audience to raise comprehension of the ideas stated in the source texts. For this purpose, several scaffolding activities assisted accurate understanding. For example, utilizing graphic organizers proved effective in arranging new information into the existing text-structure schemata and facilitating students' metacognitive abilities (Miller & Calfee, 2004). Matching the type of graphic organizer created by the students to the text type (contrast-comparison) was one of the activities the learners found especially useful. Additionally, the students filled in graphic organizers with linking words to contrast or compare ideas of the two source texts.

This phase is also immensely important for later revising and revisiting during the Extend phase by contributing to students' differentiation between high-order and low-order concerns (Allen 1987; Keh, 1990; Osidak & Kavytska, 2020). Allen (1987) states that poor revisers bring only surface or sentence-level changes and are not concerned with points of confusion and breaks in logic. Understanding the distinction between the mechanical mistakes and errors connected with the development of ideas and organization help students focus on mistakes connected with organization standards of the essay, logical presentation of ideas and use of transition words.

**Phase 3: Reflect.** During the Reflect phase, the students were concerned with the semantic level of the text, as they had to achieve 'near-ideal understanding' of a text (Calfee & Miller, 2005, p.207). Yet, Sormunen et al. (2012) observe that students rarely can carefully read and analyze the source texts and search for ideas to properly synthesize the sources while building meaning under time constraints. Therefore, the comprehension strategy instruction involved activities to promote understanding of the important ideas and supportive details of the ST: make connections between



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and among important ideas in the text; answer questions about the text; sequence events and ideas in the text; offer interpretations of and responses to the text; check understanding by paraphrasing or restating important and/or difficult sentences and paragraphs; visualize characters, settings, or events in a text, etc. Additionally, to integrate new ideas with the existing knowledge after reading a text, the students turned to the graphic organizers they created during the previous phase to correct the prewriting texts. They reordered, analyzed, reflected on the prewriting texts to make sure it presents correct, accurate, or relevant information to the context of the reading.

Spoken activities also appeared effective in assisting students to raise comprehension and critical awareness of the context area of the target text (Dunlop & Xhafer, 2016). For example, to decipher meaning of the two texts presenting different points of view, the students worked in two groups in which they in turns processed the content separately, noted down similarities and differences of the author's viewpoints and then transferred (or organized grid created during the previous phase) this information to the table representing the authors' ideas. Then groups debated the points to contrast differences and compare similarities. This step-by-step collaborative learning strategy increased student's attention, engagement, and involvement.

**Phase 4: Extend.** During this phase, the students received the writing prompt to complete its requirements by synthesizing and transforming their knowledge into a compare-contrast essay.

## SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Product Analyzing Procedure

Two compare-contrast writings (pre- and post-test products) were analyzed against a set of criteria to test the formulated hypotheses. Since we were interested in an overall impact of the Write-Read Cycle intervention on improving two aspects of compare-contrast SBW (information integration and textual organization), we purposefully ignored details of individual students' performance when analyzing the impact of the intervention.

To evaluate the level of content integration, we make use of the holistic scale (with slight adaptations) developed by Sole et al. (2013). The scale relies on several criteria that are relevant to content integration, such as selection of information, integration, elaboration of information, textual organization, and comprehension errors (Segev-Miller, 2004; Spivey,1997). The scale is presented below (See Table 3).

The evaluation of textual organization of compare-contrast essays was carried out based on the similar pattern of the holistic scale with a view to categorize the products into successful, attempted and failed (See Table 4). The holistic description was provided by the authors and involved summarized requirements to a compare-contrast writing (Bauer, 2016).

The products were analyzed by the three authors of the chapter and the intervention instructor. The overall agreement between them was 78%, and the discrepancies that appeared were resolved collaboratively, which enables making a presumption that the procedure ensured the appropriate reliability.



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*Table 3. The scale of assessing information integration level*

| Integration level | Product description |
|---|---|
| Successful | Fully meets the task instruction, extracts relevant information from the ST and links it up in the text. Demonstrates substantial selection of information without omitting important ideas. Connects ideas with intra and intertextual integrations. Has an appropriate organization. Paraphrases or elaborates the ideas with no coping. |
| Attempted | Partially abides with the task. Contains brief statement of the most important ideas from each ST. Does not establish connections, might omit core information items. Demonstrates point by point information selection and includes intratextual integrations and at least 1 intertextual integration. Paraphrases or elaborates the ideas with no coping. |
| Failed | Does not meet the task instruction. Demonstrates linear presentation (unchanged) of content from the ST. Faithfully copies the ideas in the order they appear in the ST. Does not adequately select or integrate the information. Has coherence problems. |

## RESULTS

Table 5 shows the summarized analysis of the level of information integration in students' pre-test and post-test written products in both experimental and control groups. The analysis was carried out based on the procedure described above.

The analysis of the pre-test essays reveals the common tendency in both groups. 86% of all written products created by the students do not meet the task instruction to integrate the content from 2 texts and organize it as a compare-contrast pattern. These texts demonstrate linear presentation of ideas from the ST in the order they appear in the ST. Coping is a prevailing technique, as students highly depend on the ST. The writers fail to select the appropriate items of information to present them as points of

*Table 4. The scale of assessing textual organization of a compare-contrast essay*

| Textual pattern | Product description |
|---|---|
| Successful | Introductory paragraph provides background information and makes a thesis statement that names the subjects of comparison. The thesis statement lists the points of comparison that are discussed in the body paragraph. Points of comparison support the thesis statement and organize the text logically. Each of at least 3 body paragraphs compares one specific characteristic (point of comparison) in both subjects. The concluding paragraph restates the thesis statement and summarizes the similarities or differences between the subjects. The text might end with a comment that gives an insight or a discovery that came from comparing the two subjects. |
| Attempted | Introductory paragraph makes a thesis statement that names the subjects of comparison. The thesis statement lists the points of comparison that are discussed in the body paragraph. Points of comparison support the thesis statement but do not organize the text logically. Each of at least 2 body paragraphs contains one point of comparison. The concluding paragraph restates the thesis statement and summarizes the similarities or differences between the subjects. The text might with a comment that gives an insight or a discovery that came from comparing the two subjects. |
| Failed | Introductory paragraph makes a thesis statement that names the subjects of comparison. Points of comparison do not support the thesis statement and do not organize the text logically. Each of at least 2 body paragraphs contains one point of comparison. The concluding paragraph restates the thesis statement and summarizes the similarities or differences between the subjects. |



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*Table 5. Level of information integration in pre- and post-test writing*

| Pre-test writing | | | Post- test writing | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Experimental group (n=10)* | | | | | |
| **Product category** | **Number** | **Percentage** | **Product category** | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| Successful | 0 | 0% | Successful | 0 | 0% |
| Attempted | 1 | 10% | Attempted | 4 | 40% |
| Failed | 9 | 90% | Failed | 6 | 60% |
| ***Control group (n=12)*** | | | | | |
| Successful | 0 | 0% | Successful | 0 | 0% |
| Attempted | 2 | 17% | Attempted | 2 | 17% |
| Failed | 10 | 83% | Failed | 10 | 83% |

comparison in their own texts. This, in its turn, has resulted in coherence violations. However, it should be stressed that even the failed products do not demonstrate comprehension errors.

The post-test writing results show more considerable improvement in the experimental group. 4 of 10 essays are categorized as ‘attempted’, as they present paraphrased and elaborated ideas with no direct coping from the ST. Moreover, all 4 texts contain at least 1 intertextual integration. The control group demonstrates no changes, since the students were not exposed to the Read-Write Cycle intervention.

In terms of textual conventions, the written products were generally of better quality compared to the level of information integration (See Table 6). Surprisingly, 1 text of 12 in the control group was evaluated as successful on the pre-test stage. When the result repeated in the post-test writing, the authors interviewed the student to find out what was the impact factor. It appeared the student was a prize-winner of several national FL contests and had extensive experience in writing, including SBW. Upon the whole, average 77% of all texts written before training were categorized as failed, whereas after training, the share decreased to 40% in the experimental group and to 76% in the control group, which is an indicator of the fact that textual organization skills are more affected by training compared to information integration skills.

The failed texts share common features, such as: introductory paragraphs at most make a thesis statement that name the subjects of comparison but do not provide background information about these subjects. The body paragraphs prevailingly rely on 1 point of comparison. Moreover, points of comparison do not always involve the content ideas from the ST, instead, the students present their own views on the topic.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Given the existing gap in investigation of SBW in the context of FL learning, the future research directions might focus on other aspects of SBW at a secondary school level, including the examination of listening-into-writing. The impact of the input source is also among the underresearched topics the comprehensive study of which would contribute to better understanding of SBW specifics.



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*Table 6. Level of textual organization in pre- and post-test writing*

| Pre-test writing | | | Post- test writing | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Experimental group (n=10)* | | | | | |
| **Product category** | **Number** | **Percentage** | **Product category** | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| Successful | 0 | 0% | Successful | 1 | 10% |
| Attempted | 3 | 30% | Attempted | 5 | 50% |
| Failed | 7 | 70% | Failed | 4 | 40% |
| ***Control group (n=12)*** | | | | | |
| Successful | 1 | 8% | Successful | 1 | 8% |
| Attempted | 1 | 8% | Attempted | 2 | 16% |
| Failed | 10 | 84% | Failed | 9 | 76% |

## CONCLUSION

The chapter aimed at examining the impact of the Read-Write Cycle interventional instruction on two aspects of a source-based compare-contrast essay. The intervention was carried out in the context of a secondary school FL course and aligned with the national curriculum for the 10$^{th}$ grade in terms of the content and skills taught. However, unlike an FL course in which reading and writing are traditionally taught as stand-alone skills, the instruction under study integrated the two activities. The instruction was based on the Read-Write Cycle which presented explicit instruction in writing and reading strategies aimed to extend the students' existing schemata and experiences and offer opportunities for enhancing critical thinking and rhetoric.

This study shows a positive impact of the Read-Write Cycle training on the quality of the compare-contrast writing. Overall, our data support the formulated hypotheses. As for hypothesis one, it has been supported. The instruction based on the Read-Write Cycle has resulted in the improvement of information integration in the students' written products. Even though the improvement did not appear considerable, the data confirm the training efficacy. Upon the whole, the students from the experimental group achieved a higher level of integration in their post-test essay, with 40% of the texts assessed as attempted compared to 17% in the control group. Regarding hypothesis two, it has also been supported. The instruction based on the Read-Write Cycle has led to the improvement of textual organization, with 60% of the essays in the experimental group categorized as attempted and successful against 24% in the control group.

Additionally, the chapter discusses the challenges encountered in the process of the intervention design and implementation. The ST selection for designing SBW tasks and writing prompts appeared the most challenging for both the authors and teaching practitioners due to high level of time and effort consumption. The challenges, observed by the authors during the intervention, have added a lot to understanding cognitive and organizational demands not only of the writing process but also of the instruction modelling and implementation.



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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Fastwriting:** Is a nonstop writing for a set amount of time offered to expand on the topic using the heading(s) and topic related vocabulary of the source texts.

**High-Order Concerns:** Are errors in writing connected with the development of ideas and organization standards of the essay, logical presentation of ideas and use of transition words.

**Integrated or Source-Based Writing Skills:** Is the ability to critically read source texts and effectively integrate extracted ideas into a new written product.

**Knowledge Transformation:** Is a process of creating new knowledge which involves problem analysis and problem setting through problem solving activities in content and rhetorical domains.

**Knowledge Transmission:** Is the process of generating content without communicating it. Knowledge transmission can be compared to an everyday impromptu speech which does not involve such metacognitive strategies as goal setting, planning or revision.

**Low-Order Concerns:** Are the mechanical mistakes such as spelling or grammar mistakes that do not interfere with understanding.



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**Source-Based Writing Cognitive Schema:** Is the ability to comprehend the information of the text, analyze it, retrieve important information, compare and combine this information with the existing personal knowledge, plans and transform the information into a new coherent writing.

**Source-Based Writing Instruction:** Provides scaffolding activities that allow students to integrate new context into existing knowledge through critical comprehension of source texts, recognition of the necessary text structures and accurate representation of the retrieved ideas in writing.

**W-K-L:** What I *Know*-What I *Want* to Know - What I Have *Learned* activities aim to activate students' prior knowledge through brainstorming on the suggested topic in pairs and small groups.



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## APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE TEXTS USED IN SBW INSTRUCTION

### Text A

Should Your Teen Work During High School?

There are many reasons for a teen to get a job in high school. Some teens get jobs to contribute to their family's finances. Other teens get jobs to save up for college or to fund other personal expenses. Some teens get jobs to gain valuable work experience. Yet with the increasing demands of high school and the increasing selectivity of the nation's top colleges, many parents wonder, should my teen have a job?

In 2017, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that teen summer employment rates were plummeting. In fact, recent labor data confirmed that even during the school year, fewer than one in four high school students has a job. Many wonder if this is because teens are getting lazy. Quite contrary, today's teens are staying in school longer, spending more time on school work, enrolling in more summer classes, and pursuing higher education. Is there still value in a job during high school? Absolutely! Working during high school can be a benefit for plenty of reasons.

Teens who work gain important skills – not just vocationally, but also interpersonally. Teens, who hold a job have the opportunity to develop communication and interpersonal skills specific to being a part of a professional community. Your teen will learn to communicate with a boss about things like compensation, scheduling, and other concerns. These are difficult to learn outside of a work setting.

Of course, working teens also gain important work experience. Building a resume early on can be beneficial over the long-term, as teens who have already had one job are more likely to win out over their less experienced peers when looking for a subsequent job. In addition, teens who work are more likely to develop time management skills. Balancing a work schedule on top of other commitments like school work or extracurriculars can naturally lead to better organization and necessitate planning ahead.

Finally, your teen will learn about finances and money management. By having some income, your teen will be able to create a budget, save money, and even contribute to certain expenses. Your teen is likely to have more appreciation for things he or she has saved to buy personally, which may also lead to more appreciation for your family's expenses and purchases.

There's no doubt that having a job can be a great benefit to your teen, providing many valuable skills and experiences that are difficult to replicate outside of a job. Yet still, having a job isn't easy and there are definitely some points you should consider as well.

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*(abridged from* https://blog.collegevine.com/should-your-teen-work-during-high-school/*)*

### Text B

Saturday jobs 'can damage exam grades for teenagers'

There was widespread praise for millionaire parents David and Victoria Beckham when it was revealed that they had sent their eldest son, Brooklyn, to do a few weekend shifts in a west London coffee shop. However, new research suggests that teenagers who take on a Saturday job could be damaging their



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GCSE grades. This effect is especially noticeable in girls, as they might spend the earned extra cash on risky behaviours like drinking or smoking.

But the latest study, Youth Employment and Academic Performance, written by Dr Angus Holford, has cast doubt on the wisdom of working and studying. According to the study, around a quarter of all 13- to 16-year-olds in England take some formal paid employment during school term time. “This can be a good thing – they earn their own money and can pick up useful skills, which might help them find full-time work in the future. However, they may spend that hard-earned money on less than useful things or fall in with a different group of people. We did find that schoolchildren who worked became more likely to drink alcohol regularly, smoke or consume cannabis,” said Holford.

However, the biggest impact of part-time work was on the school grades of girls. For teenage girls, an additional hour of paid employment per week in school year 10 reduced their final GCSE performance a year later by approximately one grade in one subject. This was in part caused by the girls spending less time studying outside lessons. Holford said he suspected another factor influencing their grades could be explained by girls in employment becoming less motivated by school and less interested in the work they did in their lessons. Girls who have a job at the age of 15 work on average six hours a week, which means their part-time work is likely to reduce their results considerably – a grade lower in six subjects.

“The long-term effect of this would be particularly bad for borderline students at risk of not achieving the target for progression in education, of five A-C grades – including English and math. Given that academic results at 16 have such a significant influence over our future life outcomes, these findings should worry policymakers and parents who want young people to achieve their potential at this crucial point,” said Holford.

“It’s inevitable that having a job gives teenagers less time to study. That alone might be a small price to pay given the potential benefits of having a part-time job for all-round development. What concerns me instead is how it causes teenagers to lose sight of the importance of their education for their longer-term opportunities.”

*(abridged from* https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/mar/28/saturday-jobs-damage-exam-grades-teenagers)



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# Chapter 5
# Equitable Assessment and Evaluation of Young Language Learners:
## Reflections From a Teacher Training Context

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter discusses major contributions in research and professional assessment development and reviews key classifications in young language learner assessment (YLLA). Using the five-level metric (close, immediate, proximal, distal, and remote) by Ruiz-Primo et al., the authors classify assessments as curriculum aligned or non-aligned. Inequalities limiting access to learning and to opportunities for achievement (economic status, pre-primary education, digital environment) are linked to the five metrics. They review international examinations for YLLs (Cambridge, TOEFL, Pearson) and measure their alignment with an interactive and performative-enacted curriculum. Recommendations are given for separating external assessments as local or international in washback phenomena, for the inclusion of national assessment specialists in the research paradigm, and for greater attention to language assessment literacy in teacher training. The authors predict that increases in distance and digital learning will determine future forms of YLLA and exacerbate existing inequities.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Theoretically, the teaching, learning and assessment of language for young language learners (YLLs) are embedded in a common curricular matrix (Nikolov, 2016) where innovation in one triad requires a corresponding change—or alignment (Kinesh & Knight, 2013)—in the other two. This complex relationship between assessment and curricula for young learners has clearly emerged as a field for both research and professional assessment development (Bailey, 2017; Wolf & Butler, 2017; Inbar-Lourie & Shohamy, 2009; McKay, 2006; Papp, 2018 Rixon, 2016).

We define YLLs as bilingual/multilingual school pupils 6–12 years of age with varying social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. While YLLs can refer to primary-age students in any ethnolinguistic setting, the vast majority worldwide form the primary school population in countries where English is taught as a foreign language and are specifically designated as Young English Language Learners (YELLs). Thus, for non-anglophone contexts, we use YLLS and YELLs interchangeably. Although these YLLs might not have met the world of high-stakes certifying examinations, they are generally familiar with internal testing in the school and some external testing from entities, such as school districts or ministries of education, in their own countries. Literature on characteristics of YLLs, such as minimal literacy and a short attention span requiring stimulating activities, and the effect these have on assessment design and methods (Hasselgreen, 2005; McKey, 2006; Bailey, 2017) has suggested the following demands be satisfied in preparing assessments of YLLs:

1. Learning and assessment tasks should be interesting and appealing, with elements of games and fun because YLLs are still growing socially, cognitively, emotionally and physically. Assessment tasks influence their motivation and concentration spans, and their memories may restrict their ability to hold language in their minds for a longer duration.
2. Different types of formative and summative assessments should be used in conformity with the capacities of learners and the expectations of parents and teachers. Assessments should also consider individual characteristics, needs and preferences in addition to contextual factors, such as cultural and linguistic background.
3. Scaffolding should be provided in some assessment activities to support student learning and the carrying out of difficult tasks. YLLs are still developing literacy skills in their L1 and these skills may not transfer easily to their L2 learning, so scaffolding plays a major role in their assessment.
4. The assessment tasks and feedback on these tasks should be designed in such a way that they highlight learners' strengths and weaknesses, keeping in mind that young learners are vulnerable to failure and criticism.

In sum, the most effective and beneficial assessment for YLLs will be responsive to the purposes and uses of assessment; learners' age; the context of instructions and assessments; the amount of YLL exposure to English; and the inferences made from the assessment results.

However, there are also a few concerns about assessment in general, and specifically standardized language testing, that are foundational to a discussion of Young Language Learner Assessment (YLLA, also YELLA). The first concern regards the process of assessment itself. Like the other classroom teaching and learning activities, assessment is not an event but numerous activities at once which involve grading, evaluating, and comparing students (Carless, 2007).



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Further, there is evidence that assessment tasks are not always evenly distributed in courses, and examinations are often critiqued for requiring memorization and rote learning (Carless, 2007). We haven't yet capitalized on the full potential of formative assessment and feedback processes (Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2018; Carless, 2007). While mindset theorists (Blackwell, Trezeniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Patterson, 2017) have documented the positive feedback in creating a growth mindset in children of all ages regarding learning and assessment tasks, research on mindset theory has only recently addressed second language learning (Lou & Noels, 2019).

The second common criticism is related to standardized accountability language tests, such as Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE), TOEFL *Junior* and TOEFL *Primary*. Apart from the issues of validity and reliability, these tests raise issues of *instructional insensitivity* (Popham, 2007) in that they measure proficiency in language as opposed to learning in the instructional setting. These instructionally insensitive tests have been a major area of research in washback or impact studies of classroom teaching and learning (Andrews, 2004; Cheng and Watanabe, 2004; Madaus, 1988). One of the influential factors in research on accountability or high-stakes tests is that students' performance is not only influenced by the quality of instruction, but also their socioeconomic status and general ability (Popham, 2007; Ruiz-Primo et al., 2012).

Equity in primary assessment, we note, is clearly tied to access to pre-primary education, itself a reserve of the those with greater socio-economic resources. Here, we see the close entwinement of learning and assessment: a child whose access to potential learning is circumscribed is a child whose assessment results will be markedly lower than those of children with free access to sources of learning. This effect is durable and is felt from initial schooling up to and including secondary education (NEP, 2020, p. 29; UNICEF, 2019, p. 12). We are reminded that the measure or proof of learning is assessment, as mentioned above.

Keeping the above considerations of limited literature on assessment of YLLs and on educational and assessment equity in mind and using a situated stance of reflective practice, the main aim of this chapter is to review the alignment of assessment with the classroom teaching/learning experiences of both teachers and students. We compare the established assessment practices and the emerging body of theory and assessments developed for YLLs with classroom practices of pre-service teacher candidates in a national pedagogical institute. We seek to demonstrate that while both theory and testing at the international level have advanced parallel to classroom practices supported in teacher training and promoted in the enacted curriculum, the assessments delivered in classrooms by administrative or governmental institutions remain fixed in a past of rote and formulaic learning practices. We show that these locally institutionalized assessments have not kept pace with the advances in learning theory and curriculum present and promoted in other branches of the same educational establishment. The chapter utilizes a conceptual framework consisting of two assessment paradigms of summative and formative assessment, the assessment continuum of Ruiz-Primo, Shavelson, Hamilton, and Klein (2002), defined by their distance from the enactment of classroom instructional and equity considerations in the assessment of YLLs. The main reason for choosing Ruiz-Primo et al.'s (2002) conceptual framework is that, from the reflective stance of teacher trainers, we wanted to map various facets of YLLs' learning at different distances from the classroom curriculum, as observed in pre-service teacher candidates' practicum (see Table 2). We further wanted to explore if equity considerations in the assessment of YLLs have any relation to the distance of these assessments in a prescribed curriculum.

To achieve the purpose as stated above this chapter begins with the explanation of two major assessment paradigms of YLLs. It then explains the position of various assessment activities in an enacted



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curriculum and equity issues explored through this continuum. Our reflective stance mediated through the conceptual framework allows for delineation of language assessment literacy (LAL) at the levels of teacher trainers, initial teacher training, professional development and observed practices. The inclusion of LAL in teacher training and professional development is explored as a potent driver of improvement in Young Language Learner Assessment (YLLA). As observed from the vantage points of teacher training and teacher observation, it is noted that innovation in assessment has not been embedded in the curricular matrix alongside innovations in teaching and learning at the local and national levels, despite the need for simultaneous development established as a theoretical necessity. Traditional forms of assessment that do not conform to learner-driven forms of language acquisition have persisted within primary curricula (see proximal and distal assessments below). International English assessments for language learners, however, show clear evidence of assessment alignment with communicative and performative aspects of primary language pedagogy. We use this evidence to suggest future directions and recommendations for assessment of YLLs.

## TWO MAJOR ASSESSMENT PARADIGMS FOR YLLS

In language testing literature, irrespective of test-takers' age, two professional prototypes of assessment appear in the forms of *summative* and *formative* assessments. These dichotomies are also known by other names depending on their purposes, uses and assessment contexts. For instance, summative assessment is generally externally mandated and is also called *assessment of learning* or norm-referenced assessment, and formative assessment, generally internally mandated, is also called *assessment for learning* or criterion- and pupil-referenced assessment. The results of summative assessment are used in arriving at decisions regarding a completed instructional event. Conversely, the results of formative assessment are used by teachers to adjust their instructional practices (Popham, 2009). However, a key consideration in any assessment is the *test purpose*, which in turn depends on its *use*, for example, placement, diagnostic, proficiency and achievement tests.

A pervasive dichotomy is the one between *internal* and *external* testing. While classroom assessments administered by teachers are internal assessments, external tests are administered by district, national or international bodies. Additionally, internally mandated formative assessments are part of classroom work related to "the needs of the teachers and learners working within a particular context and . . . are generally ecologically sensitive" (Fulcher, 2010, pp. 1–2). Conversely, external tests are directed by a group of people who generally "do not know a great deal about the local learning ecology [context], and probably don't even know the teachers and learners who will have to cope with the required testing regime" (Fulcher, 2010, p. 2).

Ruiz-Primo et al. (2002) discuss a proximity continuum that describes the distance of instructionally sensitive assessments in relation to the enacted curriculum. Before explaining the continuum, some definitions are warranted here. Instructionally sensitive assessments, according to Ruiz-Primo et al. (2012), have three qualities: they represent the taught curriculum (i.e., the content of the test has actually been taught); they reflect the quality of instruction in relation to students' learning; and they have formative value (i.e., the assessment informs appropriate adjustment of instruction). The enacted curriculum is defined as the instructional methods and materials used by classroom teachers to deliver the prescribed curriculum.



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There are five types of assessment activities on the proximity continuum of Ruiz-Primo et al. (2002): *close, immediate, proximal, distal* and *remote*. In the enacted curriculum, this concept of proximities is coupled with the effects of instruction or of a program on student achievement. Classroom instructional or assessment activities, such as observations, especially of performative communication, and artifacts are immediate assessments. Embedded assessments and classroom quizzes of learning from one or more activities are close assessments that are parallel to the content and activities of the unit or curriculum. Intermediate and close level assessments are curriculum sensitive and are closely aligned to the content and activities of the enacted curriculum. Proximal assessments (e.g., formal classroom tests and exams) are demonstrations of language knowledge relevant to the curriculum rather than measures of language communication skills. We designate proximal assessments as “proto-summative” because the test tasks and items, while retaining some contexts from the instructional environment, mirror those on local or national tests.

Distal assessments are criterion-referenced achievement tests that reflect state or national standards in a particular knowledge domain (e.g., the US legislation often referred to as “No Child Left Behind”). Finally, remote assessments are norm-referenced achievement tests that measure broader outcomes, such as national and international achievement measures (e.g., PISA and PIRLS, Cambridge, ETS and Pearson tests of primary English).

Here, we make the important distinction that distance of items is not the same as cognitive complexity or demands of the test tasks and items. Ruiz-Primo et al. (2002) concluded that classroom teachers’ instruction influences students’ performance specifically on immediate and close assessments. Furthermore, these contextually sensitive assessments are more reflective of the changes in students’ performance than of broader de-contextualized proximal assessments. We use the above-mentioned multilevel approach of Ruiz-Primo et al. (2002) to discuss equity and assessment of the YLLs in relation to initial teacher-training practices. Although not specified by Ruiz-Primo et al. (2002), we consider national and large-scale standardized language tests as distal and remote summative assessments, and immediate and close assessments as formative assessments. The classification of proximal assessment is problematic as it shares characteristics of both formative and summative assessments.

## Proximal, Distal and Remote Summative Assessments

At the proximal, distal and remote levels, domain-specific assessments are either designed on the state or national curriculum or developed internationally to measure general language proficiency of YLLs. On the one hand, abandoning the curriculum specificity of a particular course and using more generic representation of learning goals (Shepard, Penuel, & Pellegrino, 2018), distal and remote tests mainly focus on proficiency testing of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (although some versions, e.g., TOEFL Primary, are limited to three or just two skills). On the other hand, at the proximal level, assessments reflect the same knowledge and skills relevant to the curriculum, but the content (e.g., topics, scenarios) may differ from the studied units (Ruiz-Primo et al., 2002). Proximal tests may be created using a state or nationally mandated template that specifies the type and content of questions (Rixon, 2013). Our review of proximal examinations shows that tests prepared at the school, or proximal, level adapt state-mandated distal examinations by substituting target content into existing test structures (e.g. review of samples).

In the last four decades, many large-scale international assessments for YLLs/YELLs have been developed at the remote level. For example, in the US, prevalent YLLs’ tests are TOEFL *Junior*, TOEFL



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*Primary*, Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA) and Early Language Listening and Oral Proficiency Assessment (ELLOPA). Similarly, in other parts of the world, common YLLs' tests are Pearson's Test of English (PTE) for Young Learners and three levels of the Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) tests – Starters, Movers and Flyers. These tests do not follow any prescribed syllabus and tend to provide for the English proficiency of young learners in the English as a Second/Foreign language (ESL/EFL) contexts. Since YLLs are still developing their cognitive, social and cultural abilities, these large-scale assessment designers claim that their tests are developed by keeping in mind young learners' learning contexts, language abilities, cognitive development and affective factors in measuring communicative language ability (Wolf & Butler, 2017). Most reading and listening tests consist of closed and selected test task types (e.g., multiple-choice questions, or MCQs) for reliability and the ease and efficiency of marking. Well-designed restricted response items can measure language knowledge at word and phrase levels in addition to measuring some high-order skills at sentence, text and discourse levels (Papp, 2018).

Three internationally recognized standardized tests for YLLs—TOEFL for Young Learners, Cambridge English Qualifications and Pearson Test of English Young Learners series—are explained in Table 1. As remote assessments, these tests are not based on or limited to any specific curriculum. The main aim of these tests is to assesses YLLs' skills, knowledge and ability to communicate effectively at different proficiency levels.

While both TOEFL digital and Cambridge face-to-face exams are individual, the Pearson exam uses the same positive pair or small-group format seen in the earlier SOPA and ELLOPA tests developed by educational consortia. Their oral interviews are closer to classic CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) pedagogies than the BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) that inform the construction of national and local exams (Papp & Rixon, 2018, p. 10). In Table 1, we see that these examinations—however distanced in time, space or format from the point of instruction—do follow the communicative practices in immediate and close formative classroom activities. The stated goal of the Pearson Test of English Young Learners (PTE Young Learners) is to "assess a young learner's ability to use English language communicatively . . . [with] an emphasis on real-life scenarios rather than on knowledge of specific language items and vocabulary" (Test levels, PTE Young Learners, 2020). Children's oral skills are measured digitally (TOEFL Primary) or in face-to-face situations with an external examiner (Cambridge EQ; PTE). We note that the Cambridge series states measurement of five skills: the traditionally designated "speaking" becomes "spoken production" and "spoken interaction." These three assessments differ markedly from locally produced external examinations that Arnold and Rixon (2008) describe as conservative and lagging behind methodologies. That is, these summative international examinations are closer to the enacted curriculum than to the summative examinations produced locally or nationally in that they measure language communication skills as well as language knowledge.

We note, however, that information on the adoption of these tests by educational administrations is scarce. Rixon's 2013 *Survey of Policy and Practice in Primary Teaching Worldwide,* written for the British Council, shows that transitional assessment (primary to secondary) is generally limited, and where it exists, it is national rather than international. Of the 64 respondents in Rixon's study, only one reports use of an "exam provided by an international examination body," while the majority use examinations produced by a local or national authority external to the schools (p. 36). Breeze and Roothooft (2014) give loss of national oversight and cost as factors limiting use of international examinations. Moreover, digitally delivered assessments may be limited to school environments where computer equipment and connectivity are available. Thus, many schools worldwide are not able to offer computerized examinations.



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*Table 1. Comparison of three YLLs' international standardized tests and their construct*

| Test | Test Delivery | Skills | Task Formats |
|---|---|---|---|
| **TOEFL® Young Learners Series** | | | |
| TOEFL Primary<br>(Age 8 and up)<br>~ 80 minutes | As three tests:<br>Paper/digital for Steps 1 and 2<br>Digital speaking | Reading and listening: Step 1 (60 min)<br>Reading and listening: Step 2 (60 min)<br>Speaking (20 min) (digital only) | Picture cues, matching, 3-option picture-based MCQs<br>Listen and draw<br>Description, opinion, request, and questions |
| TOEFL Junior<br>(Age 11 and up)<br>~ 133 minutes | As two tests:<br>Standard: Paper only<br><br>Speaking: Digital only | Standard test: listening (40 min), language form and meaning (25 min),<br>reading (50 min)<br>Speaking (18 min) | MCQs—no picture options<br>Readings illustrated<br>Picture narration, academic and non-academic tasks |
| Cambridge English Qualifications (Age 6–12) | | | |
| Pre-A1 Starters<br>~ 45 minutes | Paper/digital<br>Teacher supervised speaking-external interlocutor, and a test taker (face-to-face) | NB: Five skills<br>Listening (20 min)<br>Reading and writing (20 min)<br>Spoken production and spoken interaction (3–5 min) | Matching, 3-option picture-based MCQs, picture binary choices, and copying<br>Gap fill choices both visual and textual<br>Listen and draw, listen and color<br>Pointing, coloring, short answers |
| A1 Movers<br>~ 60 minutes | Paper/digital<br>Teacher supervised speaking-external interlocutor, and a test taker (face-to-face) | Listening (25 min)<br>Reading and writing (30 min)<br><br>Spoken production and spoken interaction (5–7 min) | Matching, 3-option picture-based MCQs, picture binary choices, and copying, listen and draw, and readings with illustrations<br>Gap fill word choices illustrated<br>Short sentences and short answers |
| A2 Flyers<br>~ 75 minutes | Paper/digital<br><br>Teacher supervised speaking-external interlocutor, and a test taker (face-to-face) | Listening (25 min)<br>Reading and writing (40 min)<br>Spoken production and spoken interaction (7–9 min) | Matching, 3-option picture-based MCQs, binary choices pictures, copying, writing words and sentences. Gap fill word choices illustrated<br>Readings illustrated<br>Short sentences, questions and answers |
| Pearson Test of English Young Learners (Age 6–13) | | | |
| Firstwords (Level 1)<br>~ 80 minutes | Paper-based<br>External examiner, a test-taker, and four other test-takers (face-to-face interactions) | Integrated listening, reading and writing (60 min)<br>Spoken test (20 min) | 3-option picture-based, MCQs, matching, and gap filling<br>Question and answer (picture and text board game), short talk |
| Springboard (Level 2)<br>~ 80 minutes | Paper-based<br>External examiner, a test-taker, and four other test-takers | Integrated listening, reading and writing (75 min)<br><br>Spoken test (20 min) | 3-option picture-based MCQs, dialogue completion, matching, gap filling, and writing sentences<br>Question and answer (picture and text board game), short talk |
| Quickmarch (Level 3)<br>~ 80 minutes | Paper-based<br>External examiner, a test-taker, and four other test-takers | Integrated listening, reading and writing (60 min)<br>Spoken test (20 min) | 3-option picture-based MCQs, question and answer, dialogue completion, matching, gap filling, and writing sentences<br>Question and answer (picture and text board game), short talk |
| Breakthrough (Level 4)<br>~ 95 min | Paper-based<br>External examiner, a test-taker, and four other test-takers (face-to-face interactions) | Integrated listening, reading and writing (75 min)<br>Spoken test (20 min) | 3-option picture-based MCQs, question and answer, dialogue completion, matching, gap filling, and narrative writing<br><br>Question and answer (picture and text board game), short talk |

## Recent Trends in Distal and Remote Assessments

Other recent developments in general educational movements have also influenced the distal and remote assessment of YLLs. Three of these—standards-based assessment, assessments using specific perfor-



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mance criteria, and Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)-related performance-based assessment—are discussed here. One distinction is to be made between *standardized testing* (e.g., TOEFL Junior, PET Young Learners) and *standards-based assessment*. As mentioned above, standardized tests for YLLs are mostly used for either placement or proficiency testing. Standards-based assessment allows for making judgments about YLLs with respect to shared benchmarks of expected outcomes and/or performance. Teachers can make qualitative judgements about their students in relation to what they can do vis-à-vis the prescribed standards. The main goal of standard-based assessment is that schools and teachers bring all learners to an acceptable minimum standard of learning (Rixon, 2016). As there are broad standards to be achieved rather than ranking the students, the original intent of these standards was to relieve pressure of competition, not only for students but also for teachers, because the number of students reaching or surpassing the required standards judges the success of an institution. However, not all standards-based assessment movements have been successful because they are critiqued for supporting "managerialism, government control, competition amongst schools in education and the consequent disadvantaging and side-lining of minority groups" (Rixon, 2016, p. 24). Typically, one such learner group, that of ESL/EFL learners in a country where English is dominant, does not do well on these types of standardized tests (Menkin, 2008, p. 97).

The performance-based criteria assessment uses task completion and task achievement as indicators of learners' success. Instead of relying on discrete test items, performance-based assessment adopts a holistic approach to assessment and employs various methods of assessment, such as role-plays, portfolio assessments, self-assessment and peer assessment. These methods represent a reasoned approach to the restrictions imposed by YLLs' limited ability to read and write, especially in early years. We note that some of these have been adapted into the international assessments reviewed in Table 1. [Performative assessment represents a reasoned Similar to standard-based assessment, performance assessment of learners reflects real life skills that include meaningful, engaging and challenging tasks simulating real-world contexts]. Performative assessment represents an approach similar to standards-based assessment, in that they both state goals in terms of what learners can do. Performance assessment of learners, however, reflects real-life skills that include meaningful, engaging and challenging tasks simulating real-world contexts. The Pearson PTE statement of purpose cited above sets out these performative aspects of language assessment. These tasks combine language abilities with skills and knowledge of various content areas by evaluating not only the final outcomes but also the procedures and strategies used to reach those outcomes. One example of these assessments is *The European Language Portfolio (ELP)* that not only collects the examples of students' work but also accounts for their self-assessment. This portfolio is linked with the performance descriptors of CEFR.

Many programs for YLLs link language proficiency assessment to CEFR. Although CEFR seems to offer language challenges for young children at a lower level, there are fundamental problems with the references (Rixon, 2016) because these are not specifically designed for young learners. The CEFR descriptors would require more contextualization for use with YLLs, keeping in mind their cognitive and social developmental levels. Hasselgreen (2005) has also pointed out that the CEFR descriptors are insufficient in providing clear descriptions of the abilities of YLLs. There is a need for materials that capture the language quality of everyday classroom performance "in addition to the more function-focused 'Can-dos,' which show long-term rather than immediate progress" (p. 352).



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## Classroom-Based Intermediate and Close Formative Assessments

At the intermediate and close level, formative or classroom-based assessments of YLLs are curriculum sensitive, as these are close to the content and activities of the curriculum. Employed formally or informally, these classroom assessments are used by teachers a) to make inferences about students' language knowledge and abilities, and b) to improve an under-way instructional program or to adjust teaching and learning activities accordingly (Popham, 2009). Positive in intent, these assessments help improve teaching and learning and aid in raising the standards of achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Most classroom-based assessments are ongoing and take into account the progress of each individual student (e.g., their academic literacies, such as effort, motivation, collaboration), which are not generally specified in the curriculum. Importantly, formative assessments stress the central role students play in assessment (i.e., they have to take an active part in their own learning, and, unless they come to understand and deal with their strengths and weaknesses, they may not progress). That is why assessment methods, such as self-assessment and peer assessment, are commonly used in Assessment *for* Learning. These classroom-based assessments are especially relevant to YLLs and their teachers as learners are still acquiring a new language and these assessment methods provide valuable and relevant information to teachers regarding instructional needs of their learners (Bailey, 2017).

Formative assessment, however, is more complex than it appears at first sight (Bennett, 2011; Carless, 2007; Popham, 2009; Shepard, Penuel, & Pellegrino, 2018) and it has its own challenges (see Bennett, 2011 for more details). There appear to be two factions—one group considers it formal, structured and planned, while the other considers it informal, ad hoc and interactive (Carless, 2007). While the former group believes that teachers do not have time to conduct formative assessments because of various restrictions, such as large classes, increased workload and time constraints, the latter group with a more constructivist interactive orientation considers formative assessment as part of good teaching practices. Furthermore, the theoretical assumptions of summative and formative assessments are different, so to incorporate the elements of formatively assessing young learners' learning into summative learning would require substantial theoretical reformulations (Wolf & Butler, 2017). These theoretical as well as practical concerns have enabled us to identify proximal assessments as hybrid, or proto-summative.

Additionally, there are concerns with the validity and usefulness of these intermediate, close and proximal assessments (Messick, 1996). Some of the validity considerations for the assessment of YLLs are appropriate purpose, meaningful inferences and improved learning. Assessments should allow students to show what they know and understand in relation to the assessment outcomes, standards and/or criteria (Carless, 2007; Papp, 2018). For validity and positive washback of assessments, Messick (1996) has proposed two considerations: first, assessment tasks should be criterion sampled—in other words, they should be "authentic and direct samples of the communicative behaviours of listening, speaking, reading and writing of the language being learnt . . . and [the] transition from learning exercises to test exercises should be seamless" (p. 241). This means that the test should be instructionally valid and there should not be any difference between instructional activities in class and the test tasks. Additionally, Messick (1996) recommends that positive impact of assessments can be achieved by minimizing two threats to construct validity: *construct under-representation* and *construct irrelevance.* Construct under-representation, occurs when "the assessment is deficient: the test is too narrow and fails to include important dimensions or facets of focal construct" (Messick, 1996, p. 244). Construct irrelevance is defined as "the assessment [that] is too broad, containing excess reliable variance that is irrelevant to the interpreted construct" (p. 244). In the case of YLLs, it means that not all objectives of a course are



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addressed in the assessment. Conversely, the test content does not reflect what is taught during a course. Therefore, as mentioned above that large-scale standardized tests use different curricula, the chances of both construct under-representation and construct irrelevance occurring are high. The construct of assessing YLLs and its challenges are discussed in the next section.

## The Construct of Assessing L2 Young Learners

A frequently cited difficulty in assessment of YLLs is the lack of clarity about the underlying construct to be assessed. This is because of our limited knowledge about how young learners learn a second language (i.e., what cognitive processes are developed by young learners for processing different test tasks). Also missing is how these cognitive processes could differ from those of their more thoroughly studied elders (Bailey, 2017; Hasselgreen, 2005; Inbar-Lourie & Shohamy, 2009; McKay, 2006; Wolf & Butler, 2017). We consider a construct as "the competency, or aspect of thinking, or learning, that one is aiming to access (e.g., an area of knowledge, skill, or ability)" (Chudowsky & Pellegrino, 2003, p. 76). According to this definition, the construct of assessment of YLLs includes not only the four language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, including phonological awareness and pronunciation, but also social and academic literacies, such as organizing knowledge, problem-solving, self-monitoring and peer collaboration (Anand, 2020; Wingate, 2015).

Exploring suitable assessment construct of YLLs, Inbar-Lourie and Shohamy (2009) suggest a continuum of interfaces and connections between various types of teaching programs and their assessment practices. These programs vary in their objectives and formats in relation to their emphasis on only language awareness on one end of the continuum, and stress on content through language on the other. The assessment construct also varies for these different programs. For example, language awareness programs measure explicit language knowledge rather than language as a tool of communication. The goal of these programs is to develop familiarity with L2 in comparison with learners' native language. On the other hand, content programs, at the end of continuum, are usually immersion programs where content is taught through communicative competence and literacy skills are acquired in the target language rather than in a learner's native language. Between these two extremes, there are programs that assess focused language instruction through lexicon and structures; programs that assess language through familiar themes that are not concurrently studied in other subjects; content-based programs that integrate topics from other school subjects into language teaching; and language across curriculum (CLIL) courses that rely on utilizing target language for acquiring knowledge.

The assessment approaches recommended for these programs promote the use of formative assessment to inform, improve or diagnose teaching and learning (McKey, 2006; Rea-Dickins, 2000); however, most assessment tools for young learners are more language-focused rather than content-focused. Language-focused tools test language through familiar topics or themes rather than through an integrated content-based approach (Inbar-Lourie & Shohamy, 2009). Another recent challenge added to the assessment of YLLs is the construct of language abilities in an online environment. Use of language abilities are different in computer and noncomputer use (Wolf & Butler, 2017), thus more construct refinement is required for multimodal assessments. In conclusion, the construct of the assessment of YLLs should include the following core aspects (Hughes, 2003; Wragg, 2003):



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a. **Knowledge and Understanding:** concepts and ideas, theories, applications, learning rules of communication and interacting with others, analogies, relationships, understanding that words and sentences have meaning;
b. **Dispositions:** collaboration, concentration, flexibility, and reflectiveness;
c. **Skills:** reading, listening, writing, speaking, mental and physical dexterity, and academic literacies that include critical thinking, problem-solving, interpersonal skills and multimodal skills; and
d. **Attitudes and Values:** about learning, respect for all and care for the environment.

Unfortunately, many of these constructs are mostly untapped by large-scale tests and can only be observed formally and informally in classroom-based assessment (Chudowsky and Pellegrino, 2003). In a second-language learning context, attitudes and values are present as themes for language focus rather than as targeted content. L2 grammar or vocabulary can be easily tested through achievement or proficiency testing, but more elaborate assessment methods, such as integrated skills assessment, interviews, and group observations, are required for more elaborate information about the learners. In sum, even though the primary purposes and uses of summative and formative assessment are different, all assessments share the underlying goal of advancing students' learning (Chudowsky and Pellegrino, 2003). This brings us to the issue of equity considerations in the assessment of YLLs discussed in the section below.

## EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS IN THE ASSESSMENT OF YLLS/YELLS

As observers in government schools in diversely rich neighborhoods, we confirm that access vs. lack of access to resources, such as pre-school, especially bilingual programs, has a profound impact on learners in primary school. This early advantage extends upwards and results in fewer grade repeaters or dropouts in primary and secondary school (UNICEF, 2019, p. 12). In 2019, France implemented the new education code making pre-primary education for children aged three to five not just free to all, but mandatory as of September 2019 (2020 Education Code). In July 2020, India approved and has moved to implement a New Education Policy that adds three years of pre-primary education to the national curriculum (PIB, 2020). The importance of these new programs is explained by UNICEF (2019), which reports that shifting enrolment in pre-primary education from 25% to 75% brings a 25% increase in students reaching age-level reading goals, that is, "pre-primary programs reduce the achievement gap caused by poverty and help most vulnerable children keep up with their peers" (p. 22). The rest of the world is not so fortunate: worldwide only 50% of children attend pre-elementary programs[1], although these programs are shown to radically increase rates of educational completion, and the bulk of these programs are private (i.e., requiring fees for attendance; UNICEF, 2019, pp. 24, 52).

Additionally, and most specifically related to equity in English language learning, is the role of English in private education. In the parts of the world designated by Kachru (1985) as "expanding" and "outer circle" users of English, English has become as essential to success in life as literacy and numeracy. In non-English speaking countries, a key reason parents adopt private education is to ensure that their children acquire the English advantage (Nikolov, 2016, NEP 8.3). The English advantage begins in pre-elementary programs. In our teacher-training context in Bahrain, English dominates the pre-primary landscape, with a strong majority of programs offered in English only. As we supervise teaching practice and observe classes, we see students enter Grade 1 knowing the alphabet and numbers, and engaging in formulaic



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exchanges. Others enter with no English exposure, and sometimes little or no Arabic, which places their classmates and their schools at a distinct disadvantage vis à vis their counterparts from schools where the population is drawn from families with higher economic status and greater experience with English.

Similarly, exposure to English-language playscapes, soundscapes and media landscapes is determined by access to costly electronic devices and computers, all sources of informal learning (Kuppens, 2010). In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), for example, parents in higher-economic-level households are commonly bi- or multilingual users of English, so second-language fluency and frequent codeswitching to and from English are a normal part of the learner's linguistic environment. Conversely, in residential areas housing lower-income families, there is little or no exposure to informal English language learning, and parental bilingualism may not include English. The power of informal language learning should not be underestimated, especially when adults privilege the use of the English language both professionally and socially.

At the local, or classroom, and intra-school level, we have observed that well-trained English language professionals can use skills in differentiation, in growth mindset theory and practice and in formative assessment to remediate, if only partially, the inequity in school external access to language learning.[2] As long as the teacher can engage learners who first encounter English in their formal primary program, these learners can experience success in formative (immediate and close) assessment to a degree that will maintain interest in and motivation for language learning. Thus, at the classroom and intra-school level, the teaching and learning experience can lead to equitable assessment, provided classroom learning in English is measured, as opposed to overall proficiency in English, or, more formally stated, assessment is criterion referenced, not norm referenced (Popham, 2009).

At the inter-school level, however, where teachers no longer control the end-of-semester and end-of-year assessments, these are more likely to be norm referenced, and provide an unfair advantage to students with either pre-primary exposure to English language or strong informal learning opportunities in English. These "proto-summative" and summative assessments are used to categorize not just individual students but teaching staff and schools as well. Distal assessments provided by the Ministry of Education unfairly advantage both students and schools with the highest percentage of EMI (English Medium of Instruction) pre-primary education and greatest exposure to out-of-school English language learning. "Inequalities of opportunity" stemming from circumstances students cannot control—that is, family cultural and educational capital—account for 35% of disparity in achievement (Ferreira & Gignoux, 2013, p. 19).

We have seen, and later provide in detail, examples of classroom assessments constructively aligned with teaching and learning, and that work toward limiting inequities in exposure to the English language due to social or economic advantage. We also see that the effectiveness of assessments of learning as opposed to assessments of proficiency is lost at the inter-school, district or country-wide level when the assessment tools are external to the specific teaching and learning situations of each classroom and/or school (Popham, 2009).

At the international level, we see even greater inequity based on the two factors of private, mostly pre-primary, school tuition in English and environmental exposure to English. These inequities are tied directly to the status of English in the community, the status of education in the community and to per capita wealth and expenditures on education. In countries that have known neither imperial nor economic colonialization by English-speaking nations, exposure to environmental English will be much lower, and the population will be less familiar with conventions of English speech and writing. An international assessment of YELLs that does not account for English as part of geographical identity will give an



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unfair advantage to test takers whose home environment features English as a *lingua franca* or *de facto* second language.

An additional imbalance at the national/regional level that significantly disadvantages 50% of students is the gender literacy gap evident in the 2016 PIRLS results, which show a 19-point advantage for females. In Arabic-speaking nations, the gap is startling, ranging from a 28-point difference in Morocco to a high of a 65-point gap in Saudi Arabia (PIRLS, 2016). The origin of the gap is definitely not economic, as wealthy countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have high expenditures on education. Although the PIRLS measures first- or language-of-instruction literacy, we may logically assume that a student who struggles with basic literacy skills in the first language is unlikely to overcome obstacles to literacy in a second language. At our teacher training college, statistics show male students enter with lower English skills than females, and fail the preparatory program at a significantly higher rate.[3] Language, both first and second, may be deemed unimportant for K–12 males at a local or social level. Male students will be disadvantaged on all language-dependent assessments, and most especially in the international high-stakes assessment required for post-graduate education.

In conclusion, we see that the fundamental source of inequity in primary-level ESL language assessments has its root in the divergent socio-economic status of the individual students and of the communities from which schools draw their populations. A secondary source of unequal success in English can be attributed to the role of English within the national culture and the status of language in gender culture. Students from countries where English is a *lingua franca* encountered in their daily extra-curricular lives will have an advantage over students from countries where the school is the only source of English.

## LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT LITERACY AND TEACHER TRAINING

Teacher training and professional development are key factors in developing valid and equitable assessments at all levels. As noted, classroom instructors plan and execute assessments at the immediate and close levels. The quality of those assessments is directly tied to the LAL of the teachers. Relatively new in the field in comparison with the general assessment literacy, LAL refers to the knowledge, principles and skills that language teachers need to conduct language-assessment-related activities (Davis, 2008; Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2017). For language teachers, this is knowledge of basic ideas and principles of testing and applying their knowledge while performing language-assessment-related tasks. LAL, like assessment literacy, has emerged from the field of testing, and, in turn, is establishing a separate identity in the field of general assessment literacy (Inbar-Lourie, 2017). The first reason for separating LAL from general assessment literacy, as noted above, rests on the concepts informing the constructs of language testing (Davis, 2008). These evidence a shift from the testing-oriented LAL to a social and critical turn in language testing (McNamara & Rover, 2006), which devotes more attention to contextually relevant and dialogical assessment culture (Inbar-Lourie, 2017). Inbar-Lourie places social contexts at the heart of LAL that add consequences of assessment, and fair and ethical test development to the general considerations in assessment. As discussed above, both immediate and local (intra-school) and remote (international) assessments have followed this turn.

Furthermore, the field of LAL has yet to have a coherent assessment framework, such as the *Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students* (The American Federation of Teachers et al., 1990), to delineate the required skills for language teachers. O'Loughlin (2006) correctly indicates that language testing is a "notoriously difficult domain of knowledge for students in second language



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teacher education programs" due to the intricate balance between its highly abstract theoretical concepts and their practical applications (p. 71). LAL is limited by language testing courses in teacher training courses that may have their roots in traditional testing culture and still pay attention to a "knowledge + skills" approach to language testing (Davis, 2008; Inbar-Lourie, 2017, p. 259), rather than focusing on an approach that has knowledge, skills and principles at its heart. There are tensions between the two cultural paradigms of "testing" and of "assessment" (Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2008). Testing culture is rooted in the field of psychometrics with its positivist view of the world, whereas assessment has its roots in a learning culture (Fulcher, 2012; Shepard et al., 2018). Inbar-Lourie (2008) suggests that "learning cultures are grounded in interpretive epistemology which views reality as the subject of social construction" (p. 387). These factors shape the assessment practices developed in teacher training courses.

Teacher candidates' readiness to accept new concept and techniques in testing classes are influenced by their previous encounters with testing and assessment both as language learners and teachers in addition to the testing courses and quality of input received at teacher training (O'Loughlin, 2006). Brown and Bailey's (2008) study on the contents of language testing courses confirmed the categorization of "knowledge + skills" models. Their questionnaire asked language testing experts for the extent to which certain topics were included in language testing courses and their results indicated a stable language testing knowledge rather than assessment knowledge of language teachers. The results of their survey are accurately summarized by Inbar-Lourie (2017) as:

The items dealt almost exclusively with tests and their properties, excluding references to the larger assessment picture – to assessment considerations and consequences as well as alternative forms of assessment. Testing culture was thus established as the core canon of language testing knowledge. Some of the agreed upon topics amongst the respondents were test critiquing and test analysis, item writing for the different skills, item quality and discrimination, validity, reliability, and standard error of measurement. (p. 260)

A similar focus on tests is also notable in the assessment course at the pedagogical institute in our study, to which we turn our attention below.

## ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS IN A TEACHER TRAINING CONTEXT

This section of the chapter discusses the assessment practices promoted in a teacher training context, either directly through instruction or indirectly through modelled practice. Our institution, The Bahrain Teachers College (BTC) is the examined model. Founded in 2009, it is linked to creation of a knowledge society in Bahrain, and the original curriculum was produced primarily by the consultant institution, NIE (National Institute of Education), Singapore. Special features in training, such as a series of four practica, one each year of the Bachelor of Education program, and three in the teaching specialization distinguish the BTC as an exceptional provider of immersive training.

Teacher candidates learn about assessment methods, such as collaborative learning, self-evaluations and peer evaluations in pedagogy content courses, such as "Literacy skills", "Differentiated Classroom", and "Project Based Learning," but learn mainly about item writing for the different skills, item quality and discrimination and other language testing principles of validity and reliability in the language testing course.[4] While the pedagogy content courses prepare teachers for production of communicative and performative assessments at the immediate and close levels, the testing course prepares them for production of language knowledge proto-summative and summative assessments at the proximal or distal levels.



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A self-critical examination of our language assessment instruction points to the same type of misalignment attributed to a retrograde assessment policy at the inter-school or national level in our dedicated assessment course. The focus on item production leads to a focus on assessment of language proficiency, rather than the focus on measuring language learning promoted in the non-assessment specific in pedagogical content curriculum. Indirect instruction in assessment, provided by the types of assessed work required of trainee teachers, supports a conception of assessment based first on formative experiences and culminating in (usually) innovative group or individual projects that demonstrate pedagogical competence rather than knowledge about pedagogy. Trainee teachers produce culturally relevant picture books in literacy and in children's literacy courses, and bring their own projects to fruition in the PBL course. Even within English content courses, primacy is given to assessment types that support differentiation and creativity, such as autobiographical essays based on a visual life map, inventing character interviews for extended reading, or producing and presenting research in poster and gallery walk form.

The teacher training institute aspires to best practices in assessment through training future teachers in three practical courses in the schools, one each in years two, three and four of the program. Some supervisors use lesson planning forms that require trainee teachers to specify an assessment plan and the performance indicators for assessment and to provide checklists and/or rubrics before detailing the activities planned for enacting the curriculum. That is, assessment must be established before the activities to ensure that opportunity for measurement of targeted skills is provided. The rubrics provide for evaluation of trainee teacher use of assessment clearly set out the need for:

*Consistent monitoring of student performance and formative assessment of student understanding; frequent[ly] encourage[ment of] student self-evaluation" and for "individually measurable assessment. . . appropriate for the stated objectives" (Bahrain Teachers College, 2020).*

However, we must note that, to date, norming sessions training supervisors to implement the standards set in evaluation rubrics are absent at both departmental and institutional levels, and that language assessment training in the practicum is instructor dependent.

A further aspect of teacher training in assessment that cannot be overlooked is that school or Ministry of Education developed assessments must be accepted by classroom teachers, who are tasked by both prime stakeholders – local school administration and parents – to prepare learners for the mandated assessments. Simply said, the assessment practices that are evaluated as part of their practicum do not match the mandated assessments, as assessment standards are not agreed by the training institute and the Ministry of Education. In response to this dilemma, many teachers elect to teach in lower primary grades in order to continue implementation of formative assessment practices, and to escape the less suitable assessments mandated for upper grades (Graduate X, personal communication, July 27, 2020).

In sum, we see two conflicting views of assessment, one aligned with practices presented in pedagogical content courses, and the other aligned with discrete item assessment of language proficiency, that may both originate from the teacher training institute. Trainee teachers and in-service teachers alike are, and are likely to continue to be, conflicted over their role in the separate assessment paradigms. On the one hand, they seek to enact the formative and performative assessments promoted in curricular training, but on the other see themselves constrained to prepare learners for the mandated tests of language proficiency.

The training institute, in its next round of curriculum review, must resolve its own inconsistencies by providing a coherent training program in second language assessment of young learners. Additionally, it would do well to provide a unified approach to assessment training in the practica through regular



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norming training for supervisors. The question of resolving the different views of assessment provided by the training institute and the government ministry producing proximal and distal assessment, can, we acknowledge, best be resolved by through promoting national language policies that bring the various partners in the educational establishment to the same table to set assessment practices. Then, we may hope, teachers will be able to assess young language learners in the performative manners for which they were trained.

## ALIGNMENT OF CLOSE, INTERMEDIATE AND PROXIMAL ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

In Table 2, we examine the assessment continuum of Ruiz-Primo et al. (2002, pp. 371–373), to the national/regional context upon which the authors reflect, that of Bahrain specifically and the GCC in general. In Table 2, we see assessment progressively alienated from its role in supporting student learning and motivation, to become an entity semi-independent from the curriculum. As we point out in the discussion below, the distancing of assessment from the enacted curriculum could well correspond to drops in learner motivation for language learning explored by Nikolov (2016).

As the table above makes explicit, distance from enactment of curriculum means loss of assessed speaking and communicative activities (pair, group speaking, discussion, role play). Classroom teachers may deliver interactive and communicative reviews, as observed in supervision of trainee teachers (2015–2019), but the teacher/school-level unit end assessments (proximal distance) exclude speaking and/or communicative tasks in conformity with the assessments supplied by the Directorate of Curricula for semester and year-end examinations and, in Grade 6, national examinations. Teachers so dislike exclusion from assessment preparation that they avoid assignment to Grade 6, whose assessments are the exclusive purview of the Directorate (Teacher Fatima, personal communication, July 26, 2020).

Despite distaste for Directorate materials, a comparison of examinations at the Grade 4 level (prepared in schools by teacher teams) and at the Grade 6 level (produced for schools by the Directorate) show mimicry in task and question formation. The assessments are identical, differing only in vocabulary and some increase in syntactical complexity; that is, the students repeatedly complete identical tasks at the semester's end, term after term.

This exclusion of interpretative and presentational skills is not in conformity with the prescribed textbooks and *de facto* curriculum. The textbooks currently in use (*Family and Friends*, Bahrain Edition) all include pronunciation, phonics, paired speaking work and oral presentation in each lesson, and teachers are expected to follow the scope and sequence of each lesson and unit as the designated and approved curriculum.

The Ministry of Education requires teachers to include pair or group communicative activities in English in all lessons, and teachers lose marks when evaluated if they fail to do so. Teacher training in English language education puts a premium on the development of interactive lessons that enable student interpretive and presentational communication in English.

The contradiction between the goals of the enacted curriculum and the assessment practices at the proximal and distal distances seen in the situation of YELLs in Bahrain is reflected in the literature reviewed. Reforms are enacted at the curricular level, but as Ruiz-Primo et al. (2001) state, "[e]valuations, if done at all, burst the reform balloon" (p. 369). Rixon (2016), as she reviews 15 years of advances in



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*Table 2. Outline of grades 1–6 assessment, Kingdom of Bahrain, based on distance from enactment of curriculum*

| Assessment proximity | Immediate | Close | Proximal | Distal | Remote |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Preschool | No government schools, no curricular requirements | | | | |
| Grades 1–3 | Active, performative: include pair and group communicative activities<br>Ex: Pasting selected food items on a plate to form a meal and comparing choices with partner/group. | Projects, worksheets, text and workbook activities oral and written.<br>Some work kept in individual notebooks | Teacher-designed assessments. Teacher decides if speaking and communicative activities are used. | No end-of-term/end-of-year assessments mandated. | None |
| Grade 4 | Active, performative; include pair and group communicative activities<br>Ex: Packing a suitcase for vacation trip, and explaining choices based on weather and destination. | Projects, posters, worksheets text and workbook activities, oral and written.<br>Some activities kept in notebook. | Teacher may use unit reviews or own-constructed assessments. May or may not include speaking and communicative activities as decided by classroom teacher. | Teacher-designed with strict Directorate of Curriculum guidelines as to task and question type.<br>Speaking and communicative activities excluded. | PIRLS |
| Grade 5 | Active, performative; include pair and group communicative activities.<br>Ex: Giving blindfolded student oral directions to follow path laid out on classroom floor. | Projects, posters, worksheets text and workbook activities, oral and written.<br>Some activities kept in notebook. | Teacher may use unit reviews or own-constructed assessments.<br>May or may not include speaking and communicative activities as decided by classroom teacher. | Teacher-designed with strict Directorate of Curriculum guidelines as to task and question type.<br>Speaking and communicative activities excluded. | None |
| Grade 6 | Active, performative; include pair and group communicative activities<br>Ex: 'Find someone who . . .' interactive social questioning. | Projects, posters, worksheets text and workbook activities, oral and written.<br>Some activities kept in notebook. | Teacher may use unit reviews or own-constructed assessments.<br>May or may not include speaking and communicative activities as decided by classroom. | Directorate of Curriculum provides examinations that follow own guidelines.<br>Speaking and communicative activities excluded. | End-of-year national examinations |

*Notes:* All worksheets or written activities not excerpted from the grade-level textbook and workbook must be approved by the head teacher or vice principal. Notebooks could be construed as portfolios of learning kept for parental review but often include copying tasks (e.g., copy new words five times).

curricular planning for YLLs, especially in the setting of targets, notes that "the actual practices applied in assessment are not well conceived in all places" (p. 19).

The previous discussion of Imbar-Lourie and Shohamy (2009) lists a considerable body of developed assessments for young learners at the remote level produced by reputable and competent bodies. These remote assessments, unlike the distal assessment at the national level, focus on communicative and presentational language skills, and on which students are assessed, as they use English in pairs. The assessments that they review—ELLORA, SOPA, COPE, NOELLA and Interlingua (Imbar-Lourie &



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Shohamy, 2009)—conform to the curricular goals exemplified in the scope and sequence of the *Family and Friends* Oxford FLES series that we use here as an example of performative curricular goals. Pellegrino (2014) strongly supports curricular alignment and maintains that even large-scale external assessments can benefit learners—if well designed. In sum, the existence of performative assessments of the language proficiency of young second language learners at the remote level does not mean that those assessments will be used in programs where a second language, especially ESL, has become a regular part of the school curriculum (Rixon, 2016), nor will they shape the assessments developed at the school or ministry (district/country) level.

Teachers and teacher trainers experience non-alignment of external assessments with the curriculum as a disservice to the learners and to themselves as educators (teaching practice seminars, 2009–2020). It is a short step from teacher loss of motivation to learner loss of motivation. Nikolov (2016) speaks of young learners' progressive loss of motivation as they advance in grade and age. This demotivational curve parallels the shift from internal to external, from performative to rote assessment, set out in Table 1 above. As Rixon (2016) makes clear, curricular reform must be supported by a parallel reform of assessment. "Conversely," she states, "the best way to thwart change is to take no accommodating action with regard to assessment" (p. 20).

## CONCLUSION, FUTURE TRENDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We find that the remote examinations reviewed (Cambridge, TOEFL and Pearson, ELLORA, etc.) are closer in concept and task to the enacted curriculum observed in our situated context (Bahrain and GCC) than the distal examinations produced locally for inter-school and national use. While the Cambridge Primary, TOEFL Primary, and Pearson Young Learners assessments all provide tasks and topics that motivate young learner responses, the local/national exams rely on uninspiring and demotivating tasks distant from the communicative experiences of the enacted curriculum.

As we reflect on the assessment cycles at the primary level, we see that the extremes, or immediate and close assessment and remote assessment, are more closely linked to each other than to the center. The center—which accounts for the proximal and distal assessments—is not just removed from the curriculum as enacted in the classroom, it appears to be equally removed from the influences of positive pedagogical change driven by research. We recommend that professional development be expanded to include administrative/ministerial staff from assessment centers, and propose that they not just follow research in pedagogy, but also become active participants in the research process.

Returning to our opening premise, so well stated by Nikolov (2016), we confirm that innovation in one aspect of the teaching–learning–assessment triad requires corresponding adjustments in the other two. This premise can be extended to the three locations of assessments we have examined: intra-school, inter-school (national) and international. No one of these can be omitted from the cycle of revision and improvement in assessment driven by research in pedagogy without deleterious effects on the whole.

When we analyzed assessment distance from curriculum enactment, we noted that the internal/external description conflated two locations of assessment production—the local/national and the international. Research on washback has used a binary description of assessment as internal and external, which does not adequately account for the different origins and qualities of external examinations (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng, Watanabe, & Curtis, 2004). Perhaps if washback studies were to use the triad model of this



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chapter, and to study the effects of national/external assessments and international/external assessments separately, their results might be more useful for constructive alignment purposes.

The equity concerns expressed in this chapter link equality of opportunity to equality of achievement (Ferreira & Gignoux, 2013). Digital devices and connectivity have become not just markers of wealth, but arbiters of access to achievement. The COVID-19 crisis of 2020 has universalized the trend to blended and online education seen in tertiary education, but has not universalized access to the digital environments needed for distance education (Mundy & Hares, 2020). Those students, communities and nations already limited in opportunity by wealth and limited parental education have seen their past achievements and future progress endangered by the digital divide (Iqbal et al., 2020). This "COVID-slide" effect, we are warned, may well be the strongest in the primary years (Policy Brief, 2020), especially as extant forms of distance learning were not developed for primary learners and have not yet been adequately revised to meet their needs (Mundy & Hares, 2020).

Development of a digitally delivered primary curriculum and a corresponding assessment program for young learners are among the current and immediate goals of primary educators, administrators and researchers worldwide. The future assessment of YLLs will be shaped by the digitalization of education, which may, unfortunately, exacerbate existing inequalities.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Curricular Alignment:** The assessment tasks are matched in type to the language learning activities experienced in the classroom.

**Distance or Digital Learning:** Learning that does not take place in a classroom environment but that is mediated over distance by electronic means, usually the Internet and learning platforms (digital). Non-digital forms of distance learning are radio broadcasts and televised educational programs.

**Enacted Curriculum:** The student experience of teacher-provided learning activities in the classroom.

**Equity:** The extent to which equal access to achievement is available to learners.

**Language Assessment Literacy:** The knowledge and skills needed to provide useful assessments in language-learning contexts.

**Opportunity for Achievement:** Access to opportunities for achieving learning goals is a key term in educational/assessment equity. If any factor limits or prevents a learner's access to learning, that learner is disadvantaged.

**Primary Language Pedagogy:** The pedagogical developments specifically created or adapted to enable primary-level students to learn languages.

**Teacher Training:** The combination of course work and practical training provided to future educators.

**Washback Theory:** The effect of an examination on teaching and learning practices.

**YLLA:** Assessments specifically designed to measure the language learning or the language proficiency of children ages 6–11 who study a second language.

## ENDNOTES

1. These statistics were compiled in 2019, before the 2020 Indian decision to require pre-primary education. Removing the children of India from the world-wide count of children without pre-primary education will affect these statistics.
2. One author has supervised practicums in grades K–4 and grades K–12 in Oman and Bahrain for a total of 13 years and has witnessed the small daily, weekly and monthly miracles wrought by dedicated teachers who use all instructional strategies at their disposal to support and develop English language learning in those who begin with a linguistic disadvantage. The converse is also true: unskilled teachers who rely on the English-proficient students from exceptional backgrounds to successfully complete the lesson or unit activities have demoralized and demotivated a considerable portion of their assigned students.
3. One author headed the Foundation Year Program at BTC for 4 years, and prepared all statistics, including failure rates by gender.
4. Both authors have taught the general assessment course in the Bahrain Ministry of Education certification program for K–12 private school teachers and the ELE year three course, Language Testing and Evaluation.



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# Chapter 6
# Breaking the Stereotypes: Promoting Thinking Skills in Chinese EFL Classrooms

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## ABSTRACT

*Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration are 21st-century skills that prepare individuals to succeed in the changing world. Therefore, there is a strong pedagogical need to promote these skills in EFL classrooms, given that meaningful language learning enables learners to use English as a tool for effective communication. However, the Chinese learning culture has long been criticised for being reluctant to develop thinking skills. Hence, this study aims to break the stereotypes and to find out how teachers promote thinking skills in Chinese primary EFL classrooms. The key finding reveals the use of silence as an opportunity to promote thinking, whereas challenges, such as insufficient pedagogical knowledge, are also identified from classroom interaction. Pedagogical suggestions are put forward for teacher educators and teachers in the field of language education.*

## INTRODUCTION

In response to economic globalization, many governments and education institutions have made efforts to introduce English language education in schools, given that English is used as a lingua franca. Particularly, Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) has grown dramatically in the last two decades (Rich, 2014). Many non-native English-speaking countries, including China, have introduced English as a compulsory subject at the primary stage of learning. It is believed that this is a way to maximise exposure to English and allow EFL learners to use the target language as much as possible. Therefore, a significant number of studies have looked into the effectiveness of different approaches to TEYL,

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such as the quality of effective teaching (Copland & Garton, 2014), age-appropriate teaching methods (Gregson, 2017), and challenges in TEYL (Copland, Garton & Burns, 2014). Others have examined the contextual factors that influence TEYL; for example, global policies and local cultural factors (Enever, 2018), young learners' language awareness (Muñoz, 2014), and beliefs of learning English (Tragant & Vallbona, 2018).

Additionally, encouraging good thinking at a young age has become a major teaching objective in different subjects worldwide. This move requires individuals to develop 21st-century skills for future challenges, emphasizing communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. Particularly, in Asian countries, such as China, where learning English is mainstream and has a large number of EFL learners, perceive that the variety of these thinking skills are vital to promoting citizens' global competence (MOE, 2020). However, the definition of thinking skills has not been agreed on, and a "multilayered concept" (Li, 2016, p.285) of thinking skills requires teachers to have sufficient pedagogical knowledge to support their teaching practices. Several studies have investigated promoting young learners' thinking skills (Moedt & Holmes, 2020) and teaching thinking skills in the EFL context (Chason et al., 2017; Wilson, 2016). Compared to other research in TEYL, promoting young learners' thinking skills in EFL contexts is still under-researched.

A few studies have examined adopting intervention programs to promote thinking skills in TEYL. For example, Hui et al. (2020) used a quasi-experimental design and revealed that reading picture books enhanced young children's English language learning and creativity. However, in most of the research, both the TEYL pedagogies and thinking skills programs are considered in western contexts (Yang, 2016). They have often been adapted and adopted by countries where English is not taught as the first language, thus, the cultural background has often been neglected (Gunawardena et al., 2017). Alongside this, the successful implementation of these programs and teaching methods indicates they are effective, yet it is difficult to see whether teachers developed knowledge that could improve their teaching practice and how learners participated in the learning process. Moreover, cultivating good thinking processes among young learners in EFL classrooms requires an open learning space for them to think interactively, learn together, and talk meaningfully and critically (Mercer, 2004). Yet, the Chinese learning style has been criticised as rote-learning; therefore, it is not supportive of cultivating young learners' thinking. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to closely examine a more naturalistic approach to reveal the opportunities and obstacles of promoting thinking skills in primary EFL classrooms as a way to break the stereotypes of Chinese learners.

## BACKGROUND

### Chinese Learning Culture

It is widely believed that Chinese Learning Culture (CLC) is rooted in Confucianism that collectivism, ethics, and hierarchical relationships are strongly advocated (Kennedy, 2002; Starr, 2012). In that tradition, one should maintain harmony by establishing a good relationship with others; thus, extreme emotions and social conflicts are discouraged (Bond, 2010). Therefore, CLC has been criticised as lacking teaching thinking in education since individuals would make compromises in order to enrich humanity (Starr, 2012). As a result, Chinese learners have been stereotyped as being reluctant to employ criticality and creativity, and obedient learners because in a Chinese classroom, students should never doubt



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or challenge teachers to cause them to lose face in public (Bond, 2010), but listen quietly as a way of showing respect within the hierarchical relationship.

However, this might not be a true reflection of Chinese learners or Confucianism. In a Chinese classroom, even when Chinese learners seem to be passively receiving others' opinions, this does not mean they are not engaged in in-depth learning and thinking because Confucianism advocates for reflective thinking that one needs to engage in relation to their own progress, the relationship with the environment, and people they interact and so on (Li & Wegerif, 2014). The reflective thinking requires learners to engage in a highly collective culture that values group effort, harmony, affection, and compassion (Hofested, 2001), and more importantly, such a view put learners in a position to feel they are obligated to perform well and be responsible for the community (e.g., not wasting others' time by asking questions in class). That value, perhaps, by and large, makes Chinese learners less outspoken and involved in the exploratory talk that is common in a Western classroom. Thinking, like any other mental entity, is developed, shaped, and situated in a particular social, cultural context. Culture is not a single, homogeneous, and static concept. Therefore, thinking cannot be viewed from a single perspective. In this chapter, explore how thinking is promoted and enabled in Chinese social, cultural, and educational contexts is explored.

## An Overview of Chinese Education

The Chinese government greatly values education, developing global citizens, and increasing its competence in the world. Hence, the Basic Education Curriculum Reform Outlines transforms passive and rote learning to an active and problem-solving learning approach to improve students' overall abilities, including thinking skills and collaborative learning (MOE, 2001). Furthermore, in response to national needs to develop international status and individual pursuit, the 2001 English Curriculum Standards (ECS) were introduced, and English courses became compulsory in the national curriculum starting from year three (ages 8–9; MOE, 2001). Some areas in China (e.g., Guangdong province where this study takes place) have introduced English as a subject for learning from year one (ages 6–7) or even in pre-school (Cheng, 2011). Since then, learning English has gradually shifted from focusing on skills and linguistic knowledge to other aspects of learning, including cultural awareness, learning strategies, and thinking skills. Although new curriculum reforms have led to great change in terms of effective learning (MOE, 2011), it is suggested that the exam-oriented educational system places pressure on teaching time and it makes impossible to introduce changes in real teaching (Sargent, 2015), especially with regard to promoting learners' in-depth thinking, which requires sufficient time and space.

The Chinese education system and pedagogy are exam-centric (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011). At the end of each stage of learning, students need to pass exams to progress to the next level of education. In order to improve students' results, there are various types of assessments and tests, such as preparing and practicing for national exams, mock exams held by the city or provincial government, mid-term or end-of-term exams, and tests after each unit of learning. The most important exam is the College Entrance Exam (CEE), which can be dated back to the Sui Dynasty as the Imperial Civil Exam (Niu, 2007). With a long history of this learning culture, the examination has "profoundly shaped Chinese education with respect to its content, function, mission, and value of education. It also has a marked effect on all participants within the system: teachers, administrators, parents, and students" (Zhao & Qiu, 2012, p. 314). The results of the CEE influences students' futures, and it affects whether they get into prestigious universities and their future careers. This leads to a washback effect on the teaching and learning process in language education.



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## The EFL Learning Environment

Class sizes in China are large. For example, in East China, the average size of a class is 42 students, which is significantly higher than other OECD countries (26 students; OECD, 2020). It is stipulated that EFL classes should take place weekly, about three to four times per week, and for no less than 80–90 minutes per week (MOE, 2011). The learning environment is teacher-centred; the classrooms are usually set up in rows, and teachers stand at the front of the class (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006). Along with the education reforms, the Chinese government has simplified the curriculum and lessened homework loads (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002). Nevertheless, due to the exam-oriented system, Chinese primary school students are increasingly sent to paid tuition schools after regular school hours to boost their exam results.

Regarding EFL teaching, traditional teaching methods are still dominant in the EFL class in order to help students to pass exams (Wang & Gao, 2008). This is also attributed to the large class size and limited teaching hours. Moreover, time and space are insufficient for promoting students' communicative competencies and other skills, and traditional teaching methods save time and are more efficient at developing subject knowledge. In practice, whole-class instruction, discipline, sentence manipulation, fill-in-the-blank practices, cloze passages, and translation exercises characterise the Chinese EFL class (Hu, 2003). Sargent (2015) confirms that the traditional practices of lecturing and memorizing are frequently used by EFL teachers. Yang (2015) points out that knowledge-level thinking is the focal point. However, there are still other pedagogical practices that teachers would like to use in EFL classrooms—for instance, using open-ended questions, encouraging class interaction including group work and pair work, playing games, singing songs, and giving opportunities for students to express their opinions (Sargent, 2015). In EFL classrooms, students are expected to remain silent when the teacher is delivering knowledge, both to show respect and as a matter of discipline. They will be taken through a text or a dialogue word by word, sentence by sentence, several times to memorise the sentence patterns and practice their pronunciation. Therefore, the current teaching and learning environment is not supportive of the development of students' communicative competence, learner autonomy, or thinking skills, which are prescribed as part of the goal in the educational reforms.

Higher-order thinking, such as creativity and critical thinking, has been characterised as undesirable in countries with a Confucian heritage of learning. However, an alternative argument is that the highly selective exam system in China is responsible for the stereotyped CLC and the lack of creative and critical thinking among Chinese learners. The above discussion sheds light on the significance of cultural, social, and political factors in the local Chinese context as well as the emergent situation that would have an immediate impact on young children's learning. Under China's top-down approach to policymaking, national strategies can dramatically affect national and local educational policies, which determine the practices of teaching creativity. As a result, students' thinking skills development is influenced by teachers' teaching practices. Hence, this study aims to break the stereotypes of Chinese learners by looking at classroom interaction, which is one of the areas evidenced to be useful and influential in developing students' thinking skills (Fan & Li, 2019), to find the challenges in promoting thinking skills in EFL classrooms under the exam-oriented system.



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## DEFINING THINKING SKILLS

This chapter uses a general approach that includes all the productive thinking processes that are effective for children's language learning. First, it is unlikely that a single framework will fit all contexts in terms of understanding thinking skills and how they are taught. The definition behind each framework is based on a particular value judgment, contextual situation, and component that policymakers consider significant for lifelong learning. For example, Moseley et al.'s (2005) framework is compatible with British National Curriculum categories. Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, which is one of the popular frameworks, provides useful insights into distinguishing thinking skills and cognitive domains, which have been widely applied in teaching. However, it has raised a concern that thinking is developed hierarchically and that one needs to acquire the lower-order thinking (LOT) skills before the higher-order thinking (HOT) can be developed. Yet, these HOT and LOT skills can be developed in an integrated way and can be interwoven in the teaching and learning process (Moseley et al., 2005). Further, there are overlapping features of different types of thinking, such as creativity and critical thinking (Fan & Li, 2019).

Second, to cultivate good thinking, one needs to learn skilful strategies (e.g., analysis, evaluation, comparison) and have a disposition for positive thinking (Wegerif et al., 2015). Therefore, to promote good thinking, one needs to focus on the development of a set of complex skills. Hence, by identifying a learner's use of complex thinking skills, there is a potential opportunity for them to engage in the HOT process. These thinking skills often refer to an active, creative, and productive cognitive process that challenges individuals' current knowledge and demands reasoning, critical analysis, decision-making, and problem-solving. These are not routine; they tend to be complex, yield multiple solutions and involves interpretation, judgments, uncertainty, and the imposition of meaning and criticality. "It is said to be complex thinking that requires effort and produces values outcomes" (Wegerif, 2002, p. 2).

Additionally, thinking is shaped by the situated sociocultural context, and the understanding of thinking skills in the CLC would be different from western literature. Chinese reflective thinking emphasises thinking in relation to contextual factors. It means being responsible to the other members of the community (e.g., seeking agreement), being independent, and active in learning (Li, 2015). Such thinking is deeply embedded in Confucian values. This means that Confucian-heritage children are educated to provide thoughtful responses and raise questions by engaging in analytical and reflective thinking before speaking out. As Li and Wegerif (2014) pointed out, silent engagement and inner reflection are encouraged in Confucian learning. Therefore, it is easy to observe that students are not asking questions and remain silent in class. This may be because they are considering multiple perspectives, solutions, or agreements based on what they learned. Learners are allowed to challenge others in a responsible manner after reflecting on the collective interests of unity and harmony. Thus, learners might give up their ideas to reach unity in the group since Chinese reflective thinking is situational and correlational. Therefore, silent engagement could indicate that students are involved in deep thinking, that they are looking at a question from a holistic point of view and balancing themselves with others. This process requires time.

## THE SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH TO THINKING AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

This study argues that embedding thinking skills in language classrooms is important for young learners' cognitive and language development from a sociocultural perspective. Language is the psychological tool of thoughts (Vygotsky, 1978); learners use language to convey meaning, negotiate concepts, and



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exchange ideas (Li, 2012). In EFL classrooms, however, young learners' possibly come across challenges in expressing their thoughts due to their limited linguistic resources, which further hinder their interaction with others. Therefore, the ability to use different thinking skills helps learners organise their existing linguistic recourses and generate alternative expressions for successfully engaging in conversation. The language they produce during interaction demonstrates their linguistic knowledge and indicates their interactive thinking and learning to "collectively make sense of experience and solving problems" (Mercer, 2000, p. 1). For example, due to the limited linguistic resources, EFL children need to play around with the forms and functions of language to express their thoughts. In Burrell and Beard's (2018) study, children used language play for the writing task, which indicated that they have engaged in creativity and used playfulness to explore and manipulate the forms and meaning of language.

Additionally, the sociocultural perspective perceives learning as a social process and recognises the significance of social interaction as a way to improve thinking and learning. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that cognitive development results from conversation and interaction between children and the more advanced individuals of their society. Children's minds, therefore, are culturally and socially shaped and developed through conversation, and the language they use is perceived as a mediational tool for higher-order mental processes (Turuk, 2008). As most communication is through the use of language, children are encouraged to use language to organise their thinking, dialogue, and discussions because they are believed to be important avenues for learning. Therefore, learning a language means learning a social mode of thinking (Mercer, 1995). It is organised through culturally constructed languages, and language itself plays a central role in organizing uniquely human ways of thinking (Jackson, 2008).

## Classroom Interaction and Thinking

Learning a second language can lead to the reformation of an individual's mental system (Lantolf, 2000). Children's early language learning derives from the processes of meaning-making and collaborative activities with other members of their society. The process of teaching and learning English can be viewed in social terms (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Thus, thinking can be activated through classroom talk as it creates a space for meaning construction among learners and teachers (Gillies, 2016), with the language being a social tool for thinking (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). Further, language allows every member of the class to think together, and it can be used to co-construct knowledge or trigger socio-cognitive conflicts (Mugny & Doise, 1987). In this way, learners' higher mental capacities start functioning, and different thinking skills are stimulated while interacting with others. Through the effective use of language, students can positively develop individual thinking skills such as reasoning, creative thinking skills, and learning (Gillies, 2016). Also, within a conversation, children's imagination will be inspired, and the ongoing conversation will get them to think effectively and practice using the target language. Therefore, language is a tool for communication, creativity, and thinking effectively; it is a means by which new ideas emerge, and existing knowledge is transformed (Tin, 2016).

Empirical research suggests that studies that teacher questioning is one of the most common techniques for promoting thinking and learning. Mok (2009) found that open questions are more effective for developing learners' critical thinking because they give more time and space for them to think and speak compared to closed questions. Boyd (2015) examined the relationship between teacher questioning patterns and learners' responses and revealed that using open-ended questions is helpful to guide learners to higher levels of thinking, as this type of question facilitates learners to open up their thinking and talk.



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Additionally, extended wait time also contributes to learning opportunities and learner involvement. Yataganbaba and Yildirim's (2016) study identified teachers' limited wait time obstructed learners' participation in both form-and-accuracy and meaning-and-fluency contexts. Insufficient time hindered the young EFL learners' language development. Increased wait time gives students more time to think and reflect on their learning, which leads to greater learning outcomes (Mercer & Dawes, 2008). The awareness of the role of wait time and the nuanced understanding of it is an essential element of interaction and is the key to establishing a good dialogue in the classroom (Ingram & Elliott, 2016). Regarding CLC, utilising the increase of wait time is particularly useful for language learning, and this will be further discussed with the finding in this chapter. Other features, such as giving effective feedback, also affect learners' thinking and learning development. These research studies indicate the need to raise teachers' awareness of the effectiveness and pitfalls of their teaching strategies (Gharbavi & Iravani, 2014) to help develop their pedagogical knowledge.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This exploratory case study investigated primary school teachers cognition about teaching thinking skills in English language classrooms. This chapter reports part of the findings from the larger research project and mainly discusses teaching practices for promoting thinking skills. Segments of interview data are used to support the analysis.

This study was conducted in one state primary school in Guangdong Province, China. Four EFL teachers volunteered for 60-70-minute interviews. They were interviewed individually about their knowledge regarding the conception of thinking skills, their beliefs about teaching thinking, and their strategies for promoting thinking skills since their beliefs likely impact their teaching practices (Borg, 2006). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data.

Additionally, the participants' teaching practices were video recorded, resulting in approximately 1,120 minutes, which provides a clear picture of how teachers promote thinking skills during classroom interaction. The analysis draws on the initial findings from teachers' interviews, Alexander's (2017) principles of dialogic teaching and the features of exploratory talk (Mercer, 2004), to identify the thinking moments in which teachers harness the power of talk to support children's meaning making and independent thinking (see Appendix 1). Their teaching practices were transcribed, and Jefferson's (2004) system of transcription was used to capture and illuminate the details of classroom interaction (see Appendix 2).

## FINDINGS

The opportunities and obstacles of promoting thinking skills are illustrated by the following extracts. The interviews revealed that participants acknowledged the significance of developing children's thinking skills in the language classroom. Contextual factors, such as the exam-oriented system and fragmented pedagogical knowledge, affect their beliefs about the implementation of thinking skills in class, rather than the stereotype of the Chinese learning culture.



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## Opportunities to Promote Thinking Skills

Below is a thinking moment in which children were actively engaged in classroom dialogue and articulated their ideas freely without the fear of embarrassment over wrong answer (Alexander, 2017; Mercer, 2004). Teacher and children co-constructed the linguistic knowledge (line 9-15) and built on their ideas and "chain them into coherent lines of thinking" (Alexander, 2017, p.38). The teacher, Wei, asked the students to discuss the importance of planting trees and typed students' ideas on the screen after discussion. This extract includes moments of promoting children's creative thinking and critical thinking, which also could have fostered reflective thinking through various teaching techniques.

Extract 1 (Wei, year 6)

1. T: So, do you think it is important to plant trees?
2. Ss: Yes
3. T: Why (1.2), why, why it is important to plant trees (1.5) I'll let you to think
4. about this(2.4)((preparing to type on the screen)), why(9.4)Why(3.6)it is important
5. (4.1)to plant trees ((typing the question))(2.1)Why(2.1)any ideas
6. (2.4)Maybe first you talk about it with your partners.
7. Ss: ((Student discussion))(48.3)
8. T: How about NAME
9. S5: Trees can be became a good habitat for animal
10. T: Trees can↑((typing))
11. S5: Become a good habitat for animal
12. T: For animals, right? ((typing))
13. S5: Yes.
14. T: Trees can be the home for some animals. For example, what animals.
15. Ss: Giraffe/ birds/蚂蚁 ((ants))
16. T: [birds live in the trees
17. Ss: [Giraffe/Giraffe/Monkeys
18. T: Monkeys?
19. Ss: Giraffe/giraffe/giraffe/giraffe
20. T: Giraffe don't live in the trees, but they eat the [leaves] from the::[trees]
21. Ss: [leaves] [trees]
22. T: Good idea. Anymore, anymore
23. Ss: Panda/Squirrels/Lions/cats/snakes
24. T: So very good ideas. Anymore? NAME
25. S6: The::tree can meet the::sky clare
26. T: Clear
27. S: Clear

First, current empirical studies find that open questions are useful to support young learners as they encourage them to practice language use and thinking skills (Slavit & Pratt, 2017). Wei asked the same open question, "why" six times in lines 3–5. This repetition suggests that she expected reasonable ideas about planting trees from the children, rather than being the authority that restricts individual's thoughts, as described in the literature (Thøgersen, 2015). This is also confirmed by her positive feedback in



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line 24, where she encouraged and appreciated children's ideas. Using open questions also promotes creative thinking. Children involved in a generative process need to make connections with their existing knowledge (e.g., linguistics knowledge, knowledge about protecting the environment) to generate original ideas (McGregor, 2007).

Second, Wei used sufficient wait-time for learners to proceed silent engagement (lines 3–6). This process allowed children to think individually and actively engage in an inner dialogue (Li, 2015). It is linked to the Confucian tradition that one must engage in deep thinking before speaking, which could be interpreted as an indicator of developing Chinese reflective thinking. In this extract, Wei asked learners to engage in group work after the period of silent engagement (lines 3–6), and this collaborative group work (line 7) further encouraged the development of critical thinking as they might have needed to evaluate each other's responses and justify their answers. Chinese reflective thinking might also be promoted when children learn from other group members by examining their ideas and even scarifying their opinion to reach unity (agreed answers from the group) since Chinese reflective thinking is about situating one's ideas in the group thinking (Li & Weigreif, 2014). This could be perceived as students constructing knowledge together. In this case, students' thinking can be improved as they produce new meanings and original ideas from the discussion. This is shown by the learner's responses (lines 9, 15, 17, 23, and 25).

Third, there are some opportunities where the teacher could have further promoted thinking and language learning. The response provided by S5 included a new vocabulary item – "habitat". The teacher typed this response and explained this word (line 12) to the rest of the class. Wei could have allowed S5 to explain what habitat meant or sought other possible interpretations from other students. This could have been a chance for students to further develop their language learning and thinking skills. For one thing, they would have had to relate to the knowledge they had that was relevant to the word habitat and have expressed this in English. For another, it would have required students to draw inferences about the meaning of the sentence to present their understanding of the new vocabulary item. Further, allowing students to explain the new word would suggest that the students were just as responsible as the teacher during the interaction, which generally creates a better, more interactive learning environment (Smith & Higgins, 2006). This leads to more effective ethos with regard to the development of students' language learning and the development of their thinking skills. Furthermore, the teacher expanded on S5's response by asking, "what animals?" (line 14), and other students actively engaged by providing various answers. The teacher could have used this opportunity to further develop students' reasoning skills by asking them why it was a good habitat for birds or giraffes, rather than interpreting it herself (lines 16 and 20). Children could have further elaborated their thoughts to develop their language.

Below is an extract from an EFL reading session that demonstrates critical thinking. The children watched a video titled "In the Park". This is also a reading passage in the textbook. Tony and Gogo went to a dirty park and picked up the rubbish, but Gogo accidentally pushed the bin, and the rubbish went everywhere again. The task aimed to check students' understanding of the reading.

Extract 2 (Wei, year 6)

1. T: Now tell me some true or false. True or false. Number one, Tony cleaned the park but Gogo
2. didn't.
3. Ss: True/false/false/false/true
4. T: True? NAME thinks that is true, why
5. S1: 因为他后来 [那个垃圾那个垃圾全都倒出来了 ((the rubbish fell out at last))



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6. Ss: [后来啊/后来啊 ((it was at last))
7. T: Please try to say in English OK. Try to... But he did clean the park, he did clean the park, so
8. we can see. Tony and Gogo cleaned the park together, right?
9. Ss: Yes.

This extract addresses the development of students' reasoning skills and their disposition to think critically, which evidences that Chinese learners are not reluctant to think critically. In line 3, students present two contrasting views to Wei's statement on lines 1–2, and the teacher invited one student to explain why it was true (line 4). Being asked to validate their responses helped students develop their reasoning skill that has the potential to develop their critical thinking. This was a dialogic moment that both Wei and the children addressed this learning task collectively, and the teacher listened to S1 to consider an alternative viewpoint (Alexander, 2017).

In addition, by enthusiastically arguing their opinions, students showed their disposition to seek the truth. For example, S1 expressed his view in Chinese (line 5), and other students who held an opposing view interrupted his turn and presented the reasons behind their views (line 6). These two lines show children's active and critical engagement with each other's ideas in a whole class discussion. This is also a space where learners have made their reasons visible and public. It could potentially be an exploratory talk that allows children to reach a joint decision-making and a statement (Mercer, 2004).

However, regardless the children's contribution, the teacher pointed out that all learners need to respond in English (line 7). Rather than expanding learner's turn, Wei chose to explain the reason why the statement was false (line 7-8) . It is suggested here that this feedback was ineffective for promoting critical thinking. On one hand, requiring learners to speak English indicates Wei perceives linguistic knowledge was the focal point that would be tested in exams, rather than critical thinking. This teaching practice is consistent with her view presented in interview that exam-oriented education as an obstacle for cultivating children's thinking skills since it is not obviously examined in the tests. On the other hand, Wei suggested her concern on the children's limited linguistic knowledge might be a challenge for learner's to present critical thoughts in class. Similar situation can be found in the teaching practice that learners might find difficult to present their views in English in such a short time, however, this did not prevent children expressing their different standpoints (line 5-6). L1 to present their different standpoints (line 5-6). From these extracts, Chinese children are not passive learners; instead, they actively engaged in thinking, discussing, and participating in class.

## Obstacles in Promoting Thinking Skills

In the following extract, Wei used two famous athletes to elicit the topic of health and invited students to recall the information about the athletes and present it in English (lines 1–12). Surprisingly, children demonstrated creative language use in this activity; however, their playfulness- one of the key features of creativity, was regarded as a distraction by the teachers.

Extract 3 (Wei, year 6)

1. T: Do you know this man?
2. Ss: Yao Ming
3. T: What do you know about him ((raise her hand)) What do you know about
4. him, NAME



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5. S1: He's very tall
6. T: I think so, anymore, he's very very tall, what else. What else, what can he
7. do ((invite S2)) you try=
8. S2:=He can play... the basketball
9. T: Yes, he can play basketball:: very [well
10. Ss: [Well
11. T: He's good at playing [basketball
12. Ss: [basketball
13. T: Very good, what else do you know (2) NAME, what do you know about Yao
14. Ming
15. S3:(6.3)
16. T: You try ((Invite S4))
17. S4: He is a man
18. Ss: ((Laughing))
19. T: Say something meaningful OK, 讲一些有意义的东西 ((Chinese translation)),
20. NAME, do you know.
21. S5: He play the basketball
22. T: Yes, he can play basketball very:: [well] and what else do you know about
23. him.
24. Ss: [Well]
25. Ss: ((Noise)) He is a Chinese
26. T: He is a Chinese man, and he is a good man, he's very kind and friendly. OK.
27. He is very kind ((write on the board)) and friendly, 非常的什么呀,友善
28. ((very friendly)) OK. Very kind and friendly, thank you. So this is Yao Ming,
29. and how about this?
30. Ss: Deng Yaping /Deng Yaping /Deng Xiaoping
31. T: What do you know about her ((raise her hand))
32. Ss:((Loud noise)) (2.3)
33. T: Her name is↑
34. Ss: Deng Yaping
35. T: Yes, what else? (1.9) what else (1.4) you try ((invite S5))
36. S5: Her name is Deng Yaping
37. T: Her name is Deng Yaping, yes. ((Raise hand))What else (1.4) What else,
38. NAME, what do you know (4.7)
39. S6: She can play ping pong
40. T: Yes, she can ping pong... [very well]
41. Ss: [Very well]
42. T: She's good at playing ping pong, and what else, what else (4.3) I know she is
43. very, she is hard working, and her English is very very good. OK. Yes. Deng
44. Yaping退役之后进入大学学习英语非常好...So Yaoming and
45. Deng Yaping =
46. S: =China
47. T: They are
48. Ss: Chinese



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In terms of providing information about the athletes, S4 proposed, "He is a man" (line 17), which was something that everyone knew and was an on-task response. Thus, this student was practicing and playing English to present what he knew. The playfulness of this answer is confirmed and shared by other learners with a moment of laughter (line 18). This moment could be used to foster creativity since playfulness is an essential part of promoting children's creative thinking (Carter, 2005; Maley, 2015). However, the teacher dismissed the student's idea and criticised the student by asking them to say something meaningful (line 19). This feedback might discourage students' willingness to play with language and hinder their thinking and language development. Exploiting what the teacher had concluded about Yao Ming as a friendly and kind person (line 26–28), she could have extended S4's response (line 17) and asked the student what kind of man Yao Ming is or what they think of Yao Ming. It seems that the teacher did not perceive playfulness as meaningful and treated it as irrelevant or was perhaps irritated by the student's response.

Similarly, playfulness is evident in sound play (line 30). In Chinese Mandarin, the pronunciation of Deng Yaping and Deng Xiaoping is very similar. Deng Yaping is the female athlete that is the focus of this lesson, whereas Deng Xiaoping was a Chinese politician and the leader of the Communist Party in the 80s. The teacher might have heard these names (lines 33–34) as she tried to confirm who that was. The student had fun by connecting similar sounds and stated Deng Xiaoping in class. Yet, this was not encouraged by the teacher as she ignored Deng Xiaoping and continued her teaching.

Additionally, children's knowledge about these athletes might be limited since they could only provide their names and the sport they played in several turns. For example, it is clear from the extract that the learners repeated her name three times as information they knew about the athlete (lines 30, 34, and 36), and the only other information they could provide was her profession "Ping-Pong" (line 39). In the end, Wei completed the question by giving further information about Deng Yaping (lines 42–44). Therefore, it is suggested that when teachers design thinking tasks, learners' performance and knowledge need to be considered since children need this information to make connections to engage in good thinking for better language proficiency.

Extract 4 (Mei, year 2)

1. T: OK children, I have some new friends for you. Who's this= ((raise her hand))
2. S: =This is
3. T: This is...
4. Ss: 超人 ((Superman))
5. T: Superman
6. Ss: Superman/超人
7. T: ((Point to the next sentence and raise her hand as an indicator for children to say the next
8. sentence)) (16.8) ((discipline children for being too noisy)) This is Superman ((point to second
9. sentence again then raise her hand)) (5.5)NAME
10. S3: He's from the U.S.A
11. T: Thank you, I have another friend. ((Show another picture))
12. Ss: 哈? ((What?))
13. T:((Raise her hand and discipline the children for being too noisy)) (12.1) NAME. One 第一个
14. 句子你来 ((you say the first sentence))
15. S4:(7.8)
16. T: Sit down ((raise her hand)) (3) 你来((your turn))



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17. S5: This is 孙中山 ((Sun Yat-sen))
18. T: Right. 我们的城市就是以他的名字来命名 ((Our city is named after him)). This is 孙中
19. 山 ((Sun Yat-sen)). Sit down. Number two ((raise her hand)) 第二句话 ((the second sentence))
20. (6.5)
21. Ss: China
22. T: NAME 后面 ((at the back)), the girl
23. S5: He's from China
24. T: He's from China. Right?
25. Ss: Yes
26. T: Thank you, last one. ((Show the last picture)). Wow
27. Ss: ((loud noise))
28. T: [This is
29. Ss: [((loud noise))
30. T: 天线宝宝 ((Teletubby)) we say Teletubby
31. Ss: Teletubby

This was a typical lesson for Mei. Children could easily get excited, especially when they saw the cartoon characters in class. Therefore, Mei had to stop from time to time to manage the class, which was time-consuming. In contrast to Mei's interview, where she proposed that interesting topics increased students' motivation to learn and helped develop their thinking, she spent a large amount of time managing the classroom, which did not promote thinking. For example, in lines 7–8, she had to stop for 16.8 seconds to quiet down the class and for another 5.5 seconds (line 9) to wait for the students to raise their hands to answer the questions. In line 13, she stopped for 12.1 seconds, again to manage the class. In line 15, she waited for 7.4 seconds for answers, and in line 20, she waited another 6.5 seconds for answers. It is obvious that this activity was disruptive and required more time compared to other teachers' classroom interactions.

This extract illustrates the time constraints that teachers' expressed in the interviews. For Mei, completing tasks was one way of demonstrating effective teaching. Therefore, Mei ignored students' excitement and did not exploit opportunities for students to develop their thinking and language skills by expressing their feelings and thoughts. She tried to direct students back to the structured way of learning by repeating—and memorising—the sentence structure (lines 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 23, 30, and 31), as an effective way for learning linguistics. In line 15, S4 was silent for 7.8 seconds; however, the teacher did not assist the student but instead invited another child to complete the task. Perhaps it was because Mei needed to stop and spend time on discipline that she rushed to finish the tasks. This could be the reason why the teacher did not open up a dialogue for the children but chose to focus on the structured way of teaching. It was easier for her to deliver knowledge due to the time constraints, and therefore, it was difficult to develop thinking skills.

In the interview, teachers perceived that younger learners could easily get excited, leading to the potential for chaos when they were teaching thinking skills. This was evident in their ignorance of the benefits of playfulness; the teachers also perceived excitement as a distraction from learning. Given that teachers reported limited teaching time as another tension for them, they would be left with little choice but to abandon teaching thinking skills in class since this seems less relevant for passing exams. It would also require teachers to have sufficient pedagogical knowledge to balance playful interaction and disciplined learning environment.



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## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The opportunities for promoting thinking skills from the extracts show that Chinese EFL learners are active thinkers and would engage in interaction. These moments contradict the stereotypes of Chinese learners who just listen passively, seldom challenge others, and lack in-depth thinking and learning. Yet, due to the exam-oriented system, teachers had to deliver knowledge in a traditional way within a limited timeframe. Nevertheless, asking open questions was identified as a key technique to stimulate children's thinking and form an interactive learning environment. It also suggests that teachers respect children's thinking and expect children to generate meaningful responses by asking open questions, rather than maintaining authority and a hierarchical relationship (Bond, 2010; Flowerdew, 1998). This result is similar to most of the findings from empirical research that higher-order thinking questions and open questions foster deeper conceptual thinking (e.g., Ong et al., 2016). Additionally, research studies undertaken in the Chinese context also indicate a strong, positive relationship between higher-order thinking and the length and syntactic complexity (e.g., Tuan & Nhu, 2010; Tsui, 1995). This indicates that the way teachers structure a question influences the nature of thinking required to form a response. However, it would be superficial to conclude that using open questions directly leads to the development of thinking. This study revealed that using open questions was not enough, as teachers should recognise that they need to provide effective feedback (Smith & Higgins, 2006), and sufficient waiting times for students to develop and elaborate their thoughts (Ingram & Elliott, 2016) (see extract 2).

Second, the use of wait-time indicates that silent engagement is one of the ways that could lead to Chinese reflective thinking and in-depth learning. Regarding the Confucian learning context, silence is a significant opportunity for individuals to reflect on previous knowledge, relate the contextual factors, and engage in deep thinking (Li & Wegerif, 2014). The deliberate use of silence creates a space for students to think individually and reflectively before participating in the group discussion (see extract 1). This thinking space allows children to "think twice before they speak" by reflecting on the linguistic information they have learned, making connections with what they knew about environmental issues, and using their HOT skills to generate reasons for planting trees in English. The use of wait time shows that teachers can influence the nature of a classroom discussion by manipulating silence (Elliott & Ingram, 2016). In other words, an increase in wait-time is similar to an increase in think time (Ingram & Elliott, 2016; Li, 2011). Learners used the pauses to restructure their sentences and successfully deliver their ideas. It is argued that being silent in class does not necessarily relate to passive learning; instead, it is a contextualised way of in-depth thinking for Chinese learners.

Third, there are several moments where children demonstrated their creativity and imagination through playful talk. These moments showed their willingness to take risks at playing and trying out the target language (extracts 2 and 3) rather than rote learning. Kangas (2010) found that a playful learning environment helps foster creativity and imagination in students, which also improves their academic achievements. However, in this study, the teacher restricted the playfulness in meaningful responses and phonetics, which might hinder children's foreign language use in the future since they were not allowed to take risks and try out the language on their own. Yet, in an EFL context, the English language input and output are limited, so the frequency and salience are crucial for children (Bland, 2015). Therefore, playfulness is essential for learning as children are required to use implicit mechanisms to learn English (Murphy, 2014) and support their discourse skills to make language learning pleasurable and salient (Cameron, 2003). However, it could be related to the exam-oriented system, where knowledge transmission is still an effective way to achieve satisfying results.



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Therefore, there is a misconception about Chinese learners as passive and reluctant to speak and think, rather, the exam-oriented system heavily impacts EFL teaching and learning. While it is challenging to make adjustments to the educational system, teacher education is paramount since teachers have a decisive role in class. Thus, pedagogical suggestions are put forward for policymakers, teacher educators, and teachers. Policymakers should consider a contextualised framework for developing thinking skills and articulate it in a way that is amenable to instruction (Swartz & McGuinness, 2014). Rather than implementing a thinking skills-related program in schools, a call for teacher professional development is needed to develop pre-service and in-service teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge regarding the teaching of thinking skills to young learners in EFL classrooms. Particularly, teacher education should provide more opportunities for teaching practitioners to reflect on their teaching and enable them to integrate the teaching of thinking with their pre-existing beliefs about language teaching. Furthermore, it is essential for teachers to understand learners' thinking behaviours and take actions to expand their language learning and cultivate productive thinking.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Implications for future research indicate a need to explore EFL teacher cognition about thinking skills since teachers hold a decisive role in the classroom. A framework is needed to develop thinking skills in foreign language curricula from a sociocultural perspective. Additionally, future research can focus on the children's perspective on learning thinking skills. Understanding children's perceptions of thinking skills could lead to new ways to teach thinking in classrooms. In addition, further investigation into collaborative group work is needed since the language used among children during interactions could be different from that used in teacher-students interactions. Such research could also generate useful information about how children's thinking skills develop through knowledge co-construction, discussion, and collaborative talk; particularly, how they creatively use their limited linguistic knowledge to express themselves (Fan & Li, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated the teaching of thinking skills in an EFL context from a naturalistic approach. It aimed to break the stereotypes of the Chinese learning culture, which could apply to similar contexts in the Confucian heritage of learning. Opportunities and obstacles were found for developing children's thinking skills. The findings were similar to the literature in that teacher questions, feedback, collaborative learning, an increase in wait time, the use of authentic topics, and creative teaching are techniques that helped develop students' thinking. On the other hand, teachers' fragmented pedagogical knowledge about thinking skills influenced their teaching practices; they were unaware of certain opportunities for promoting thinking skills and saw some creative behaviour, such as playfulness, as a distraction from learning.

Developing young learners' thinking skills are important for fostering 21st-century competencies, especially at the early stage of learning in EFL classrooms. Since most of the teaching-thinking framework has originated in the West, breaking the stereotypes of the learning culture facilitates teachers understand children's learning and thinking behaviours in East Asia. It increases the chances of successfully



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implementing thinking skills in class as a way to provide children with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life and work in the future.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Chinese Learning Culture:** A specific learning culture that is heavily influenced by Confucianism. It has been stereotyped as a negative learning style of Chinese students studying in the West based on their learning behaviours.

**Chinese Reflective Thinking:** A particular way of Chinese thinking that is constructed by Confucian values. It is conducted on two levels. The first is reflecting on knowledge from a holistic world view, and the second is an inward reflection on oneself, which considers other members of the community.

**Classroom Interaction:** Classroom interaction is part of the social interaction that emphasises the significance of language in maintaining conversation, thinking, and the techniques used to interact with other members of the language class.

**Pedagogical Knowledge:** This refers to the knowledge that teachers have about teaching; it can be related to a particular aspect or area of knowledge.

**Playfulness:** This is one of the features of possibility thinking that is at the core of creativity. It supports the stimulation of children's thinking as it enables them to reconceptualise everyday situations.

**Silent Engagement:** This is one of the learning behaviours that can be observed among Chinese learners. It means that learners take consider different factors before saying their answer. This is also influenced by Confucian values.

**Thinking Skills:** A set of skills that stimulates thinking, such as reasoning and memorising.

**Young Learners:** This refers to students who are not yet adults or adolescents. It refers to primary school students in this chapter.



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## APPENDIX 1

· **Principle of Dialogic Teaching (Alexander, 2017, p.38):**
  - Collective - teachers and children address learning tasks together, whether as a group or as a class.
  - Reciprocal - teacher and children listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints.
  - Supportive - children articulate their ideas freely, without fear of embarrassment over 'wrong' answers; they help each other to reach a common understanding.
  - Cumulative - teachers and children build on their own and each other's ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry.
  - Purposeful - teachers plan and steer classroom talk with specific educational goals in view.

· **Features of Exploratory Talk (Mercer, 2004):**
  - Meaning co-construction and criticality.
  - Joint consideration of suggestions, statements and decision-making.
  - Justified challenges and alternative hypotheses.
  - Active participants.
  - Visible reasoning and accountable knowledge are made public.

## APPENDIX 2

*Table 1. Transcription convention*

| ((…)) | **Contextual information** |
|---|---|
| **T** | Teacher |
| **S** | Unidentified speaker |
| **S1, S2, S3…** | Identified speaker |
| **Ss** | Several speakers speak at the same time. |
| **NAME** | Name of a student |
| ↑ | Rising tone |
| ↓ | Falling tone |
| [<br>] | Overlapping<br>Overlapping utterance end. |
| **=** | No break or gap between the speech |
| **(2.8)** | Waiting time. The number indicates the length of the elapsed time in seconds. |
| **::** | Prolongation |
| **yes/yes/no** | Simultaneous speech by more than one person |



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# Chapter 7
# Enriching Teacher Motivation by Improving Teacher Education:
## Inclusive and Reflective Training

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## ABSTRACT

*Teacher motivation plays a crucial role in the learning and teaching of languages. Despite its importance, research on language teacher motivation is limited. On a different note, research on teacher education (TE) has exposed the ineffective preparation of teachers for the reality of the classroom. This chapter will discuss implications for language teacher training programs by establishing a link between teacher motivation and TE. This qualitative investigation was conducted in secondary state schools in Spain, and 23 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers participated. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teacher demotivation to teach EFL, which in turn was associated to teachers' lack of training in inclusive and reflective practices. The findings revealed the demotivating influence of these two areas and explored how these could be tackled in TE while accounting for teachers' needs. By enhancing teacher training, the language classroom could become an inclusive and reflective space for young learners and teachers.*

## INTRODUCTION

Teachers' experience in their first years of teaching has an impact on their decision to remain in the profession. Unfortunately, many novice teachers experience a "reality shock" when confronting the reality of the classroom after the teacher training received (Veenman, 1984, p. 143; Weinstein, 1988). This may be caused by a variety of reasons, but it is well-known that from the first days on the job, "teachers must face the same challenges as their more experienced colleagues" (Farrell, 2012, p. 436). Challenges include, but are not limited to, the lack of preparation and competences and the resulting problems (Hong,

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2010), an overload of lesson planning and delivery, and classroom management of overcrowded classes with mixed-ability and diverse young learners without much supervision or guidance.

Teachers' idealized perception of the profession is often diminished when they begin teaching in their own classroom (Hong, 2010). Difficulties during this period of adaptation may lead to teachers leaving the profession early in their careers before discovering the joys of teaching young learners (Farrell, 2012; Peacock, 2009). Teachers frequently struggle to apply the theory learnt in pre-service TE to their teaching (Richards, 2008) because "there is somewhat of a disconnect between the content of teacher education and the reality" of what teachers experience in the classroom (Farrell, 2016, p. 105). Deficient training may trigger feelings of incompetence in teachers of young learners, which may lead to reconsidering their choice of teaching the specific age group; consequently, improving teachers' competences should be of primordial importance.

TE should guarantee that teachers of young learners are prepared for the real classroom in which they find diverse students and potential challenges which they will need to analyze as reflective teachers. In the classrooms, teachers should engage in reflection about their teaching and support all their students inclusively, but these practices require skills which must be taught and therefore, must be included in pre-service TE. Training in these two areas, i.e. inclusive and reflective practices, is necessary and has been found to be vital for pre-service and in-service teachers (Agudo, 2017; Aparicio & Arévalo, 2014; Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Chong & Cheah, 2009; Mehlmauer-Larcher, 2012; Nijakowska, 2014). Guaranteeing an inclusive environment in the classroom is fundamental and reflective teachers who evaluate and improve their own practices will benefit both teachers and learners.

It is difficult to establish the specific training which is needed for all language teachers to be successful (Faez, 2011). However, teachers will be more prepared for the real classroom if pre-service TE addresses the possible classroom challenges they will face when teaching young learners. Teachers' professional experiences in their first years could be improved by anticipating the potential difficulties they may find in the classrooms in the 21st century, and by guiding teachers to develop realistic expectations about their future classes. More importantly, identifying the sources of dissatisfaction and demotivation among in-service teachers is fundamental to developing teacher training programs. These could provide better preparation, starting from the dilemmas teachers face in their daily teaching experiences. Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) literature has overlooked the field of teacher motivation (Lamb & Wyatt, 2019). However, teacher educators and policy makers should consider the sources of demotivation of in-service teachers and shape TE based on these challenges to favor student teachers who are the future of the profession.

This chapter will examine some demotivating factors of secondary school EFL teachers in the context of Spain, and will discuss how these demotivators could be tackled by enhancing teacher training programs and amplifying their offer. This investigation is part of a larger qualitative research project which analyzed EFL teacher motivation and demotivation in secondary state schools in Spain (Gadella Kamstra, 2020). The present study will discuss some of the findings from this investigation and will shed light on the link between teacher motivation and TE by suggesting recommendations to reconcile teacher training and in-service teachers' needs. Implications will be discussed to resolve teacher attrition and address teachers' challenges in the classroom, which often affect students and the learning process indirectly.



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## BACKGROUND

### Teacher Motivation

Motivation is the continuing determination to do something, an "internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (Harmer, 2001, p. 51), such as learning or teaching a language. Motivation is vital in the learning process not only for young learners but also for teachers. The importance of learner motivation is evident (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011); yet the area of teacher motivation has not received much attention by researchers (Lamb & Wyatt, 2019). This has been especially highlighted in the area of language teaching even though teacher motivation is a key element in the language classroom (Dörnyei, 2001). Dörnyei (2001) defines teacher motivation as "the nature of the teacher's own enthusiasm and commitment and the close links with student motivation" (p. 3). Teacher motivation can be transferred to students and, therefore, teachers who are motivated to teach may awaken their learners' motivation to learn (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Along these lines, the use of motivating techniques and strategies in the classroom has been found to affect students' English achievement (Bernaus et al., 2009) by having a positive effect on student motivation (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Although these studies are only some of the examples of empirical research conducted in the field of motivation, they reinforce the relevance of the teacher as a key figure in the classroom and evidence the fundamental role teachers and their motivation play in learning and teaching processes.

Many teachers face common challenges and obstacles in their everyday professional experiences. It is a commonly held belief that teacher motivation is strongly affected by negative influences and contextual factors such as stress, insufficient self-efficacy, lack of autonomy and limited intellectual development (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This implies the need for investigating this domain more closely for the benefit of teachers and consequently, their learners who are affected by teachers, their practices, behavior and beliefs (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dresel & Hall, 2013; Frenzel & Stephens, 2013). Teachers are essential in the learning process and are recognized to have an impact on student motivation for better or for worse (Lamb, 2017). The relevance of teachers' role leads to stress the fact that teachers' preparation for teaching English to young learners should be prioritized.

## TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher training prepares future teachers for the classroom and SLTE programs generally provide linguistic and pedagogic training along with general knowledge and teaching practices (Karakas, 2012). Despite the preparation pre-service teachers receive, in-service teachers often feel that they have not been effectively trained for their teaching role (Peacock, 2009) and they start their careers without having enough competences for teaching (Grossman, 2008; Grossman et al., 2009). For example, teachers in the Polat's (2010) study felt "unprepared, unready and incompetent to support the language and academic needs [of their students]" (p. 239). In other words, the actual needs of practitioners are sometimes different from what is offered in TE.

Teachers' competence and ability to fulfil their role and responsibilities will depend on the teacher training they have received (Garrido & Álvarez, 2006). Importantly, SLTE "require constant adaptation so as to face the new conditions and demands of a constantly-changing world" (Agudo, 2017, p. 64). Classroom contexts have become more complex and teacher educators need to adapt to these changes by



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modifying TE programs and disregarding traditional and mainstream approaches. Classroom management skills, methodological diversification of teaching and the teaching of students with special needs are some of the challenges which have been identified by teachers in empirical research (Agudo, 2017; Aud et al., 2013) and these could be linked to ineffective teacher training.

## Inclusive Training

The term inclusive education is often discussed by researchers in the literature. In the present study, inclusive education is defined as the education of "all children, regardless of any perceived difference, disability or other social, emotional, cultural or linguistic difference" (Florian, 2008, p. 202). The main principle of inclusive education endorses the idea that people are different and "they have the basic human right to equal opportunities in education" which can be ensured by providing "a supportive learning environment" and "removing barriers to learning and eliminating prejudice and discrimination" (Nijakowska & Kormos, 2016, p. 104). However, it is important to emphasize that to guarantee inclusive education and promote inclusiveness in the classroom, training needs to be available to teachers at all levels.

The importance of teachers' role for the successful application of inclusive education in the classroom cannot be denied (Forlin et al., 2010). Nevertheless, this role will depend greatly on teachers' knowledge of inclusive practices. The fact that inclusive training should be part of SLTE is strengthened by other investigations in which language teachers have been found to be unaware of common specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), such as dyslexia (Knight, 2018). Empirical studies across the globe reveal teachers' deficient preparation to cater for students' diversity and expose the lack of training to support all students (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Knight, 2018; Nijakowska, 2014; Webster & Blatchford, 2015). Importantly, teachers have been found to struggle when trying to ensure equal and inclusive opportunities for all learners and have reported having insufficient training to support the social and emotional development of their students (Aparicio & Arévalo, 2014). In the countries of Finland and South Africa, Savolainen et al. (2012) concluded that many improvements are needed to promote inclusive training for teachers of all subjects in these contexts. EFL teachers in Europe have been revealed to lack knowledge of learning disabilities (Nijakowska, 2014) which could be attributed to insufficient pre-service SLTE. Additionally, classroom management skills were also found to be neglected in the teacher training provided for language teachers in Agudo's (2017) study in Spain. Participants highlighted their lack of training to manage a class with students with special education needs and this caused teachers to feel unprepared to teach in primary education (Agudo, 2017).

Researchers in the literature, as shown above, support the fact that teacher training should improve their offer in TE programs to develop a culture of inclusiveness. The content of pre-service TE courses is crucial because it will influence teachers and their attitudes towards inclusive practices in their future lessons by promoting their self-efficacy beliefs and confidence to deliver inclusive classes (Knight, 2020; Sharma & Sokal, 2016). If teachers feel they are able to support and help all students, their attitude towards inclusion will be more positive. Professional development courses which aim at enhancing teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards inclusive education will affect their self-efficacy and practices (Woodcock & Jones, 2020). Similarly, their attitudes could be improved by providing teachers with resources to meet students' diverse and individual needs (Savolainen et al., 2012). Thus, SLTE programs must prepare language teachers, offering training which will ensure their knowledge of inclusive practices and effective strategies.



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Inclusive teaching practices which ensure differentiation and promote diversity in the classroom are emphasized by Nijakowska and Kormos (2016) who focus on foreign language learners with dyslexia. They state that "well-trained, knowledgeable, sensitive and aware teachers are better able to cater for the diverse learning needs of their students" (Nijakowska & Kormos, 2016, p. 111). Only if teachers are effectively trained in supporting all their students will all learners be able to take part in successful language learning and teaching processes. Inclusive and individualized teaching approaches and resources will enable all students to enjoy their language classes. It is widely known that all students are different, and their needs must be met. Compulsory, good-quality and evidence-based teacher training is essential.

## Reflective Training

In the literature, researchers have defined the concepts of reflection, reflective education, reflective teaching and reflective practices differently in diverse contexts. Dewey (1933), who advocated reflective approaches decades ago, describes reflection as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). Along the same lines, Hatton and Smith (1995) define reflection as "deliberate thinking about action with a view to improvement" (p. 34) and it is important to highlight that reflection is "a means to an end" (Akbari, 2007, p. 204) aiming at improved learning and teaching performance.

The process of reflection has widely been considered as a key element to benefit successful teaching (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983) and as such, the promotion of the skill of reflection or reflective practices should be central in TE (Chong & Cheah, 2009; Mehlmauer-Larcher, 2012). Reflective practice opportunities in pre-service TE and during the first years of teaching will help teachers to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to establish a link between what they learn and the reality of the classroom which is a common challenge for novice teachers (Agudo, 2017; Farrell, 2012). The development of reflection skills will allow an improved transition from TE to the classroom (Farrell, 2016). In his study, Farrell (2016) claims that teachers' reflection was crucial for their decision to remain in the profession after the first year and hence, the skills of reflection should be learnt in pre-service TE.

Reflective thinking enables teachers to evaluate their present and their future by identifying the improvements they want to make based on the strengths and weaknesses of their actions and helps them take responsibility for their own professional development (Farrell, 2012). Reflection also provides teachers with autonomy and authority to make decisions in the classroom (Akbari, 2007). More importantly, knowing that classrooms and teachers are diverse, reflective practices will allow each individual teacher to personalize the process and consider their own teaching practices (Farrell, 2016). Reflection will empower teachers to explore classroom events, analyze their own practices and justify their beliefs, behavior and performance with a view to upgrading them. Deliberate reflection is needed for teachers to understand themselves, their experiences and their learners better. Although the benefits of reflection are clear, teachers need to learn how to reflect, what to reflect on (Korthagen, 2014) and how to include reflective practices in their first teaching experiences; SLTE should make this knowledge and practice accessible.

Additionally, many approaches to SLTE overlook the affective dimension of reflection by treating it as a list of strategical exercises teachers need to complete (Akbari, 2007; Farrell, 2018). It is important to bear in mind that reflection is not only a "tool to 'fix' problems" (Farrell, 2018, p. 18) or analyze teaching practicalities, but teachers' beliefs and emotions should also be considered when engaging in reflection (Freeman, 2016; Farrell, 2018). Farrell's (2015) framework for reflecting on practice is one



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of the approaches which ensures the inclusion of reflection in SLTE. This framework comprises the evaluation of one's teaching philosophy, principles, theory, practice and beyond practice (a wider perspective which includes moral, political and social issues which affect teacher practice). This framework provides an improved preparation for teachers' own contexts and better mindfulness and self-awareness (Farrell, 2015, 2018). In the context of Spain, Saiz-Linares and Susinos-Rada (2020) have also proposed a reflective practicum model for pre-service teachers which links theory and practice and encourage teachers to engage in reflection.

In this section, the importance of teacher motivation and TE for the learning and teaching processes has been highlighted. The area of teacher motivation has been reviewed along with the examination of TE and inclusive and reflective training available to teachers across the globe. Bearing in mind the fact that language teacher motivation is sometimes overlooked by researchers and that TE has been found to not effectively prepare teachers for the reality of the classroom, the present study will examine the following questions:

1. What factors demotivate secondary state school EFL teachers in the context of Spain?
2. How can these demotivating factors be tackled in SLTE?

The next section will discuss the context of the study and the methodology used including brief information about the data collection and data analysis.

## CONTEXT AND METHODS

As previously mentioned, this research was conducted in Spain, where frequent changes in the national government have led to continuous educational reforms (Gratacós & López-Jurado, 2016); the government has approved four general educative laws since 1990 (Aparicio & Arévalo, 2014). Educational reforms have affected teaching in general and do not facilitate the role of educators. Additionally, due to the economic crisis, Spain has invested less in education in recent years (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019). This economic challenge has also affected teachers and their preparation process. TE is often criticized and discussed, and sometimes accused of being too traditional and impractical (Sancho-Gil et al., 2017). According to OECD evidence, teachers would benefit from improved professional development programs. Spanish teachers receive less support for continuous development than teachers in other OECD countries (OECD, 2018). Therefore, a higher investment in teacher training is necessary for both pre-service and in-service teachers. The above elements are key drawbacks of the teaching profession which are likely to affect teachers and their motivation in the Spanish context. Thus, teacher motivation in Spain ought to be investigated to further understanding of the teacher profession and its challenges.-

With respect to the data collection process, EFL teachers working in secondary state schools in various Spanish cities were invited via email, postal mail and posts in social media. After providing written consent, 23 in-service EFL teachers participated in this purely qualitative investigation. All participants were Spanish EFL teachers and only three were males. All teachers had received specific training to teach English in secondary schools. They had an average of twelve years of teaching experience in Spain. Semi-structured interviews were conducted online and face-to-face. These in-depth interviews lasted an average of eighty minutes (a total of approx. thirty hours of audio-recorded data) and allowed



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participants to provide their individual opinions about their motivation and/or demotivation when teaching EFL. Appendix 1 includes a table with a summary of the participants' demographic data along with other data collection information. The interviews had circa thirty questions and the order of the questions was prearranged but by allowing flexibility a fluent conversation was ensured. Interviewees were asked about what motivated and demotivated them and about some possible solutions to teacher demotivation. A selection of the interview questions can be found in Appendix 2. These qualitative interviews enabled the researcher to better understand the "real life" of the participating teachers (Miles et al., 2014, p. 11) through apprehending many details of participants' teaching experiences while appreciating the world from these teachers' insightful point of view (Mann, 2016).

Regarding the data analysis, data from the 23 interviews were transcribed verbatim using NVivo.12, a computer software which facilitated the coding and the analysis of the data. The data analysis approach involved three steps: coding, categorizing and conceptualizing (Lichtman, 2014) as part of a non-linear process. Conversations with participants about similar topics led to the emergence of patterns which illustrated teachers' opinions and beliefs. The frequency of the codes enabled the creation of overarching themes and assisted in uncovering categories and identifying patterns in the data which revealed the findings. At least eight occurrences by eight different participants determined the cut-off point for a category and were considered satisfactory and sufficient to guarantee methodological rigor.

## FINDINGS

### Lack of Inclusive Training

In the interviews, teachers were asked about factors which demotivated them as EFL teachers. Referring to these elements, teachers' lack of training in certain areas was mentioned by participants and inferred from their comments and complaints about their daily professional experiences. Some participating teachers associated their demotivation to their lack of training. Participants claimed to feel stressed, frustrated and demotivated when they could not support students with special needs (e.g. Asperger's, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder "ADHD") or other specific SpLDs due to their lack of knowledge of inclusive teaching practices. Not being able to respond to students' diversity was causing demotivation for teachers who were not qualified or trained to help all students. This finding agrees with results from OECD (2019), which indicated that more than 30% of the teachers had not received any training to assist students with special needs and therefore, reported a high level of need for professional development in this area. The limited training offered to teachers to support learners' diversity and SpLDs has also been brought to light in the literature (Agudo, 2017; Aparicio & Arévalo, 2014; Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Nijakowska, 2014).

Interviewees (10 out of 23) mentioned that they were unable to help students with special needs and this was "demotivating" because although teachers tried to promote inclusiveness they did not "have the tools to help them [students]" because they were "never taught how to deal with this kind of students" (T19). Teachers yearned for the knowledge and the resources to support students with special needs and felt helpless if they wanted to ensure inclusiveness. Some explained that they "try to look for information, to ask" their colleagues (T19) and they "have tried different strategies" but "they are not working" (T5). Thus, they have failed to find effective ways on their own to help all their students and this was reported as a source of teacher demotivation.



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Concerning teacher training, one of the participants highlighted the difference between primary school teachers and secondary school teachers in the context of Spain:

*When you finish your degree, you can be an architect, you can be an engineer, but this doesn't mean that you know, that you can teach, that you are prepared for understanding teenagers, to cope with their problems. (T19)*

This participant contemplated the fact that secondary school teachers in Spain are trained in their own subject matter but lack pedagogic competence and classroom management skills, such as how to support all students, including those with SpLDs. In Spain, there is no undergraduate degree which prepares people to be secondary school teachers. After completing a degree in a specific subject, such as English Studies, teachers are required to complete a one-year Master to teach in secondary schools but this training does not appear to cover all practicalities of the real classroom, such as paying attention to students' diversity (López-Torrijo & Mengual-Andrés, 2015). This finding is consistent with The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EADSNE), who stated that inclusive training is needed, especially for secondary schools, and the lack of this training causes the deficient application of inclusive education (EADSNE, 2011). The above participant (T19) highlighted a key issue which concerns TE in Spain and the preparation secondary school teachers receive. In agreement, López-Torrijo and Mengual-Andrés (2015) argue that in the context of Spain and based on the contents of the Master's qualification teachers must complete, "adequate initial training of future Secondary Education teachers with regard to IE [Inclusive Education] will lack from the beginning" (p. 11).

As part of their role, teachers must support and help their students; this is one of their responsibilities. Participants felt motivated and claimed to have a good or even a "perfect" teaching day when they were "able to listen to their students' specific needs" (T9). However, when this role was unfulfilled, teachers had negative feelings about themselves:

*Sometimes I think I am not a good teacher, when I cannot do every single thing I would like to. (T12)*

This participant confessed to lacking self-confidence when unable to accomplish her role effectively. This teacher's reflection shows that teachers' beliefs and expectations of their own role could affect their motivation if they do not feel satisfied with their practice. Inability to help all students can create negative emotions regarding teachers' own performance, affecting their self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, the need for better-quality TE is reinforced and would have a direct effect on the inclusiveness in the classroom (Knight, 2018). Training will increase teachers' confidence in how and what they teach, which could also boost teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Knight, 2020; Kormos & Nijakowska, 2017; Nijakowska & Kormos, 2016; Sharma & Sokal, 2016; Woodcock & Jones, 2020). In the context of Spain, SLTE does not effectively cover the topic of student diversity and does not foster inclusive education which will have a negative effect on teachers and their "attitudes, abilities and professional self-perception" (López-Torrijo & Mengual-Andrés, 2015, p. 15). More importantly, this lack of training will influence students' language learning in a classroom in which they are not supported and their individual needs are not met. Additionally, teachers could develop negative attitudes towards students with certain SpLDs because of their lack of knowledge and awareness (Indrarathne, 2019) and this once again reinforces the need for training.



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The fact that teachers could not promote inclusiveness in the classroom, due to lack of training, elicited other comments about usual limitations for these EFL teachers. Participants were prompted to reflect on ways to solve the demotivating elements they face in their profession. Some of them would like to have "assistant teachers" to support "those students with special needs" (T17). T17 and T10 agreed that more teaching staff was needed, especially those who are qualified and prepared to help students with SpLDs. Some participants explained that their schools could be improved by "having some [extra] support for students" (T20). By hiring trained staff, teachers could collaborate to support all students in the classroom and enhance teachers' performance and motivation. This was particularly highlighted in overcrowded classes which made even more "difficult to attend diversity and personal problems they [the students] have" (T6). The excessive number of students deteriorated language teaching and led to teachers not being able to "help all the students", "attend all their needs" and "attend the diversity" which as a result triggered teacher demotivation (T4). The excessive ratio (i.e. the number of students) does not foster teachers' use of inclusive practices in the classroom.

To conclude this section, it is important to emphasize that participants were demotivated to teach when they were unable to support all students and meet their individual needs. This was associated with their lack of training in inclusive practices which affected teachers' feelings of competence and self-efficacy when they were not able to help all learners.

## Lack of Reflective Training

In the interviews, teachers participating in this study were invited to think about practical solutions to teacher demotivation. Most of the participating teachers were not aware of solutions which were within their control such as engaging in reflection for the enhancement of teacher motivation (Gadella Kamstra, 2020). Only some participants (9 out of 23) mentioned that teachers should engage in reflection and analyze the problem, trying to find solutions to fight their demotivation. These teachers discussed the importance of "reflecting" (T15) and analyzing the challenges they face in the classroom to improve their motivation by trying to "get the real reason behind" the problem (T20) and "taking action" (T15). Participants recommended "stop, reflect and make it happen" by aiming "to implement some changes" which will affect their teaching and behavior in the classroom (T20). Teachers also discussed the importance of thinking "of the things [we] have done wrong" seeking to "change [and] improve" for future lessons (T22). These participants believed that reflecting on and analyzing the problems were central solutions to teacher demotivation and key practices for the improvement of their teaching.

Reflective practices and self-analysis were potential solutions to challenges in the classroom and more specifically, to demotivating elements which needed to be considered and analyzed. This finding agrees with research in the field of education which advocates the role of reflection for the teaching profession as a tool to evaluate teachers' practices with the aim of enhancing performance (Akbari, 2007; Farrell, 2012). More importantly, teacher training should be responsible for raising awareness of reflective processes and their benefits. Promoting self-awareness and self-reflection practices in TE could encourage teachers to consider their own emotions and motivation in the classroom and to give more importance to their wellbeing. The importance of reflective practice training for teachers has been highlighted in the literature as a way to further understand the reality of the classrooms (Agudo, 2017; Farrell, 2012). By including reflective practices in teacher training, teacher educators would raise awareness of these processes which could help teachers overcome their demotivation by engaging in reflection, analyzing the problem and finding a solution within their control.



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Although engaging in reflection was found to be a way of enriching teacher motivation, participants also revealed their inability to reflect due to their lack of time and heavy workload. These factors could compromise teacher motivation. Being able to reflect on the lesson, to analyze the possible mistakes or to consider the improvements was impossible for this participant:

*If I have lessons later, I don't have time to think, it is so sad to say this, but I don't have time to meditate on the lesson […] so I switch off. (T8)*

Teachers' busy schedules do not facilitate their engagement with reflective practices. Reflecting takes time and teachers would more easily engage in reflection when being away from the classroom (Roberts, 2016). If their workload allowed it, teachers would benefit from having free time in their timetables to reflect thoroughly and adapt their classes accordingly.

At the beginning of this chapter, the fact that researchers had not paid sufficient attention to language teacher motivation was discussed. However, it is worrying that teachers themselves may also overlook their own motivation and emotions in the language classroom. More than half of the participants (13 out of 23) confessed to neglecting their own motivation and not thinking about it regularly or even "never" (T2); "I don't think about that" (T16) and "I don't consider my own" (T1). Thirteen interviewees tended to forget about their own motivation when planning and teaching EFL lessons in secondary schools, which may be linked to their lack of training in reflective practices. Other teachers also neglected their motivation for specific reasons in their daily teaching lives; "right now, I have a lot of pressure […] it depends on the time" (T12). Their workload and lack of time was found to be a constraint not only to engage in reflective practices but also to consider their own motivation.

One of the teachers was aware of the importance of emotions and motivation in the classroom and highlighted the importance of analyzing "why do you feel like this" to solve teacher demotivation (T7). Nevertheless, most of the participating teachers overlooked the value of teachers' reflection, motivation and emotions. Only four teachers seemed to be aware of the importance of their emotions in the learning process and one of them emphasized the need for training:

*Your emotional skills […] I think it's important for all of us, whether you are motivated more or less, we have to keep on training that part that is related to the area you teach, but also the emotional part. (T23)*

This participant stressed the need for emotional training for teachers, since it could help to solve problematic situations in which students may be involved. Their lack of training to support learners' emotional development has been confirmed by other researchers (Aparicio & Arévalo, 2014). Another participant reflected on ways to improve their own teaching:

*I need to improve in the relationships, the human relationship with the students because I'm convinced everything is emotional you see, the way students behave, the way students express their attitudes is because all these emotional problems they may have, so, I think we could contribute, we can contribute a lot there but of course we have to be taught. (T10)*

This participant explained that teachers need to be trained to be able to help their students and this highlights again the importance of training for ensuring effective teaching practices. Furthermore, another teacher suggested the following; "we have to be strong and well prepared physically, emotionally



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because we work with people, we work with problems and these problems affect you" (T2). Deficient teacher training may have severe consequences; teachers could be affected by students' problems and other difficulties if teachers are not able to manage their own emotions. Participants could benefit from emotional training, which would make them aware of the importance of their emotions and the need for overcoming their problems in account of their own wellbeing. More significantly, taking part in this training will ensure teachers engage in reflection. Reflective practice opportunities in teacher training will encourage teachers to not only seek solutions to problems about their own performance but also evaluate their emotions and motivation. Scholars advocate the affective dimension of reflection and emphasize the importance of reflecting on one's emotions and motivation as part of the reflective process (Akbari, 2007; Freeman, 2016; Farrell, 2018). In the context of Spain, SLTE is criticized as lacking the contents to shape teachers who are researchers and are able to enhance their practices by engaging in analytical reflection (López-Torrijo & Mengual-Andrés, 2015). Upgrading TE could ensure teachers to become aware of the value of their emotions and motivation and the significance of engaging in reflective practices.

Participating teachers recommended solutions to teacher demotivation and a large proportion of the teachers (15 out of 23) believed that training could enhance teacher motivation. Teacher development could trigger an improvement in teaching routines by learning new techniques and putting them into practice in the language classroom. Discovering new resources, learning how to use them, implementing them in the classroom and improving teachers' competences could help teachers and boost their motivation:

*You can do different things so that motivates you to teach […] these resources are new for students, they are new for teachers too, so they feel like fulfilled because you are learning another thing and it is not the same. (T18)*

This interviewee suggested that learning about new resources enhances teacher motivation. This finding is consistent with empirical research which shows that teachers join the profession and commit to teaching because of the intellectual stimulation teaching provides (Sinclair, 2008). If teachers participate in training and learn new methodologies, strategies and resources for the classroom, it is likely that they would put them into practice and this could help them improve their motivation, as was proposed by participants.

To sum up this section, some participating teachers emphasized the role of reflecting as a way to improve teacher motivation and therefore, were aware of the importance of reflection in the teaching profession. However, some interviewees acknowledged constraints regarding their engagement with reflection, e.g. the lack of time. On the other hand, a large proportion of teachers were not aware of the significant role that reflection plays on their profession and neglected their motivation and their emotions. The lack of attention paid to reflective practices, motivation and emotions in the classroom could be linked to lack of training. Importantly, participants claimed that further teacher training could also foster teacher motivation.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

There is need for further investigation to replicate this study and corroborate the findings in other settings with larger samples. The sample size of the current investigation does not allow for generalizations of the findings. Additionally, there is still a lot of work to be done by researchers to find out how to attract



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and retain teachers. As Mercer et al. (2016) suggests, further research is needed to find out why teachers join the profession and why they remain in the profession. In addition, further research should consider the potential outcomes of improving teachers' job conditions, for example by reducing the ratio and the workload and how this could influence students' learning process. Teacher motivation influences learner motivation, therefore, those issues which demotivate teachers should be tackled.

Scholars have pointed out the need for a teacher-beliefs-driven TE approach (Polat, 2010) in which teachers are listened to and considered for the design of teacher training programs. In this way, the courses would be tailored to what teachers need in the classroom and to their experiences. Teacher educators need to take teachers' beliefs and needs into consideration and incorporate these into TE. A realistic approach is needed, which cooperates with teachers, considers their concerns and trains them to develop skills which they wish to improve. Therefore, teacher educators should communicate with in-service and pre-service teachers to offer programs which are relevant for them and for the reality of the EFL classroom. Future research should aim to examine teachers' needs and beliefs about the training they would prefer while aiming to analyze the link between teacher motivation and TE. Finally, most research in the field of motivation has been done in general education and it would be useful to encourage specific research on language teacher motivation too.

## CONCLUSION

In the present study, teachers stated that they would welcome and would benefit from training which educates them to support young language learners inclusively. Teachers would also gain from further training to learn how to engage in reflection of their own practices, motivation and emotions. These training opportunities would broaden teachers' understanding of the language classroom and provide them with the knowledge to support all their students and contemplate the significance of their role and their own motivation. It may be challenging to prepare teachers for all the obstacles they will face in the classroom, but inclusive and reflective training should be available to pre-service teachers but also to in-service teachers who appreciate the need for further training for the effective fulfilment of their profession.

On the one hand, EFL teachers in secondary state schools in Spain were demotivated by their lack of training to teach young learners with SpLDs. Participating teachers expressed their need and wish to learn how to support all students. Training which promotes inclusive learning is important because in this study, it was found to affect teacher motivation, but it cannot be denied that it also has a clear influence on students' learning experience. By strengthening special education courses in teacher training, teachers would be able to support all their students and feel more motivated to teach them. Inclusive training opportunities to support learners effectively while favoring their English learning should be prioritized because learners deserve teachers who are prepared to respond to their individual needs. Thus, SLTE needs to be adapted for the development of teachers' knowledge of inclusive education and to promote the role of teachers as mediators of equitable learning for the sake of a "real inclusive society" (López-Torrijo & Mengual-Andrés, 2015, p. 16). Importantly, training on inclusive education would enhance teachers' skills and their ability to engage in self-reflection about their competence to ensure inclusive practices (Cologon, 2012). This shows a link between inclusive practices and the other main area in this study; reflective practices.



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A large proportion of the participating teachers were found to overlook their motivation and the power of engaging in reflection. Thus, the access to training in reflective practices is vital and should be part of pre-service TE. This training will help novice teachers to be self-aware, identify their own needs and target potential problems. Language teachers would be better equipped if their reflection skills were developed in pre-service SLTE and in their first years of teaching (Farrell, 2016). However, it cannot be assumed that by providing pre-service training in reflective practices, teachers will automatically engage in reflection when they start teaching (Akbari, 2017). Therefore, appropriate opportunities for reflecting should be provided for those teachers who may struggle to naturally engage in reflection (Yang, 2009). On a positive note, reflection would also result in higher job satisfaction, teachers' sense of self-efficacy and better relationships with colleagues and staff (Braun & Crumpler, 2004).

Teachers could engage in reflection in different ways, for example by writing reflective journals, diaries or portfolios, communicating with other teachers, taking part in classroom observations which promote collaborative learning, obtaining feedback from teachers, educators, mentors or students, recording their lessons and engaging in action research. Teachers can also share their stories with the community, in the form of case studies, which can then be included in pre-service teacher training as examples of the reality of the classroom (Farrell, 2012). Reflection would also benefit from processes of collaboration or cooperation in which the teacher thinks, assesses and reflects as part of a team or with the support of others (Roberts, 2016). The collaboration and coordination of teachers, educators and school administration could provide a smoother shift from TE to the actual teaching (Farrell, 2012). Facilitating teachers' transition to the classroom should be part of stakeholders' worthwhile agenda.

To conclude, the present study has enlisted teachers to help resolve the issue of teacher demotivation and ineffective teacher education. Participating teachers have addressed these problems and have provided ideas for enhancing TE. Findings from the present study indicate that TE needs to be improved for teachers to be more prepared and confident in the EFL classroom and to ensure that they remain in the profession. A more realistic range of teacher training courses which are tailored to the complexity of today's classrooms is needed. This investigation has confirmed that teachers lack training in inclusive and reflective practices. In the context of Spain, EFL teachers who work in secondary state institutions with young learners are likely to lack training which guarantees an inclusive environment and teachers' engagement in reflection. Most importantly, this study shows that this lack of training affects teachers and their motivation negatively and consequently, this influence could have an impact on their students' motivation and their language learning experience.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Demotivation:** The lack or reduction of one's interest, enthusiasm, and willingness to perform an action (e.g. teaching) due to specific negative influences.

**Inclusive Practices:** The act of doing something (e.g. teaching) while embracing different types of people and guaranteeing a fair and equal treatment regardless of any difference.

**Inclusiveness:** The quality of embracing different types of people while guaranteeing a fair and equal treatment regardless of any difference.

**Motivation:** The persisting determination and enthusiasm to perform an action (e.g. teaching) with a view to accomplish something. One's desire to do or achieve something.

**Reflection:** A serious and careful consideration of one's actions and feelings with the aim of enriching them.

**Reflective Practices:** The act of doing something (e.g., teaching) while engaging in serious and careful consideration of one's actions and feelings with the aim of enriching them.

**Self-Efficacy Belief:** A person's belief that they have the ability to perform a task (e.g., teaching) and to meet challenges successfully. A belief in one's capacity to do or achieve something.

**Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs):** The difficulties which affect someone to acquire new knowledge in a traditional and mainstream learning context (e.g., Asperger's, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD).



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## APPENDIX 1

## Participants' Background and Data Collection Information

| Participant | Working Area | Gender | Teaching Experience | Interview | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Duration | Type |
| **Teacher 1** | Madrid | Male | 1-5 years | 54 minutes | Face-to-Face |
| **Teacher 2** | Gran Canaria | Female | 6-14 years | 62 minutes | Face-to-Face |
| **Teacher 3** | Gran Canaria | Female | 6-14 years | 106 minutes | Face-to-Face |
| **Teacher 4** | Gran Canaria | Female | 6-14 years | 84 minutes | Face-to-Face |
| **Teacher 5** | Gran Canaria | Female | + 25 years | 78 minutes | Face-to-Face |
| **Teacher 6** | Gran Canaria | Female | + 25 years | 43 minutes | Face-to-Face |
| **Teacher 7** | Tenerife | Female | + 25 years | 81 minutes | Face-to-Face |
| **Teacher 8** | Tenerife | Female | 15-24 years | 98 minutes | Face-to-Face |
| **Teacher 9** | Madrid | Female | 6-14 years | 105 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 10** | Gran Canaria | Male | 1-5 years | 129 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 11** | Tenerife | Female | 1-5 years | 98 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 12** | Madrid | Female | 1-5 years | 62 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 13** | Lanzarote | Female | 6-14 years | 67 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 14** | Tenerife | Female | + 25 years | 76 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 15** | Madrid | Female | 6-14 years | 122 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 16** | Granada | Female | 6-14 years | 65 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 17** | Madrid | Male | 6-14 years | 72 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 18** | Tenerife | Female | 1-5 years | 73 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 19** | Gran Canaria | Female | 15-24 years | 103 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 20** | Madrid | Female | 6-14 years | 95 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 21** | Valencia | Female | 6-14 years | 70 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 22** | La Rioja | Female | 6-14 years | 80 minutes | Online |
| **Teacher 23** | Tenerife | Female | 6-14 years | 61 minutes | Online |



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## APPENDIX 2

A Selection of the Interview Questions

INITIAL MOTIVE + PAST EXPERIENCES
· Why did you become an English teacher?
ROUTINE + ATTITUDE
· What makes a good day for you? Describe a good day.
· What makes a bad day for you? Describe a bad day.
· On a working day would you say that you look forward to going into the class to teach? Why?
· What happens after the class is over? How do you feel?
· When the class is over, do you wish the class would continue?
IMPROVEMENT
· What changes do you think are necessary in the language teaching profession in general in Spain?
· If you could change the situation in your school regarding teaching, what would you change?
· Is there anything you would like to improve as a teacher? Why? How?
JOB SPECIFIC + SATISFACTION
· How satisfied are you with your job?
· What gives you the most satisfaction?
· And along the same lines, what are the aspects of your teaching that you enjoy the least at the moment?
MOTIVATION + DEMOTIVATION
· Do you teach or plan a lesson having motivation in mind?
· What about your own motivation?
· How would you define 'motivation'? What is 'motivation'? What elements shape 'teacher motivation'?
· Do you consider yourself motivated to teach?
· Do you think your motivation is less, more than or as important as students' motivation in the classroom?
· What demotivates and motivates you when you are teaching?
· Do you believe that the teachers with whom you work are motivated?
· Which solutions would you suggest which could improve teachers' motivation? Would it help you?
· How could you improve your own motivation?
OPINION
· Do you consider yourself a good language teacher?



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# Chapter 8
# Multisensory Language Teaching:
## Its Impact on the English Vocabulary Achievement of Turkish Young Learners

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to investigate the effects of multisensory vocabulary teaching (MSVT) on 4th-grade learners' English vocabulary knowledge. Accordingly, the experimental group was taught through MSVT while the control group was given mainstream coursebook-based instruction. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used. The non-parametric Wilcoxon tests yielded statistically significant differences regarding pupils' vocabulary achievement in favor of the experimental group both in the immediate post-vocabulary test and in the delayed post-vocabulary test. Furthermore, content analysis of the learners' diaries, teachers' blogs, and interviews revealed mostly positive views about learning words through MSVT compared to coursebook-based learning.*

## INTRODUCTION

Various aspects of individual differences and their implications in educational practice have recently drawn the attention of a considerable number of researchers in the field of language learning and teaching (Mayer, 2011). Among many major individual areas of language learning, learning style is considered as one of the most important variables which affect learners' language learning outcomes (Ehrman, Leaver & Oxford, 2003; Westwood & Arnold, 2004). In the literature, a variety of terms related to

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individuals' learning styles have been used. These are learning style, cognitive style, personality type, sensory preference, and modality (Ehrman et al., 2003). The present study will use the terms sensory preference and modality.

Due to the variety of style dimensions, it is impractical and a very demanding task for teachers to match their teaching style to each learner's learning style in limited classroom hours. Thus, perceptual learning style has been considered as a primary issue in the language learning area because perception is the way of constructing new L2 representations from input via the senses, which is an essential aspect of language acquisition (Truscott, 2015). Besides, activities which appeal to the five senses, such as visual, auditory, tactual/kinesthetic, and hands-on activities, have been reported to be the most effective teaching aids in young English learners' classes (Griva & Semoglou, 2012; Jubran, 2012). Furthermore, a variety of multimodal tools seem to appear every day to make a great contribution to daily life such as smartphones and tablets in addition to computers. Not surprisingly, the field of education has taken advantage of these tools in developing ways to increase young children's skills and motivation by designing multisensory educational materials as young learners (YLs) value multiple input modes which activate different sensory modalities. Similarly, teachers who seek innovation need to be cognizant of their current teaching contexts (Karatepe & Yılmaz, 2018) in addition to being aware of their learners by taking their characteristics, needs, learning preferences, intelligence levels, and views into account to provide them with learning opportunities through multiple ways to scaffold their learning.

However, the traditional classroom context in Turkey usually fails to support teachers' endeavor to provide learners with teaching materials which fit their learning style. One reason behind this failure is that educational policies are always formed with a view that all learners are the same. These policies do not seem to support individual differences; on the contrary, they defy such differences. Currently, ELT practices in Turkey rely heavily on visual materials and partly on audio materials such as a coursebook, and some basic educational technology equipment. Auditory and visual learners may somehow derive benefit from coursebook-based conventional instruction; however, tactual/kinesthetic learners may be at a strong disadvantage with such instruction. When viewed from this aspect, teaching foreign languages, particularly English, is not at a satisfactory level in Turkey (Akpınar & Aydın, 2009; Tarcan, 2004).

Extensive individualized instruction for every student is not practical, although both teachers and students can benefit from the identification of learning styles (Gilakjani, 2012). Thus, developing techniques to appeal to a class full of learners with different learning preferences can be a very daunting task for teachers. In this sense, using multiple input modes is an advantage not only for learners to maximize their learning but also for teachers, who can revive their teaching, and thus feel professional fulfilment because they can facilitate their learners' learning process by using a wide variety of tools (Nilson, 2010; Read, 2007). Moreover, when learners are taught through activities by manipulating and experiencing conceptual information, they learn more easily and retain what they have learnt better (Obaid, 2013). Therefore, this chapter aims to investigate the effect of integrating multiple senses on the foreign language vocabulary achievement of primary school students to reveal whether activating more senses will unlock learners' full potential in their foreign vocabulary achievement.



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## BACKGROUND

### Multisensory Language Teaching (MSLT)

Traditionally, perceiving is regarded as unisensory: eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, bodies for moving, and fingers for touching and so on. However, from an ecological perspective, it is assumed that all learning is based on perceptual learning whose role is to combine visual, auditory and other information within a context of activity both directly and indirectly. Thus, learning a language is not a stand-alone or a fixed system, but instead a whole-body and whole-world network of processes that focus on more complex, multimodal networks of meaning-making in action. In other words, the centrality of action and the multisensory nature of perception need to be taken into account to provide language learners with rich and varied opportunities for meaning-making (van Lier, 2011).

The term "multisensory" is defined as a "sensory-embodied experience" which "is not in any essential way reducible to being of one or another sensory modality, but rather each is contingent on and indeed part of the production of others" (Fors, Bäckström & Pink, 2013, p. 175); or collective and synergic use of senses that increase the probability of detecting and identifying events or objects of interest (Stein & Standford, 2008).

Although the multisensory approach could somehow find its theoretical bases through Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Bruner's Theory of Instruction, the underlying theory of using MSLT is in fact, the Dual Coding Theory proposed by Allan Paivio (2007), who asserted that thinking comprises the activity of two different cognitive subsystems. These systems include a verbal system which is related specifically to the language aspect and a nonverbal system which is related to non-linguistic objects and events. This suggests that there is a close relationship between the Dual Coding Theory and Multisensory Approach. The brain organizes countless bits of sensory information detected every moment and gives meaning to what is experienced by selecting what to focus on and ignoring all the rest of the information in order to move and learn. For example, by drawing an analogy between food and sensation, it was stated that sensations could be considered as "food for the brain" because they provide the knowledge activating the body and mind (Ayres & Robbins, 2005). They argued that just as food must be digested to nourish our body, sensory processes must be well-organized to let the brain use those sensations to form perceptions, behaviours, and learning. Learning is a function of the whole nervous system; thus, learners learn more and more easily, when more sensory systems work together. Thus, providing language input through multiple-modality stimulations is cutting edge for learners not only to interpret the given input but also to recall the stored information easily in the future.

### Multisensory Vocabulary Teaching (MSVT)

Vocabulary, which is more than a list of words and a proxy for content knowledge (David, 2010), can be defined as "the total number of words that are needed to communicate ideas and express the speakers' meaning" (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 25). However, vocabulary teaching with an open and unlimited subsystem had been ignored until the 1990s when compared to grammar teaching with a closed and manageable system, due to the influence of structuralism. During the 1990s, because the main aim of teaching a foreign language is to achieve communication, vocabulary teaching received a great deal of attention and was considered as a fundamental component of foreign language learning (Beltrán, Contesse & López, 2010). In the same direction, it is believed that a person with even a good deal of grammatical knowl-



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edge will not be able to communicate without the required lexical knowledge which has a basic role in shaping and transmitting meaning in that language (Olmos, 2009). Therefore, vocabulary is considered as very critical to be able to communicate in a variety of social situations.

Learning and academic achievement can be enhanced, and competency of teaching and learning can be developed when teachers adapt their teaching styles in such a way that they can cater for different learning styles, by providing learners with opportunities to learn in several ways (Mishra, 2007; Siddique, Abbas, Riaz & Nazir, 2014; Yılmaz & Genç, 2010). Thus, before teaching the target words, teachers need to consider different ways of activating students' senses by incorporating the principles of MSVT, which were reported by Król-Gierat (2014) as follows:

Step 1: Putting the words into context, relating them to real experiences and children's interests, or discussing pictures and stories to create background knowledge.

Step 2: Using visuals, gestures, sounds, demonstrations and experimentations.

Step 3: Building links around word meaning.

Step 4: Building links around the sound and spelling of the words.

Step 5: Extensive practice and consolidation.

It is clear in the aforementioned principles that children need to be exposed to newly learnt words many times and in different situations, not only by stimulating their interests and curiosity (David, 2010; Zorba & Arıkan, 2012), but also by providing them with a language-rich environment and multi-layered contextualized vocabulary practices (also see, Hadley, 2003; Opp-Beckman & Klinghamer, 2006; Karatepe & Yılmaz 2018).

There appear a variety of multisensory materials suggested in the literature for YLs to present, practice, revise, and test vocabulary, such as puppets with brilliant colors, assorted textures, exaggerated physical expressions (Benjamin, 2003; Salmon & Sainato, 2005), wall charts, commercially-produced flashcards, home-made magazine picture flashcards, hand-drawn pictures, diagrams, grids (Gairns & Redman, 1986; Royce, 2002), online computer games, videos, songs, music video clips, digital stories, vocalized PowerPoint presentations, and even robots (*Fišer & Dumančić*, 2015; Natriello, 2007) to help teachers to draw and sustain learners' attention to the subject at hand.

In addition to multisensory materials, multisensory activities suggested in the literature are as follows: some TPR-based activities; learning with a puppet, such as following the puppet's instruction, correcting the puppet, or guessing what's in the puppet's bag; flashcard vocabulary activities, such as flashcard instruction, flashcard groups, and missing flashcards; some games such as bingo, crosswords, jumbles, dominoes, Pelmanism, treasure hunt; sequencing activities; classifying and sorting; word search; scrambled word challenge; and odd one out (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004; Kirsh, 2008; Murray & Christison, 2011; Nunan, 2011; Read, 2007).

## MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER[1]

### Relationship Between Multisensory Language Teaching and Vocabulary Learning

Considering the common characteristics of children, particularly going for meaning and learning through chunks, and the need for fun (Moon, 2000), it is obvious that teachers should present vocabulary in context and in chunks through the use of songs, rhymes, visuals, puppets, toys, hands-on activities, role play, or



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stories to enable children to use the target language in a more peaceful, relaxed, and fun environment. Thus, the studies summarized in this section present the effects of multisensory materials, songs and rhymes, various forms of stories, drama, games, and mixed/multimodal activities on YLs' vocabulary development.

For instance, Barani, Mazandarani and Seyyed Rezaie (2010) investigated the effect of "picture into picture" audiovisual aids on the vocabulary learning of sixty young Iranian EFL learners. For that purpose, the experimental group was taught unknown words through using audiovisual aids, such as watching and listening, watching and copying, listening and drawing, looking and drawing, looking and writing, and looking, listening, saying and writing and so on, whereas the control group was taught through the curriculum book. The T-test results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group, which is a clear indication of a positive effect of using picture into picture audiovisual aids on vocabulary learning.

Believing that songs, as invaluable auditory input, help children practice vocabulary, rhythms, and structure of the language by having fun in the classroom, Coyle and Gracia (2014) and Sarı (2014) investigated the effects of using songs on YLs' vocabulary knowledge in English. For instance, in their study with 25 children attending a semi-private school in Spain, Coyle and Gracia (2014) examined whether the exposure to new words within the context of song activities leads to the acquisition of receptive and productive vocabulary in young EFL learners. The participants were taught English through songs accompanied by pictograms displayed on the interactive whiteboard, and follow-up activities such as doing the actions in the song lyrics and playing a game which required the children to point at the image that corresponded to a target word. Pre-, post- and delayed post-vocabulary tests were administered to the participants by asking each child both to name and to point to the words in English. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test and Friedman test results showed statistically significant changes as regards receptive vocabulary but not productive vocabulary. Thus, the study suggests that limited exposure to the song was sufficient to improve the children's receptive vocabulary but not sufficient to develop their productive vocabulary. Similarly, in Thailand context, Vungthong, Djonov and Torr (2017) focused on a systematic analysis of the power of images and their interaction with words to facilitate vocabulary teaching and learning by following a multimodal social semiotic approach. The results of the analysis of the 23 songs videos in the Grade 1 and 2 English apps revealed that elaboration relationships were used mostly in both grades. However, exposition relations in Grade 1 do not involve images with background, whereas more complex visual structure and more detailed background were dominated in Grade 2. Furthermore, the song videos in Grade 2 include fewer clarification relations and more projection relations than Grade 1. The study suggested the use of multimodality in EFL materials to support spelling and meaning aspects of a word; however, signified the importance of a teacher's instruction rather than multimodal materials regarding the use of a particular word.

The impact of the use of contextual vocabulary teaching on learners' vocabulary knowledge in English was investigated in the following studies via authentic animated cartoons (Arıkan & Taraf, 2010), authentic animated stories (Kaya, 2011), and digital stories (Abdul-Ameer, 2014) which revealed that the experimental group which was taught the target words through a variety of senses outperformed the control group which was exposed to fewer senses when learning the words. For instance, the study by Abdul-Ameer (2014), which aimed to investigate the impact of digital stories on 40 eight-year-old 3rd grade Iraqi primary students' understanding of the story and acquisition of new words, revealed that the students in the experimental group which was taught through three selected digital stories online by computer outperformed the students in the control group which was taught through stories based only



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on the teacher without technology, not only in terms of comprehending new vocabulary items but also in terms of the four basic language skills, particularly listening comprehension.

The impact of drama on YLs' foreign language vocabulary learning was examined by Demircioğlu (2010), Köylüoğlu (2010), and Tokdemir (2015). For instance, Demircioğlu (2010) investigated whether drama had an impact on 9-10-year-old 3rd-grade learners' vocabulary learning by setting experiments with two classes, one of which was randomly assigned to the experimental group and the other to the control group with 25 subjects in each. Independent samples T- test results revealed that there was a significant difference between the groups' post-test scores in favor of the experimental group, which shows that teaching vocabulary to YLs through drama is more effective than traditional vocabulary teaching methods.

Since children will be able to memorize and reproduce chunks of language in games, songs and stories, modern primary foreign language programs include songs, rhymes, storytelling, role-plays, and game-like activities with high language content (Martin, 2000). The studies conducted by Chou (2014) and Dapo (2014), which investigated the effects of mixed activities, such as playing language-related games, singing theme-based songs, and listening to stories on children's vocabulary knowledge revealed that multimodal activities helped learners memorize English vocabulary more efficiently.

In another study, Tight (2010) conducted a study with 128 participants in eight intact classes of third-semester intermediate Spanish students at a large Midwestern university to investigate whether there were differences in L2 vocabulary gains and retention in immediate or delayed post-tests among all learners when the instruction was through (a) a single, more preferred learning style, (b) a single, less preferred learning style, (c) mixed-modality instruction, or when (d) there was no instruction. The results of the immediate post-test, the 1-week post-test, and the 1-month post-test showed that mixed-modality instruction always stimulated the greatest overall mean gains, followed by instruction in a more preferred modality, instruction in a less preferred modality, and no instruction, respectively, in addition to having a significant advantage over the other types of instruction. Similarly, mixed-modality instruction led to significantly greater retention in the delayed post-tests than both instruction in a single, more preferred modality and instruction in a single, less preferred modality.

Cárcamo, Cartes, Velásquez, and Larenas (2016), via an action research project, investigated the impact of multimodality instruction on vocabulary acquisition among 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th graders in two semi-public schools in Spain. There appeared a statistically significant difference between the results of the pre-test and the post-test, which indicates that multimodal instruction unconsciously helped students to use and retain the target words when compared to traditional instruction. More recently, in Belgium context, Peters (2019) investigated the effect of imagery on word learning in addition to examining the impact of input modality in three TV viewing conditions: with L1 subtitles, with captions, and without subtitles on word learning of 142 fifth and sixth grade Dutch speaking EFL learners. One of the striking results of the study is that on-screen imagery which combines both spoken text and visual images has a positive impact on vocabulary learning due to enabling learners to process information through auditory and visual channels.

Although the literature on teaching English to YLs is enormous and includes the importance of teaching through all senses, the effects of multisensory teaching on learners' achievement in English vocabulary knowledge have not been investigated in depth in Turkey context. Therefore, the present study, which aims to provide methodologically sound evidence to justify the use of MSVT in the educational practice of YLs, is likely to fill this gap in the field of teaching English to young learners (TEYLs) and to provide a significant contribution to the field. The study focused on the effects of MSVT on learners' receptive vocabulary knowledge in English. In other words, dealing with productive words is not within



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the scope of this study. Thus, the researchers were charged with ascertaining whether the use of MSVT is supported by scientific evidence through experimental findings.

## The Effects of Multisensory Language Teaching on Foreign Language Vocabulary Achievement of Primary School Students: A Case Study

### Aim and Research Questions of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of multisensory vocabulary teaching (MSVT) on students' foreign language vocabulary achievement. An attempt was made to examine the effect of MSVT on students' foreign language vocabulary achievement via the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the vocabulary achievement scores of the treatment groups immediately after the implementation of MSVT?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference between the vocabulary retention scores of the treatment groups a month after the implementation of MSVT?
3. What are the views of the teacher and the pupils on learning English vocabulary through MSVT?

The independent variable of the study was MSVT. The lesson plans in the treatment were prepared in line with the content of the target units [unit 3 (family members), unit 4 (clothes), and unit 5 (body parts)] in the coursebook "Elementary English 4 Student's Book and Workbook 1" by taking into account the gains of MSVT. Accordingly, multisensory materials and activities used in this program were prepared by taking into account the suggested literature, the gains of the program, and achievement tests. In line with this purpose, the materials used in the study were audio and visual materials including songs, dramatizing, rhymes, cartoons, masks, drawings, pictures, flashcards, posters, animations, photos, videos, a digital story, and a crossword puzzle in addition to various tactual materials including toys, puppets and other realia. Furthermore, the activities used in the study were matching, labeling, completing the crossword puzzle, hands-on activities, listening and finding the correct item, finding the partner, categorizing the words, computer-based games, a guessing game, a dart game, and completing the pictorial worksheet.

## Research Method

## Research Pattern

Following a mixed method approach, the quantitative/positivist paradigm and the qualitative/interpretive paradigm were used in the study to encompass various aspects of MSVT used in this study. Because random assignment is not possible in state primary schools throughout mainstream education, a quasi-experimental research type with the non-equivalent comparison group design with two intact groups was utilized in the study to answer the research questions.



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## Study Group

The participants of the research consist of totally 46 fourth grade pupils (9-10 year-olds) enrolled in the Öğretmen Hasan Güney Primary School in Bursa, Turkey. An experiment was conducted in the first term of the 2012-2013 academic year. Subjects were two intact groups, class 4A (23 students, 12 of whom were female and 11 of whom were male) as the control group which was given mainstream education, and class 4B (23 students, 9 of whom were female and 14 of whom were male) as the experimental group which was given the treatment with MSVT. In addition, the teacher in this study, who was female and 32 years old at that time, had nine years of teaching experience with children.

## The Instrumentation

The quantitative instrument was the vocabulary achievement test prepared by the researchers**.** The test was comprised of matching and multiple-choice items accompanied by various pictures as suggested by Vedyanto (2016), who provided statistical evidence for using pictures in a test format to assess students' vocabulary achievement. In order to test the internal consistency reliability of the vocabulary test, the 45-question vocabulary test was administered to a group of 30 fourth grade pupils (class 4C) in the same school as a pilot study. Based on the results of the analysis of the item total correlation test, items 1, 16, 39, and 45 were removed from the test. The answers of the participants to the remaining 41 items were reanalyzed to find out the reliability of the vocabulary test. Reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha score of $\alpha = .81$ over 41 items in the vocabulary test. In respect of the post- and delayed post-tests, the analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha score of $\alpha = .80$ over 41 items in the post-vocabulary test and $\alpha = .87$ over 41 items in the delayed post-vocabulary test.

The qualitative instruments were the pupils' diaries, the teacher's blogs, and the semi-structured interview with the teacher.

## Data Collection

The study was conducted after receiving approval from the Department of Research and Development of Education affiliated to the National Educational Directorate, and after obtaining an informed consent form from every pupil's parents. At the beginning of the experiment, the pre-test was given to both groups to determine whether the groups were equal regarding their background knowledge of the target words.

The treatment and testing were concealed within ordinary classroom routines. Because three units were involved in this study, the duration of the treatment was six weeks. The students were given the post-vocabulary test a week after the treatment and the delayed post-vocabulary test a month after the treatment.

Before the intervention, the students in both groups were given diaries to write about their experiences, ideas, and feelings with regard to each English lesson during the treatment. The students were at the beginner level, and thus they wrote their diaries in Turkish. Furthermore, the teacher wrote her observations, feelings, and views about teaching each lesson with multisensory materials and activities regularly in her blog for the 6-week period. Finally, the interview was conducted with the teacher to delve into the results obtained from the quantitative part.



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## Data Analysis

Due to non-normally distributed data, the quantitative data were analysed by using the Mann-Whitney U statistical test via SPSS-Statistical Package for Social Sciences to reveal the differences between the pre-, post- and delayed post-vocabulary achievement test scores. As for the qualitative data, codes and categories were formed from the data of the learners' diaries, the teacher's blog and the interview extracts by the researchers via the inductive content analysis technique.

## Research Findings

### Findings for the Post-vocabulary Achievement Test Scores of the Treatment Groups

In order to investigate whether there was a statistical significant difference between the groups in terms of their vocabulary knowledge, the Mann-Whitney U test, which assumes that there are two samples coming from the same population, was run on the participants' pre-scores in the vocabulary achievement test, as displayed in Table 1.

*Table 1. Pre-Vocabulary Achievement Test Scores of the Groups*

| **Treatment Groups** | **N** | *Mdn* | **Range** | **Mean Ranks** | **Sum of Ranks** | **U** | *Z* | **p** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 23 | 14 | 68 | 23.30 | 536 | 260 | -.099 | .651 |
| Control | 23 | 14 | 46 | 23.70 | 545 | | | |

* Significant at the .05 level.

The Mann-Whitney U test result indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups' pre-vocabulary achievement test scores (U = 260, p = .651), which evidenced that the groups were equal to each other in terms of their vocabulary knowledge. Thus, it can be asserted that the comparison of their vocabulary scores would reveal reliable results.

*Table 2. Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Treatment Groups' Post-Vocabulary Achievement Test Scores*

| **Treatment Groups** | **N** | *Mdn* | **Range** | **Mean Ranks** | **Sum of Ranks** | *U* | *Z* | **p** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 23 | 79 | 78 | 16.74 | 385 | 109 | -3.418 | .001 |
| Control | 23 | 65 | 69 | 30.26 | 696 | | | |

* Significant at the .05 level.

The Mann-Whitney U test result presented in Table 2 indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the treatment groups with regard to their vocabulary knowledge (U = 109, p=



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.001, r= -0.503). Based on the median scores of the groups, it is clear that the experimental group's post-vocabulary scores (Mdn = 79) were higher than the control group's scores (Mdn = 65).

## Findings for the Vocabulary Retention Scores of the Treatment Groups

Participants were given the vocabulary retention test a month after the treatment so as to investigate whether there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups regarding their vocabulary retention by using the Mann-Whitney U test.

*Table 3. Mann-Whitney U Test Results of Treatment Groups' Vocabulary Retention Scores*

| Treatment Groups | N | *Mdn* | Range | Mean Ranks | Sum of Ranks | *U* | *Z* | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 23 | 84 | 50 | 17.30 | 398 | 122 | -3.134 | .002 |
| Control | 23 | 69 | 60 | 29.70 | 683 | | | |

* Significant at the .05 level.

The Mann-Whitney U test result displayed in Table 3 showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the treatment groups with regard to their vocabulary retention (U = 122, p = .002, r = -0.45). Based on the median scores of the groups, it is clear that the experimental group's delayed post-vocabulary scores (Mdn = 84) were higher than the control group's (Mdn = 69) scores.

## Findings for the Views of the Teacher and Pupils on MSVT

The following extract taken from the teacher's blog indicates the teacher's evaluation of the multisensory activities used in the classroom.

*T: "We said that Ann has got a family and we are also a family. Thus, we gave roles of father, mother, aunt, and grandfather. My pupils looked so good in the costumes. Every new word they learnt became real when they played these roles. They learnt through experience. Their behaviours, gestures, and facial expressions changed immediately…"*

The interview results also indicated the impact of MSVT on learners' interests and participation:

*T: "While using MSVT, I observed that the students' participation increased and they took an active role in their learning. Therefore, they mostly learn by doing and experiencing. I realized that learning becomes more permanent when the coursebook is supported by supplementary materials and a variety of activities… Every child can find something interesting and motivating when learning English through multisensory materials and activities."*

On the other hand, the teacher explained the way of her teaching English vocabulary during mainstream education:



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*T: "When I was using the coursebook, most of the time I took an active role and the students became passive. For instance, when teaching vocabulary, I expected them to underline unknown words in the passage, to guess the meaning of the words in the context by evaluating whether the meaning of a word is positive or negative, to match the words with the pictures, and finally to look up a dictionary to get the meaning."*

In addition, in their diaries, a few pupils in the control group expressed their views related to learning English vocabulary as follows:

*P3: "The English lesson was good. We always learnt new words. We had fun…"*

*P5: "I understood the words which we have learnt today easily because they are useful for me in daily life…"*

*P7: "…To be able to learn the words we learnt today I did revision. Therefore, I understood the words better…"*

As seen in the above extracts, the pupils in the control group mentioned the subjects they learnt, their beliefs about learning new words and their vocabulary learning strategies.

## SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The target words of each unit were taught explicitly through the use of multisensory materials such as hand puppets to introduce family members; hand-made Bugs Bunny and Lola Bunny models with their colorful hand-made clothes, a colorful wooden wardrobe, clothespins, and a washing line to introduce different items of clothing; and hand-made magnetic body parts of a monster, a big colorful cardboard model clown, and a puppet monster with its detachable parts to introduce the words for body parts. These visual and tactual materials were supported by auditory materials such as a video-based song, PowerPoint presentations that were vocalized by two American children, and digital stories, in addition to the teacher's presentation of these materials. As can be seen, the learners were provided with a variety of multisensory activities which helped them to process the new word meanings by working with the new vocabulary items through activating multiple senses. Hence, it is difficult to determine exactly which one of them was significantly more effective than another. It is more reasonable to attribute the success of vocabulary teaching in the study to the use of all learning modalities in combination.

The results of this study were in line with the study by Tight (2010), which concluded that mixed-modality instruction led to the strongest impact on vocabulary learning when compared to other uni-modal types of instruction. One of the reasons for the effectiveness of MSVT seems to come from its adaptability for learners' level of cognitive skills and perception. From the results of this study, it can be inferred that instruction by means of MSVT materials tailor-made to suit the needs and tastes of the pupils increases their achievement in vocabulary tests (Cameron, 2001; Linse, 2005; Moon, 2000; Moon, 2005; Read, 2007; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). Furthermore, in line with the qualitative studies conducted by Sarı (2014) and Tokdemir (2015, the qualitative parts of this study including the learners' diaries,



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the teacher's blogs, and interview also provided insight from the perspectives of the participants with regard to multisensory vocabulary learning and teaching.

Some of the pupils expressed their views on vocabulary learning in their diary extracts, which revealed that they developed mostly positive attitudes towards English lessons, and more specifically towards learning new words in English, through matching, labelling activities, and games. It is more likely that they had an enjoyable time when manipulating big pictures, flashcards, puppets, and hands-on materials. On the other hand, they also reported that they had difficulty in pronouncing and writing new words in English. The reasons for their negative experiences might be that the study did not aim to develop the pupils' productive vocabulary knowledge, but rather, their receptive knowledge. Although activities that required the pupils to practice the productive aspect of vocabulary learning were not completely ignored, most of the multisensory materials and vocabulary activities were designed and used to improve the pupils' receptive vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, two of the pupils jotted down a problem related to remembering the words because they had to deal with too many words simultaneously in each unit. Dunlap (2015) emphasized that overloading students by expecting them to know too many words defeats the purpose of exposing them to and teaching them vocabulary items. She suggested that more than seven, eight, or nine words should not be introduced at a time. Instead, a small number of words should be carefully selected and taught wisely by creating a curiosity about words to build vocabulary. However, the researcher did not reduce the number of the words taught in the intervention program in order to verify the equivalence of the groups and so as not to contradict the impact of MSVT on vocabulary achievement. Thus, the number of words used in this study per unit, which was over the recommended number, was determined by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) curriculum.

The data obtained from the cooperating teacher's blogs helped the researcher to ascertain some notable aspects of the use of MSVT. For instance, she stated that the pupils had much more fun when they played a game to revise newly learnt words. She suggested that people should not stop playing games, no matter how old they are, by asserting that games are one of the most effective techniques to promote learning. The teacher's views can be supported by the diary entries. The students stated that they had fun and spent a great and enjoyable time while playing games, in addition to positively mentioning the hand-made multisensory materials used within a variety of games such as the dart game and wheel game. In the literature, language games are also considered as a powerful learning tool in teaching almost every component of a language including vocabulary, by referring to their numerous benefits as mentioned by many authors such as Dolati and Mikaili (2011), Flora (2009), Lewis and Badson (1999), Linse (2006), Read (2007), and Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (2006).

In addition, the cooperating teacher also highlighted the importance of role-play activities in noticing and rehearsing newly learnt words through experiencing, by stating that "every new word they learnt became real when they played these roles". She also observed that when the pupils wore costumes to become different family members their behaviour, gestures, and facial expressions immediately changed. What was observed in the MSVT classroom is compatible with what is emphasized in the literature with regard to drama. Drama activities, which are naturally multisensory, enable learners to use mime, sounds, gestures, and imitation to make associations between language and these accompanied expressions serving as semantic clues (Dündar, 2012; Phillips, 1999; Read, 2007; Zalta, 2006).

On the other hand, the diary entries of the control group might shed light on the mainstream elementary school English instruction in Turkey. Some of the diary extracts revealed that pupils learnt new English words through pictures, listening to the teacher, translation, revising the words after the lesson, getting help from the teacher, doing exercises in a worksheet as homework, writing the words three times, and



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drawing and coloring items or pictures. When reporting their way of vocabulary learning, it was seen that they did not use positive expressions such as having fun in relation to the aforementioned ways, with two exceptions, which were a drawing and coloring activity and a bingo game. This is the most important difference emerging from the diary data. With regard to the use of drawing to practice newly learnt words, Baines (2008) stated that creating drawings could help learners to depict the meaning of unfamiliar words. It is probable that learners forget the definition of words but not a drawing or an image associated with a definition. Thus, their learning moves from short-term to long-term memory.

On the other hand, some of the pupils in the control group expressed positive feelings and views about two of the book activities, namely a bingo game and a song, by stating that they had a great time /good day in the classroom when learning through games and songs. In the interview, the teacher also stated that she mostly used a matching activity that required pupils to match the words with pictures, which is also included in many elementary school English coursebooks. Furthermore, she tried to teach some strategies such as underlining unknown words within the passage, guessing the meaning of the words from the context by evaluating whether the meaning of a word is positive or negative, and finally looking words up in a dictionary to learn the meaning of unknown words. In short, it seems reasonable to assume that teaching English vocabulary through MSVT is more effective than through mainstream education.

With regard to retaining English vocabulary, it is obvious that MSVT helps learners to keep words in their long term memory. The findings of the study can support the dual-coding hypothesis proposed by Paivio (1990), who asserted that people comprehend environmental information by dealing with two systems cognitively, namely the imagery system by referring to non-verbal objects, events, and behaviours including the processing of information through sensory modalities, and the verbal system by referring to language phenomena which should not be associated with the verbal system alone, but also with the imagery system. In short, human cognition deals with both language and nonverbal objects and events simultaneously. Thus, higher retention might be explained by what is claimed by Paivio (2007) and supported by Vekiri (2002), in that the participants of this study appear to have stored the target words in at least two systems, namely the linguistic system and the multisensory system including the visual system, in long-term memory.

In addition to the quantitative results, the qualitative part of the study provided invaluable data as to the implementation of multisensory materials and activities in the context of the classroom. The overall results emerging from the diary extracts of the experimental group indicated that learning English through MSVT is nothing short of fun and entertainment, owing to the fact that the multisensory activities used in the study were designed to suit their age and taste, which is why most of the pupils were very happy and fostered positive attitudes towards the English course. It is interesting that some of the pupils compared learning English through coursebooks to learning through multisensory materials. Except for one who preferred learning with the book which provides more individual work, most of them expressed positive views and feelings with regard to multisensory materials and activities which lead to more cooperative work than the coursebook activities do. They pointed out that multisensory materials, particularly the puppets, yes/no hands and manipulative monsters, were more attractive, enjoyable, and effective than what is offered within the coursebook. The reason might be that it is very difficult for elementary learners to sit still to work with coursebook exercises. In such experimental studies, participants are usually impressed by the novelty of the whole experience.

It is apparent from their diary extracts that the multisensory materials and activities increased the pupils' willingness and desire to be actively involved in stimulating and challenging activities accompanied by manipulative materials. The interview results support the finding that every pupil, including



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those labelled as uninterested and lacking in language aptitude, could find something interesting and motivating among a variety of multisensory materials and activities, which stirred up their enthusiasm for being involved in the activities supported by big, hand-made materials. The participating teacher suggested that when a teacher becomes the slave of prescribed books, it is highly likely that a lesson will be teacher-centered. However, MSVT puts the learners into action, and teachers are expected to take more of a passive stance while still being active.

On the other hand, the diary extracts taken from the control group might portray the mainstream English education in Turkey. That is, most of the participants within the control group attributed importance to the subjects being taught as easy, difficult, fun and enjoyable, being prepared for the lesson, answering the questions, getting help from the teacher, learning new things, doing exercises and homework, studying for the exam, and being able to produce the correct answer. They also mentioned their favorite coursebook activities such as the bingo game, song, drawing, and coloring. The results also indicated the pupils' negative views and feelings about doing revision and writing in a mechanical way. Despite having difficulties in dealing with some of the points, they fostered positive attitudes towards the English course as a result of their love for their teacher, for whom they express love and affection, saying that she makes the lesson more enjoyable for them.

The findings of this study can be used as a framework for primary school English teachers who seek innovative ideas to design their instructions so as to improve their pupils' vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, materials developers, particularly those who design English coursebooks for 4th-graders, can derive benefit from the multisensory materials and activities suggested in this study. In addition, should the need arise for redesigning the 4th-grade English language teaching program, the Turkish MoNE Board of Education and Discipline may take the findings and suggestions of the study into account in order to integrate evidence-based methods, techniques and materials. Finally, the teacher trainers who teach the course "Teaching English to Young Learners" in ELT programs can better equip teacher trainees with the techniques suggested in this study to help them become more competent English teachers in primary school contexts.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Despite using a mixed-method design by following both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms in order to achieve triangulation, this study followed a predominantly quantitative paradigm supported by a qualitative paradigm. Therefore, further research on the same issue can be designed by using a reversed version by focusing primarily on qualitative data involving field notes, classroom observation, video recordings, and interviews with pupils to obtain more in-depth results with respect to MSVT.

Knowing a word truly does not only mean perceiving its meaning but also using it as a part of daily life, and so students should be supported in using the target words in speaking and writing (Dunlap, 2015). Thus, further research can be conducted to investigate the effects of MSVT on learners' productive word knowledge.

The study was conducted via face-to-face education; however, the researcher and teachers have been struggling to find the best online teaching system and techniques due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, future research can be conducted to investigate the effects of MSLT which would involve online multisensory materials and activities on different components of language learning.



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## CONCLUSION

It would not be wrong to say that the findings of the study provide methodologically sound evidence for implementing MSVT, which activates the child's senses such as seeing, hearing, and feeling, in TEYLs. As considered in traditional methods, learning is not merely transmitting certain knowledge and skills to learners who are expected to gain factual knowledge. Instead, it is also a matter of instruction through which learners construct and reconstruct knowledge. When considered from this point of view, it is worthy of notice that MSVT helps pupils to construct and reconstruct knowledge through engaging in child-appropriate multisensory activities accompanied by developmentally appropriate manipulative materials which provide first-hand experience by seeing, handling, or manipulating them.

MSVT gives the teacher an opportunity to make a small change in this area. The history of education shows that remarkable changes come from within the classroom, from individuals altering one or two practices. If this attitude becomes widespread, it can snowball and animate the system. Big changes coming from above are not usually so powerful as to leave an imprint on an individual pupil's mind. No child would remember a word of the Ministry of Education, but s/he will always remember the teacher saying "*Here is a green monster!*"

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Individual Differences:** Learner variables differentiating individuals from each other.

**Multiple Modality Stimulation:** Activating more sense organs of students to increase their desire for learning.

**Multisensory Activity:** An activity in which students perform an assigned task by activating more than one sense.

**Multisensory Language Learning:** Constructing new language knowledge and skills via activating more than one sense.

**Multisensory Language Teaching:** A teaching system that requires language teachers to provide new language input through supporting visual, auditory, and tactual/ kinesthetic materials and activities.

**Multisensory Materials:** Any kind of language sources that require students to utilize more than one sense among visual, auditory, and tactual/kinesthetic senses.

**Perceptual Learning Styles:** Ways of perceiving and interpreting a new input via the most preferred learning channels such as visual, auditory, and tactual/kinesthetic.

**Young Learners:** Primary-level students aged from approximately 6/7 to 11/12.

## ENDNOTE

[1] This study is a part of the first author's PhD thesis under the supervision of the second author.



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# Chapter 9
# YAITS:
## The Design and Development of a Personalized E-Book Platform for EFL Learners

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## ABSTRACT

*An educational, personalized electronic book called You Are in the Story (YAITS) is evaluated to assess its effectiveness on reading comprehension and motivation on sixth grade EFL students in a state secondary school in Turkey. The study was conducted with 48 students (aged 11-12) that included reading comprehension scores and reading motivation scores. Results indicated that reading comprehension scores showed no significant difference between groups. YAITS considerably led to superior reading motivation scores compared to the printed guided reading control group. Personalized e-book reading had a positive influence on the internal reading motivation of the learners. Participant students claimed that they preferred to read in their free time the printed version of the books because of the sense of ownership that the printed text storybooks offered.*

## INTRODUCTION

The use of computers and electronic devices for reading for personal and educational purposes has gone up significantly in the recent years. This change is mostly caused by the digital revolution, which is also changing the world of education. Especially in the last two decades the use of digital children's books has become a multidisciplinary and methodologically diverse interest of study, with a focus on qualitative or quantitative research techniques and books produced commercially or by researchers; however, digital books for children lack a contemporary approach and this situation restricts user experience of the children (Kucirkova, 2019).

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According to Kucirkova and Flevitt (2020), "personalized books are digital or print books that have been altered in response to individual readers' needs and preferences" (p.136). The main purpose of personalized books is to provide children with a chance to be the protagonist of the fictional narratives. Personalized reading systems typically cater to the purpose of teaching children new concepts or supporting their learning with tailored reading experiences (Kucirkova, 2017). According to Kucirkova (2016), there is a wide variety of personalized e-reading elements such as: listening to the story, voice-recording, getting immediate feedback, helping when students do not understand, highlighting text, use of hotspots, reading to the student, and story authorship. Kucirkova (2016) also claims that the child's name as the main protagonist or other story characters can bear the names of the child's friends/relatives. Children might interact with the story elements in ways that are peculiar to them such as creating their own avatars and using it as the protagonist of the book. With the help of personalized electronic reading elements, children can experience reading meaningful and enjoyable stories. However, personalized electronic books might have some limitations. Interactive elements that are used in personalized electronic books such as hotspots might interfere with children's understanding of the story and might result in cognitive overload (Bus et al., 2014). Kucirkova (2017) also does not advise the use of only personalized electronic books for children.

On the other hand, the studies by Bus et al. (2014) and Kucirkova (2010) suggest that children show more interest in the story when they use personalized electronic books. Moreover, Kucirkova (2010) also mentions that personalized information provided improved comprehension with reduced memory load as the learner was building on previous knowledge and the concepts they already knew. Even though personalized reading has been used in reading in English, to our knowledge, there has been no detailed study of the impact of personalized reading on a learner's reading comprehension and motivation in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, which this study aims to address.

## Design of "YAITS"

YAITS is an educational personalized e-book platform that is designed for children at the age of 10. Four sample screens can be seen in Figure 1. The main goal of developing a digital personalized reading platform was to help children develop their reading comprehension skills while using the platform. ADDIE has a 5-step process for educational web design: analyze, design, develop, implement, and evaluate. This model was created for instructional purposes but it was also used in web design projects.

Analysis Phase: The project priority of the designers in this process was the target users and the goals of the project. The educators, therefore, evaluated four variables that were students, educational objectives, educational review, and learning objectives. Students were the first factor for analysis. Educators need to explore the prior knowledge of students about "English as a Foreign Language" and the challenge that students face, so that educators could identify the areas that need to be concentrated on and ways to solve their difficulties in reading in a foreign language. Instructional goals educators do need to define the obvious goals for this instruction to the child. Developing a very successful instruction template was simpler when a specific target was set. Therefore, the main objective of this project was to make it easier for students to increase English as a foreign language output through the website to inspire them to read English.

Learning outcomes and learning needs (what results should be achieved, what knowledge should be adopted) were defined. To achieve this, students' knowledge and skills required (specific skills required)



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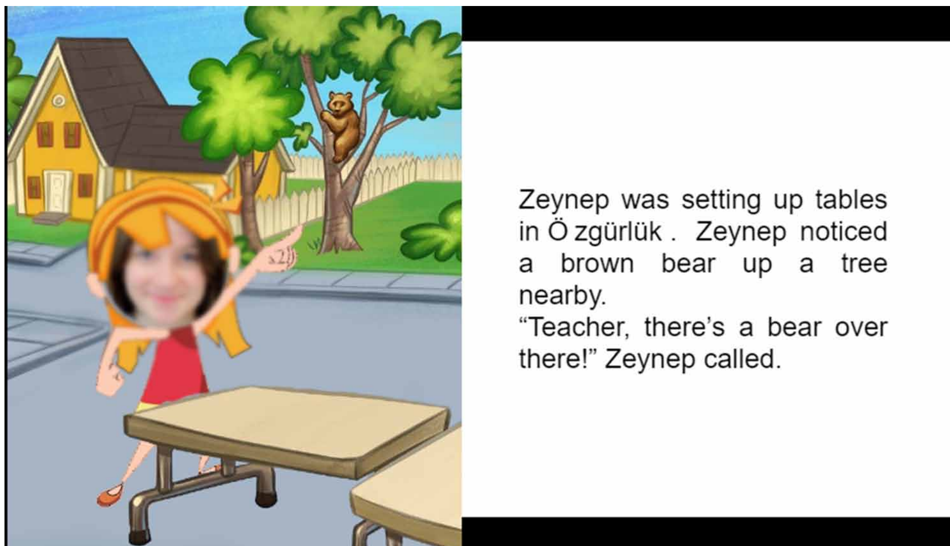
*Figure 1. Sample screen*




were also described. The researcher identified all pedagogical considerations, particularly in the case of online courses (adequacy of the approach chosen, adequacy of the methodology chosen, constraints ...)

Learning objectives: Through this study, researcher ensured what the students would be able to do after completing the lesson. The instructors referred to and adopted the course outline for “English as a Foreign Language” to evaluate the learning goal and the learning outcomes. In order to collect the required data above, a set of questionnaire was adopted as the research tool. Students’ need analysis was carried out by distributing need analysis questionnaires among the sixth grade EFL students. Through this context, an overview of the prior need for the development of the personalized electronic reading website included 100 grade six students who studied in a state school. The need analysis questionnaire which had four parts. Section A probed on the demographic details of the students; gender, year of study, mother tongue, and English as a foreign language learning background. In the questionnaire in order to generate the similarities and differences among students’ topic related questions were used. Section B was related to students’ needs in learning English as a Foreign Language, while Section C tried to collect data about the challenges faced by students in reading English. Lastly, section D probed students’ suggestions and opinions on the features of an effective educational website. Design Phase: The second phase of ADDIE model was the design phase. In this process, the designers concentrated on the website’s conceptual construction particularly on the website setting, what it could do and how to use it to meet the needs of the students. This stage used the data gathered from the analytical process to acquire the relevant theories and models of instructional design that described how learning could be obtained. Three design components to be based on by educators were learning content, tests, and instructional strategies including teaching methods and website design.

Learning content design: This step assures the material was well crafted to reach the learning objective. The educators had developed learning material based on the needs of the students as well as their thoughts and feedback based on the data gathered during the research process. In many studies, the font Verdana was believed to be a better choice to use while reading (Chapparo, Shaikh, Chapparo, & Merkle, 2010; Hojjati & Muniandy, 2014). So, Verdana was chosen as a font. Dyson (2004) found out



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that readers perform better when the texts were presented by using double-space on the screen between the lines. Another study also suggested that reading time had increased for 10-year olds when reading a computer presented text (Kerr & Symons, 2006). According to Sanchez and Wiley (2009), reading time is influenced by the amount of scrolling while the student is scrolling the text. Some other studies also reached the same conclusion, scrolling has a negative impact on text recall and/or reading comprehension among adult readers (Delgado et al., 2018; Sanchez & Wiley, 2009). Eklundh (1992) claimed that scrolling disrupts the reader's sense of text structure and spatial location of information, and hence makes it more difficult to understand the text. Scrolling was likely to generate cognitive load in the limited working memory capacity that we need when reading for comprehension (Sanchez & Wiley, 2009). In the study, we decided to create the book in page format, the reader does not need to scroll up and down while reading. The reader turned the pages. When the learning content and assessment were identified, the researcher started to design the instructional strategy by combining various methods to help students understand the topic. Then, the researcher and the field experts designed the website by preparing flowcharts and storyboards.

Development Phase: In this stage, the information which was collected in the analysis stage and started to build website. The development phase involved producing and testing the methodology used in the project. This stage was conducted based on the data collected from two previous phases. The developers started the development of the website by considering the hardware and software requirement required for the development. Frontend user interface language was used on the web-page. Frontend languages include CSS 2/3, Html 4/5, Javascript. It has to do with all the languages and frameworks used in designing and adding interactivity to web apps. Backend languages include PHP, Javascript. Javascript is a language for client scripting that was used to build Web pages. It was a language built-in Netscape which was standalone. It was used to render a webpage interactive and to incorporate special effects on pages such as rollover, roll-out, and other forms of graphics. HTML and CSS were used to create the layout.

Such systems had been chosen to create a mature infrastructure that allowed website building to be faster and simpler, enabling non-tech-savvy people to run their great platform without any technological support. The following table presents the software needed to create this educational website. In this stage, we finally put it all together and build a usable, attractive, and effective website. Permission was taken from Raz-Kids headquarters, and content was adapted with the help of field experts. To collect data from users we preferred Mysql.

In image two, you can find the sample screenshot of the programming language of the personalized book reading web page.

After website development was completed, we asked experts in Computer-Aided instruction and English as a Foreign Language and personalized reading to conduct a thorough review of the website. They tested the website and provided their opinions and suggestions in order to improve the website before it was used in sixth grade English as a Foreign Language students. The website was redesigned, updated, and enhanced in terms of learning material and online guidance prior to the implementation process.

The implementation process was then applied among the students at the aim. This process includes delivering and distributing the materials to target students who were secondary school students in the 4th grade who participated in the English Main Course. The number of students who took part in the implementation process was 24. In the process of reading, a computer laboratory with computing facilities and internet access was used for implementing the educational website. This process required all products to be tested to determine if they were working well and appropriate for the intended audience (Reiser & Dempsey, 2007).



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Evaluation Phase: The last phase of the ADDIE method was evaluation. This phase ensured that the website designed could achieve the desired goals. The evaluation was conducted via the implementation phase with the help of the teachers who administered the evaluation survey among 24 4th grade students. This stage was administered to measure the effectiveness of the website in helping the students to learn the language, as well as for instructional improvement.

The prototype was created as a web page as the secondary state schools in Turkey did not have tablets and laptops at schools. This prototype was complemented by several components to facilitate students in English as a Foreign Language reading process. The materials presented in the prototype were from the Raz-Kids web site which was created by field experts and used millions of students around the world. There are several main components in the prototype and the details. The home page gave a clear overall picture of the website. There was the only name of the web site and access code tabs and a header written “You are in the story” on the homepage. Besides, the header was created colorful to attract students' interest in reading English as a Foreign Language.

## METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of personalized book reading on reading comprehension skills and reading motivation levels of sixth grade EFL students at a private school in Istanbul, Turkey. The second purpose of this study is to analyze secondary school English teachers' opinions/reflections about their experience in using a personalized electronic book platform in a private school in the same context. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used. In this mixed method study, data were gathered through reading comprehension tests, a 4 point Likert-type reading motivation scale and teacher reflective journals. Random sampling was not used in this design due to feasibility issues. The groups that were present were matched for certain features and participants were randomly assigned to the groups. However, it still did not guarantee that these groups were equivalent.

### Research Questions

The study mainly aims to answer the following question:

“What are the effects of the personalized reading application (YAITS), when used as a reading comprehension tool, on English Language proficiency and student motivation in EFL classes?”

The sub-questions in the study are:

1. What is the impact of personalization as a reading comprehension tool on reading comprehension skills of EFL learners?
2. What is the impact of personalized reading comprehension activities on motivation levels of EFL learners?
3. What are the reflections and concerns of the secondary school EFL teachers regarding the reading program applied (personalized e-book reading and printed book reading)?



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## PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

To investigate these questions, the study was conducted in a Turkish secondary school context with EFL students. To provide appropriate and precise responses to the research questions, this proposed study recruited 48 sixth grade learners (aged 10), and three EFL teachers at a private secondary school in Istanbul, Turkey. EFL program which the students participating in the present study were exposed to was a four-skill integrated curriculum with 2 lesson hours each week. For the purposes of the study, a private school which had at least two sixth grade classes with 24 students in each classroom was selected. Each class had a Turkish EFL teacher and the researcher, who is an experienced EFL teacher, was also present during the sessions. The study was conducted as an after-school, extracurricular activity and 60 minutes was allocated for each book every week.

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND MATERIALS

### Research Design

The instructional design process for the personalized reading software was employed following the five core elements (analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation) and guidelines of the ADDIE model, which is a generic instructional design model (Gustafson & Branch, 2002). In the evaluation stage, the experts were consulted from the fields of both English Language Teaching and Educational Technologies. As a result of the feedback, changes in the design of the personalized reading platform were implemented.

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used. Creswell (2012) states that the mixed-method research design is carried out in order to collect qualitative and quantitative data within the same research and to use one to support the other. Mixed-method studies involve at least one quantitative method and a qualitative method, but studies in which these methods are not directly related to any research paradigm are called mixed-method models (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The quantitative part of the study utilized (1) a 4-skill English language placement test that was applied before the treatment as a pre-test to determine the English language proficiency level of the participants, and (2) a reading comprehension test. Additionally, a 4 point Likert-type scale reading motivation questionnaire was employed as a post-test. The summary of quantitative research instruments employed in this study can be seen in Table 1. The qualitative part of the study was composed of teacher reflective journals.

### English Proficiency Test

For this study, the Cambridge Starters Sample Test was used at the time of the analysis to assess the students' current level of English. The evaluation was performed by both the researcher and another experienced teacher working at the same school, teaching the same students. After both scorers completed evaluating all the proficiency tests separately, they worked together to compare, explain and negotiate their scores in order to ensure inter-rater reliability.



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*Table 1. Summary of quantitative research instruments*

| | Pre- Test | Treatment | Post-Test |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personalized electronic reading program (Experimental group) | Cambridge Starters Exam | Five weeks long guided reading program with a 60 min. guided personalized e-book reading session every week<br>Students read 5 books in total.<br>For each book they answered 10 reading comprehension questions.<br>Five Teacher Reflective Journals | Reading Motivation Questionnaire |
| Guided printed reading program (Control group) | Cambridge Starters Exam | Five weeks long guided reading program with a 60 min. guided printed book reading session every week<br>Students read 5 books in total.<br>For each book they answered 10 reading comprehension questions.<br>Five Teacher Reflective Journals | Reading Motivation Questionnaire |

## Reading Comprehension Tests

Reading comprehension tests were used to assess the students' level of comprehension after reading each story. Reading comprehension tests were developed to compare reading comprehension of the students on the content of the five weeks of the electronic reading course by field experts. The reading comprehension tests created included elements such as vocabulary, story elements, problem and solution, analyzing details, identifying main idea and details, and overall reading comprehension scores. The level of each book was determined in accordance with other common leveling programs like Developmental Reading Assessment, Lexile, and Reading Recovery.

## Reading Motivation Questionnaire

A 4-point Likert-type reading motivation questionnaire which was developed by Baker and Wigfield, (1999) to investigate the impact of the personalized e-book reading courses after the experiment was utilized in this study. Reading motivation questionnaire was used to assess the students' reading motivation after post-test in order to determine whether there was a significant change in the learners' reading motivation. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher in the classroom. Before the children answered the survey, they were told that they should answer questions about their reading, and that the questions had no correct or incorrect answers. Children were asked to respond to each item on a scale of 1 to 4, with choice of answers ranging from (1) "very different from me" to (4) "a lot like me". They were given some time to read the questions on their own. They completed the reading motivation questionnaire approximately in 7 minutes. Reading motivation scores has sub factors such as recognition, competition, self-efficacy, social, curiosity, and general reading motivation. The data obtained from the pilot study were analyzed descriptively via SPSS 22 in order to determine internal consistency reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated the questionnaire to reach excellent reliability, $\alpha = 0.91$.



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### Teacher Reflective Journal

In qualitative EFL research, the use of reflective journals has generated much interest in the recent years. John Dewey became one of the first academics to base his research on reflective thinking and the positive influence of reflective practices on the promotion of self-reflection and critical thinking. During the process of reflection, participants are expected to share their opinions about themselves through the research procedure — their values, decisions, expectations, and behaviors (Mruck & Breuer, 2003). Thus, the researcher of the current study requested that teachers hold a reflective journal during the process to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of the teachers about the application of electronic reading. The teachers participating in the study kept a reflective journal and sent it regularly to the researcher. The researcher did not provide the teacher with any guidance on what to write or how to write such reflections so as not to have any sort of impact on the teacher's reflections and to prevent the bias problem in qualitative research. The researcher and two field experts coded the data separately to ensure inter-rater reliability. Miles and Huberman's (1994) below formula was used in this study, the agreement between coders was found to be 80% which is sufficient to indicate inter-rater reliability ($P > 70\%$).

## INSTRUCTION PROCEDURE

### Experimental Group

#### Personalized Electronic Reading Program

For the experimental group, the personalized electronic reading program was implemented for 5 weeks with a 60-minute session each week. All 24 students were required to log in to the program during each session. Each child had their own username and password, and the software was set to their level of reading. The timer was set at 60 minutes for students to listen, read, and take quizzes on the books appropriate for their level. During these lessons, students were not allowed to control other features of the program and students were given training and instructions by the researcher to develop their reading fluency and comprehension skills before the experiment for guided reading. The researcher decided on the order of the books to be read by the learners.

#### Control Group

For the control group, the printed reading program was followed for 5 weeks with a 60-minute session each week. All 24 students read printed books during each session. Each child had their own printed book and the books were appropriately chosen for their level of reading. As with the experimental group, the timer was set at 60 minutes for students to read, and take quizzes on the books identified for their level. During these lessons, the teacher guided them, and students were given training and instruction by the researcher to develop their reading fluency and comprehension skills before the experiment for guided reading.



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## Data Analysis

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods.

The quantitative data obtained in the study (post-test scores of motivation questionnaire data, reading comprehension scores after reading each text) were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 22 for Windows. Number, percentage, average, and standard deviation were used as descriptive statistical methods in the analysis of the data. A Chi-square test was used to determine whether variables were independent from each other. Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to compare quantitative continuous data between groups. After the Kruskal Wallis test, the Mann-Whitney U test was utilized as a complement to determine the differences. The change between repeated measurements in the group was analyzed using the Wilcoxon test.

While conducting qualitative data analysis, strategies like categorizing, coding, and interpreting were implemented. Auerback and Silverstein (2003) argue that recurring concepts are themes that lead to “theoretical constructs” and eventually provide “theoretical narrative” that incorporate observations and interpretations. Hence, firstly, the data was collected from responses in teacher reflective journals and transcripts were created from the interviews. These data from the field notes and reflective journals were coded and categorized into themes. Then, they were categorized into similar groups based on the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from coding. These categories were used to construct a matrix of major themes, which were sorted by the researcher under specific headings and were elucidated.

Each section composed of 5 sub-sections. In addition to the reflective journals kept by the course teachers observing the students in both printed book reading and personalized e-book reading groups, field notes were taken each week for each classes by the researcher. Focus group interviews were conducted with five students from each group. Within the scope of the present research, all data obtained were transcribed and written, read by the researcher and her thesis advisor, coded, categorized, themed and finally interpreted. To ensure the reliability of the results obtained by the researcher, she revised the records she kept throughout the interviews and observations, received the confirmation of the participants and four different expert opinions. A number of differences arising were discussed among experts to decide on the final code, categories and themes.

### Ethical Considerations

Even though this study did not look at sensitive information about the participants that could violate their anonymity is being kept. All participants were asked for their consent to take part in the study before their participation. They were informed about the nature of the study through the school in writing (in Turkish) and were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The students in Grade 6 are under 16 and therefore, permissions from parents were sought in advance via the school.

## FINDINGS

This part presents the findings of the current study which aimed to investigate the effects of personalized reading experiences, compared to printed reading, on reading comprehension skills, motivation of EFL young learners at a private secondary school in Turkey along with the perceptions of participant students and teachers about it.



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## Findings about the Effects of Different Reading Environments on Reading Comprehension

Tables 2 and 3 below show the reading comprehension performance of the groups in the experiment. A comparative analysis was carried out and the between-group statistics were interpreted to discover whether there was a difference between the reading comprehension scores of the groups due to the different reading environments: printed book reading and personalized e-book reading.

*Table 2. Printed book reading group, change in scores between week 1 and week 5*

| | 1st week | | 5th week | | N | Z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Sd | Mean | Sd | | | |
| Problem and solution | 0.92 | 0.28 | 0.83 | 0.38 | 24 | -0.81 | 0.41 |
| Story elements | 0.71 | 0.46 | 0.79 | 0.41 | 24 | -0.81 | 0.41 |
| Analyze character | 0.71 | 0.46 | 0.87 | 0.33 | 24 | -1.26 | 0.20 |
| Main idea and details | 0.71 | 0.46 | 0.67 | 0.48 | 24 | -0.30 | 0.76 |
| Vocabulary | 0.54 | 0.20 | 0.54 | 0.20 | 24 | 0.00 | 1.00 |

In the printed book reading group when the mean scores of problem and solution, story elements, analyze character, main idea and details, and vocabulary in the 1st week and week 5 were compared using Wilcoxon test, a statistically significant difference was not found ($p>0,05$).

*Table 3. Personalized e-book reading group, change in scores between week 1 and week 5*

| | 1st week | | 5th week | | N | Z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Sd | Mean | Sd | | | |
| Problem and solution | 0.75 | 0.44 | 0.92 | 0.28 | 24 | 1.63 | 0.10 |
| Story elements | 0.58 | 0.50 | 0.83 | 0.38 | 24 | 1.89 | 0.05 |
| Analyze character | 0.62 | 0.20 | 0.96 | 0.49 | 24 | 2.53 | 0.01 |
| Main idea and details | 0.83 | 0.38 | 0.87 | 0.33 | 24 | 0.44 | 0.65 |
| Vocabulary | 0.58 | 0.50 | 0.94 | 0.24 | 24 | 0.23 | 0.00 |

In the personalized e-book reading group, the difference between the arithmetic averages was statistically significant as the Wilcoxon test for paired groups performed to determine whether the averages of reading week 1 and reading week 5 showed a significant difference ($Z=-2.30; p=0.02<0.05$).

Vocabulary scores of the students showed a significant difference between the groups ($\chi^2(3)=55.39, p=0.00<0.05$). Vocabulary scores of the learners who were exposed to personalized e-book reading ($\bar{x}=0.94$) were higher than vocabulary scores of those who read printed books ($\bar{x}=0.54$).



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The difference between arithmetic averages was found statistically significant as a result of the Wilcoxon test for paired groups performed to determine whether the mean of Analyze Character 1st week and analyze character 5th week showed a statistically significant difference *(Z=-2.53; p=0.01<0.05).* The arithmetic average of Analyze Character scores in week 1 was lower than (x=0.62) the average in week 5 *(x=0.96).*

## Findings About the Effects of Different Reading Environments on Reading Motivation Levels

A comparative analysis was conducted and the between-group statistics were tabulated to discover whether there was a difference between the reading motivation scores of the groups due to the different reading environments: printed book reading and personalized e-book reading. Table 4 shows the results of the analysis.

*Table 4. Personalized and printed e-book reading group change in scores in post tests*

| Groups | Personalized e-book reading group | | Printed book reading group | | KW | p | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Sd | Mean | Sd | | | |
| Post Self-efficacy | 3.60 | 0.33 | 2.57 | 0.46 | 44.68 | 0.00 | 1 > 2 |
| Post Competition | 3.11 | 0.67 | 2.17 | 0.23 | 50.13 | 0.00 | 1 > 2 |
| Post Curiosity | 2.94 | 0.53 | 2.14 | 0.19 | 55.39 | 0.00 | 1 > 2 |
| Post Compliance | 3.55 | 0.32 | 2.43 | 0.11 | 33.26 | 0.00 | 1 > 2 |
| Post Social | 3.05 | 0.38 | 2.81 | 0.11 | 13.89 | 0.00 | 1 > 2 |
| Post Recognition | 3.36 | 0.51 | 2.47 | 0.35 | 44.02 | 0.00 | 1 > 2 |
| Post General Reading Motivation | 3.26 | 0.27 | 2.43 | 0.13 | 51.15 | 0.00 | 1 > 2 |

Kruskal Wallis-H Test revealed the following findings:

Post self-efficacy scores of the students differed significantly between the groups *($\chi^2(3)=44.68$, $p=0.00<0.05$).* Kruskal Wallis-H test showed that post treatment self-efficacy scores of the participants who were given personalized e-book reading treatment *($\bar{x}=3.60$)* were higher than the self-efficacy scores of the ones who were exposed to printed books *($\bar{x}=2.86$).*

Post competition scores of the students were seen to differ significantly between the groups ($\chi^2$ *3) =50.13, p=0.00<0.05*). Post competition scores of the students in the personalized e-book reading group *($\bar{x}=3.11$)* were higher than the scores of the ones in the printed book reading group *($\bar{x}=2.17$).*

Comparison of post curiosity scores of the students also showed a significant difference between groups ($\chi^2$ *(3) =55.39, p=0.00<0.05*). Scores of learners in the personalized e-book reading groups *($\bar{x}=2.94$)* were seen to be higher than the ones who read printed books *($\bar{x}=2.14$).*

Post compliance scores of the students differed significantly between the groups ($\chi^2$ *(3) =33.26, p=0.00<0.05*). Personalized e-book reading group's post compliance scores ($\bar{x}$*=3,552*) were seen to be higher than printed book reading group's post curiosity scores *($\bar{x}=2.43$).*



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Post-social scores of the students also showed a significant difference between the groups ($\chi^2$ *(3) =13.89, p=0.00<0.05*). The comparison of the post social scores of personalized e-book reading group *($\bar{x}$=3.05)* and printed book reading group *($\bar{x}$=2.81)* indicated the former to be higher.

Post recognition scores of the students differed significantly according to the groups ($\chi^2$ *(3) =44.02, p=0.00<0.05*). Post recognition scores of personalized e-book reading participants *($\bar{x}$=3.36)* were higher than those of printed book reading participants *($\bar{x}$=2.47).*

Finally, post general reading motivation scores of the students also differed significantly between the groups ($\chi^2$ *(3) =51.15, p=0.00<0.05*). The findings indicate that post general reading motivation scores of personalized e-book reading group *($\bar{x}$=3.26)* were higher than the post general reading motivation scores of printed book reading group *($\bar{x}$=2.43).*

## Reflective Journals of the Control Group (CG)

As mentioned in the methodology section, the course teacher was asked to observe the printed e-book reading group and to keep a reflective journal every week. Data analysis indicated issues such as time constraints and lack of engagement, which are examined in more detail below.

## Time Constraints

Based on the reflections of the printed book reading group's teachers, it was noted that there were difficulties in keeping up with the pacing of the course and not time allocated was not sufficient to complete the tasks, as can be seen in the comment from the teachers' weekly journal comments below:

*[…] They have not been able to do some of the activities today, again. The teacher was required to assign the tasks as homework. (T1, Printed Book Reading Group, 05.11.2019)*

*[…] They were able to cover some discussion about the book after finishing the guided reading, some of the students were able to discuss, but due to time limits. Therefore, due to a lack of instruction some students struggled to fulfil the requirements of the program. (T2, Printed Book Reading Group, 05.11.2019)*

This may have been partly due to the fact that lecturing takes a lot of time, which made the teacher think it often prevented the planned activities from being done. It could be concluded therefore that the teacher needed more time to complete the exercises and was not pleased with the performance of the students due to lack of guidance.

## Lack of Engagement:

When teaching the teacher noticed that some of the students were very involved and interested in the lesson while the others were overwhelmed and did not take part in the lesson.

As this situation is disturbing the teacher, she writes:

*[...] Students asked some questions but I could not answer all of them. Once again I had the chance to see that the more involved the students are, the more attentive and engaged the session is. There were still silent and inactive students. (T1, Printed Book Reading Group, 05.11.2011)*



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*[…] Making them engage in the lesson is difficult at times, they seem so disconnected. (T2, Printed Book Reading Group, 05.11.2011)*

Based on this statement, it could be inferred that the teacher was not happy with the students who were participating in the lesson and she was naturally worried about distractions in the class. It could be inferred that student involvement was high, but it was difficult for the teacher to encourage all students at once.

## Reflective Journals of the Experimental Group (EG)

As mentioned in the methodology section, the course teacher of the personalized e-book reading group was also asked to observe the students and to keep a reflective journal every week. The findings showed that the observer teacher of the personalized e-book reading groups felt satisfied with the lesson in different ways. The following themes have emerged from the data; the learning environment, teacher intervention, reading pace, and ownership. Teachers also identified some negative aspects of personalized e-book reading.

## Learning Environment

The participants were found to be practicing independently during e-book reading lessons. The results suggest that this learning environment might improve their reading skills and encourage them to take more responsibilities.

The statements below assist these findings:

*[…] Students did all the reading on their own and they look really engaged. They monitored their performance, and tried to correct their mistakes while analyzing the stories. (T1, Personalized E-book Reading Group, Journal Data, 23.10.2019)*

All in all, teachers' reflections found that e-book reading lessons offered students the ability to plan their path of learning or discover new ways of learning on their own; namely, paved the way for a more autonomous learning experience. In addition, it could also be concluded that such an "autonomous learning environment" provided students with the ability to learn in individually diverse ways. The teachers also added that even though all the participants had gone through some pedagogical and technical challenges, they were willing to use electronic reading in their lessons. Their answers indicated that this was mainly because they believed the necessity to make use of technology in teaching, and had already witnessed its benefits especially in terms of fostering motivation in their students.

## Minimal Teacher Intervention

Concerning the results involving limited participation of teachers, reflective journals of the teachers showed that teachers only need to intervene with the class when the students needed clarification for any instruction. The participant teachers stated that the teacher acted as just a facilitator and students would complete all tasks on their own.

This is supported by the following excerpts.



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*[…] The teacher didn't lecture, she just observed the students. Surprisingly, she hasn't even helped them. She merely gave feedback. Without her guidance, they focused on their readings. They did work independently. (T1, Personalized E-book Reading Group, Journal Data, 06.11.2019)*

*[…] They never approached the teacher about the texts in the story or the vocabulary. When they came across with an unknown word, they just used an online dictionary and took notes. (T1, Personalized E-book Reading Group, Journal Data, 06.11.2019)*

To conclude, based on the reflections of the teachers, it is evident that e-book reading classes required comparatively less teacher assistance or guidance as the students were willing to complete the task and the related activities independently. Furthermore, the role of the teacher was to observe the class, being ready to assist the students or provide clarification when needed.

## Reading Pace and Discomfort

When analyzing the results, it was seen that teachers in the personalized e-book reading group was satisfied as they had sufficient time for student to complete the activities and they found it to be more interactive. They stated in their reflections:

*[…] Having personalized reading texts in the class, students focused more and the teacher had more time to monitor. (T1, Personalized E-book Reading Group, Journal Data, 30.10.2019)*

*[…] I do not think that reading from screen is comfortable. Whenever I read online, it makes me tired. (T1, Personalized E-book Reading Group, Journal Data, 10.10.2019)*

*[…] I read from the screen when I use social media and short messages. If it is a page or less, I prefer to read from the computer monitor or my mobile phone. (T4, Printed Book Reading Group, Journal Data, 10.10.2019)*

When teachers observed the researcher and took notes of their observation, they all anticipated that students would read slower from the screen. Before the study, teachers had their prejudice against screen reading as they thought that it was going to take longer than reading from a printed source. Journal entries of the teachers in the first week indicate that they found reading online to be not very comfortable and easy to use in classes.

## Ownership and Readers' Preferences

When analyzing the results, it was seen that teachers in all groups mentioned that they prefer owning and reading print books over e-books. Some of their comments can be seen below:

*[…] I do not think that reading from screen is useful. When I read something, I need to take notes, and color the parts which are important. When I read online, I do not have this chance. (T1, Personalized E-book Reading Group, Journal Data, 10.10.2019)*



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*[…] When I have the printed book in my hand, I like the texture of it, I love turning pages or underlining the sentences I like. (T4, Printed Book Reading Group, Journal Data, 10.10.2019)*

Overall, participant teachers at first claimed that they prefer to read a printed book as it gives them the chance to underline and take notes.

## DISCUSSION

### The Effects of YAITS on Children's Reading Comprehension

Concerning the research question, findings of the reading comprehension test indicated that personalized e-book reading participants made higher gains. On the other hand, those in the printed book reading group did not improve their reading comprehension as much. Some studies found no correlation between the media and improved reading comprehension (Hermena et al., 2017; Margolin, Driscoll, Toland, & Kegler, 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Courduff, Carter, & Bennett, 2013). In a quasi-experimental study which was conducted on 68 high school students, it was found that most participants read more quickly on the screen, while the reading scores were not found to be significantly different between paper and screen reading participants (Sackstein, Spark & Jenkins, 2015).

The current study investigated whether the reading medium (personalized e-book reading vs. print text) lead to a difference in the comprehension levels of sixth grade EFL learners. Results, in line with the previously conducted studies, showed that students' scores were not higher on the assessments when they read print text compared to when they read digital text, meaning there was no significant difference in scores between the groups. However, in the literature there exists some research on personalized teaching, which show that it had a significant effect on reading comprehension scores (Akinsola & Awofala, 2009; Dutke et al., 2015; Ku & Sullivan, 2002; Lopez & Sullivan, 1992; Sullivan and Yu, 2014; Sezer, 2015; Zeytçioğlu, 2017). In the light of all these studies, it is possible to state that reading e-books is fairly new to the students and they are not familiar with the scope of available tools in it. Although they were motivated to read e-books, it did not show any difference in their comprehension scores. This could also be explained with the novelty effect.

### The Effects of YAITS on Children's Reading Motivation

This study also aimed to investigate the impact of personalized e-book reading lessons on sixth grade EFL learner's reading motivation skills. The results indicate that implementation of personalized e-book reading has a positive effect on the reading motivation of the participant students.

At the beginning of the study, the motivation and reading medium of students were linked. As other researchers in educational technology argued in previous studies, we hypothesized that reading medium will affect reading performance in the planning stage (Hull, Stornaiuolo & Sterponi, 2013; Kneer & Glock, 2013). And, in this study, this hypothesis was confirmed.

Self-efficacy expectations is an important factor in evaluating the level and achievement of computer use by individuals (Deryakulu, Buyukozturk, Karadeniz & Olkun, 2008). In the study conducted, students who used personalized e-book reading were found to have higher self-efficacy scores than the printed book reading control group.



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General reading motivation of the personalized e-book reading group was also higher than the printed book reading group. It could be concluded that the personalized electronic book reading has a positive effect on sixth-grade secondary school students' general reading motivation.

Another possible explanation for increased motivation finding could be the different format in which information was supplied (electronic format compared to print format). Novelty effect is known to be a factor in increased motivation. "Novelty effect" is defined as an improvement in learning when a new technology is introduced, attributable to increased interest in the new technology that tended to diminish as students become more familiar with it (Metcalf et al., 2019). As the participants were not familiar with the personalized reading format, they could be motivated as they tried a new format of electronic reading. The lower reading motivation scores of the printed book reading participants can be attributed to the fact that it was an experience they have previously had, whereas personalized e-book reading was a "novel" experience for them. It could be concluded that as guided printed reading was a familiar experience for the learners, their reading motivation did not show an increase.

When the sub factors of motivation were examined, it was evident that personalized electronic book reading increased internal motivation of the students. In personalized e-book reading group, participant students' self-efficacy, compliance and curiosity scores were higher compared to the control group.

Curiosity of the personalized group showed the highest difference between groups. This is also supported by earlier studies in the literature which have found that when personalized fiction stories were used in EFL classes, they inspired "curiosity" (Figueroa-Flores, 2015; Kucirkova, 2017; Donohue et al., 2020). To conclude, Personalized e-book reading increased not only the general reading motivation of the students but also the intrinsic motivation of the students.

### Reflections and Concerns of the Secondary School Teachers Regarding the Reading Program Applied (Personalized E-book Reading and Printed Book Reading)

Each one of the four teachers participating in the study submitted weekly reflective journals, a total of six reflective journals. Also the researcher collected field notes. These data were analyzed via content analysis. In the study, reflection of the teachers had a vital importance as teachers enjoyed the practice. It is possible that they might have a tendency to integrate e-book reading in their classes in the future. Some of the outcomes obtained from the content analysis of reflective journals were in line with the results from the reflections of the students.

Teachers' epistemic beliefs are also important when they were integrating technology into their classes. If the teacher believed knowledge was absolute and could not be changed, this could have influenced their teaching. It turned out that teachers who believed that knowledge was not absolute and unique and that might change with new findings even if they were written in the book, and those teachers directed children to the internet to do more research. Epistemology of knowledge is also important. All of the students in the study mentioned that although they have a computer lab at school they have never been there. Teachers reported that they have noticed a number of children following text lines on their computer screens with a finger. This activity in reading has also been noticed among college students who are 19 years of age, completing at a machine reading comprehension test (Margolin et al., 2013). A teacher explained this in their reflective journals by claiming that they did not use computer laboratory as they consider technology as a distraction. This is called in the literature as functional fixedness or cognitive blindness. It is defined as the way the ideas we hold about a function of objects can inhibit our



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ability to use the object for a specific purpose (German & Barnett, 2005). Teachers use media in their life as an entertainment tool, when they come across the term technology integration, they ruminate it as something which harms the learning environment.

In the first week reflective journals of the teachers, all teachers claimed that they did not understand the long texts online. When the literature was analyzed, it was seen that some other studies reached similar results. Readers mention they prefer the printed version of the books because of the sense of ownership the printed text offers (Armitage et al., 2004; Griffith, Krampf, & Palmer, 2001). Teachers in the experiment also wrote in their journals in the first week that reading online was not comfortable and easy to use in classes. One teacher also wrote that she likes "physical experience" of the printed text. Readers of digital texts frequently report that reading online makes them tired and creates discomfort (Rouet, 2000) and that the lack of a "physical text", or more precisely lack of tactility, builds a feeling of uncomfortable reading environment (Armitage et al., 2004). However, as schools transition to paperless classrooms across the globe, the use of digital devices as reading resources has become increasingly relevant (Giebelhausen, 2015; Shishkovskaya, Sokolova, & Chernaya, 2015).

In their reflective journal entries, the teachers also talked about the positive motivation they observed in the e-book reading experimental groups. Kaynar, Sadik and Boichuk's (2020) study also showed similar results. The researchers propose that in early childhood children need to be introduced to e-books as they increase the students' interest in reading and their reading competencies. Most of the teachers found e-books useful because they provide an enjoyable reading experience for their students. The teachers also pointed out the importance of parental involvement while integrating technology into language learning in the early childhood. It can be concluded that the students whose parents are more interested in technology and language learning perform better in learning activities.

All in all, teachers' reflections showed that e-book reading lessons offered students the ability to plan their path of learning or discover new ways of learning on their own. In addition, it could also be concluded that such an "autonomous learning environment" could provide students with the ability to learn in individually diverse ways. Liman-Kaban and Boy-Ergul (2020) mentioned that teachers may consider technology use in the classroom as a distraction. At the beginning, teachers had some kind of prejudice against electronic reading, but then they realized the opportunities technology could offer. Moreover, Liman-Kaban and Boy-Ergul (2020) claim that there is a need for pedagogical, technological and technical teacher training. They also added that even though all the participants had gone through some pedagogical and technical challenges, they were willing to use technology; their answers indicated that this was mainly because they believed the necessity to make use of technology in teaching, and had already witnessed its benefits especially in terms of fostering motivation.

Absence of teacher education on how to conduct effective reading can be another reason of the teachers not using screen reading or computer lab at school. According to "What's Hot in Reading Report", the majority (60%) of participants do not accept that teacher training programs in these days are equipping educators with the skills they need for effective reading instruction (ILA, 2020). The report also adds that the biggest challenge for equity is the variability of teacher knowledge and the effectiveness of teaching. In the report, they asked about the professional development needs and 49% of the participants claimed that they need training on using digital resources to support reading instruction. According to National Literacy Report in the UK (2019), more than 30% of the young individuals report that they cannot find reading material that interests them. In the interview, our participants also claimed that they did not know how to reach quality reading material online.



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All in all, it is possible to conclude that teachers in the experiment had some reservations about integrating technology in their classes. However, after they observed the classes, they embraced the advantages it provides such as immediate feedback, more teacher-student time, and comfortable learning environment it created.

## CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study adds substantially to the literature by exploring the effects of electronic reading classes on reading comprehension skills and reading motivation of sixth grade Turkish EFL learners. The findings showed that it improved both. Participants had improved their skills and attained language acquisition (LA) after electronic reading treatment. Shortly, the results of the present study demonstrated that the use of screen reading lessons for teaching and learning reading could be considered as an efficient means of instruction to promote the development of reading comprehension skills, improve the reading performance and achieve LA in EFL classrooms.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher chose to work with sixth graders because they are at an intersection in their reading skills growth. Many students at this age have usually learned to properly decipher words to the point of practical fluency. Due to the nature of this research, the number of participants was limited. Therefore, the number of participants (n=48) in the study was not very high, and also their reading ability levels were low. Due to this limitation, for future research, it may be advised to use a wider sample of different ability levels. It is duly recommended that this type of research be carried out on a larger scale in order to improve the generalizability. Our analysis aimed to contribute to the gap in the literature regarding the relationship between reading comprehension and the personalized storybook reading. It calls experts to consider conducting new research on the impacts of personalized books on reading comprehension performance of the students, or overall research on the effectiveness of personalization tools in EFL classes.

Another possible research avenue would be to compare the comprehension skills of the students reading from different technological devices on the screen and to investigate the reasons that motivate the students to read on the screen. It is also possible to compare high and low achieving students reading from screen and to investigate the reasons that motivate the students to read on the screen. The effect of text length or text type on students' reading comprehension skills can also be analyzed.

Another limitation is that this research was performed for five weeks, with 60-minute lessons in each. Hence, the researcher could not apply a retention test due to external restraints. A retention test could be carried out four weeks later; however, in that period, the schools were in Semester Holiday. Also, a longer period of treatment can be carried out in the future studies in order to be able to gauge the effect of the treatment on the retention of the participant students. Lastly, present study respondents only read stories from one single online supply. In future studies various electronic libraries can be combined into screen reading classes to give the students broader variety of genre choices.



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# Chapter 10
# The PETaL Approach to Bilingual and Intercultural Education in Early Childhood Education

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## ABSTRACT

*García and Flores state that new pedagogies must respond to the complex bilingualism of students and to the heterogeneous classes of the 21st century. The main goal of this chapter is to describe the theoretical foundations of a new approach to bilingualism and interculturality in Early Childhood Education (ECE) called "the PETaL approach", whose acronym stands for "Play, Education, Toys, and Languages". PETaL is an approach and not a methodology in that it is a flexible model of bilingual implementation that adapts its key methodological principles to the particular context in which it is developed. Moreover, it is an approach that entails intercultural education as a constitutive axis of accommodation and plasticity, which are sine qua non conditions of it. The PETaL approach is framed in the European space, which offers a suitable international and socio-educational context where it has begun to be experimented and which has already attached itself to incipient research.*

## INTRODUCTION

The acronym PETaL was initially born to give its name to an Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree (EMJMD) coordinated by the University of Córdoba (Spain), whose partners are the Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon (Portugal) and the Marmara University (Istanbul, Turkey) as members of the consortium (2018-2025). EMJMDs are part of the Erasmus+ scheme by the European Commission, and they are defined by the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) in this way: "An Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree (EMJMD) is a prestigious, integrated, international study programme, jointly delivered by an international consortium of higher education institutions (HEIs) and, where relevant, other partners with specific expertise and interest in the study programme" (EACEA, n.d., paragraph 1). EMJMDs aim

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to foster excellence, innovation and internationalization in HEIs by launching competitive calls to select the best curricula, institutions, teachers and students. The ultimate goals are to boost the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and to improve the level of competences and skills of Master graduates and their employability.

PETaL EMJMD (https://web.em-petal.eu) was selected as one of these programmes in 2018, standing as a unique opportunity for quality training of early childhood education (ECE) teacher students on intercultural and bilingual education, taking play and toys as its main constructs.

An outstanding outcome of PETaL EMJMD is the PETaL approach, whose design makes sense in the 21st century because, among other reasons, contemporary education curricula should provide an intercultural and plurilingual view of the world (Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier, & Panthier, 2016) that must accompany human beings from their earliest childhood (0-8 years) (UNESCO, 2006).

The PETaL approach is framed in the European space, which offers a suitable international socio-educational context where it has begun to be experimented and which has already offered incipient research. PETaL is also in line with the Council of Europe's founding principles of multilingual and intercultural education (Council of Europe, n.d.a., paragraph 5).

This chapter will describe the PETaL approach, by offering the main theoretical bases on which it has been designed: intercultural and bilingual education. Then, we will describe the four areas covered by the training of the intercultural competence (i.e. knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior) (Byram, 1997), which will be discussed in detail herein.

Describe the general perspective of the chapter. End by specifically stating the objectives of the chapter.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical construct that lies at the base of the PETaL approach is composed of a structured set of concepts which, coming from different theories (e.g. CLIL, bilingual education and intercultural education), have nurtured this 21st century approach. Its objective is to foster the learning of second languages among ECE students through the construction of the intercultural communicative competence, which constitutes its central axis. Therefore, languages and culture are structural to this model.

To begin with, PETaL assumes that language is at the core of human identity, activity and expression (UNESCO, 2012). Charalambous & Rampton (2012) underline the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence for the modification of the individual's mental constructs and the capacity to recognize otherness. Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier, & Panthier (2016) publish the official document of the European Commission for the development and implementation of curricula in plurilingual and intercultural education. This document contains interesting descriptors and indications for the ECE stage (International Standard Classification of Education [ISCED], level 0), which is divided into two main blocks: ECE development (between 0 and 2 years) and pre-primary education (which ranges from 3 years to the beginning of primary education, an age that varies between countries). This stage of education is not normally compulsory but is often present in international state school systems. For these authors (and therefore for the Council of Europe) schools are a space of discovery and socialization, and in the pre-school stages they represent a crucial moment for plurilingual and intercultural education. In this sense, and given that it is a question of access to language (and general) education for all pupils, one of the first considerations is that socialization and schooling of this kind for very young



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children should be guaranteed and offered under optimum conditions to all groups concerned, both native permanent residents and newly arrived immigrant families.

PETaL, as an approach to bilingual education, assumes that linguistic education is at the base of its precepts, as learning experiences in languages and cultural diversity are placed in a priority area. On the other hand, respect for *otherness* is a fundamental part of intercultural education, which is the constitutive axis of PETaL. The different forms of expression and the multimodal and multisensory experiences that, among others, are offered through *mindfulness* techniques in the PETaL classroom, as well as the capacity to reflect on languages, human communication and cultural identity (which are found in the affective and cognitive domains of the child, as Hill, 2006, pointed out) lead to intercultural understanding.

Then, games, play and toys, as powerful transmitters of culture and developers of the intercultural communicative competence, will be basic pedagogical tools in the PETaL classroom, whose main use will be to help children to build and develop such intercultural communicative competence. These interesting structural elements are placed in the enriched context of PETaL, where we also find translanguaging and classroom materials, as well as specific relaxation techniques (e.g. mindfulness), which contribute to creating a rich, positive and, above all, fruitful experience from an educational point of view for the child of this interconnected, ubiquitous and diverse society.

PETaL uses the four components of intercultural communication competence identified as the core of this approach (skills, knowledge, attitudes and behavior). United Nations (2011) indicates that the age of the migrant child is a factor that plays against his or her cultural adaptation; that is, the younger the child, the easier it is for them to learn a language and adapt to the environment.

As stated above, the PETaL approach is framed in the European space, which offers a suitable international and socio-educational context. Therefore, PETaL is in line with the Council of Europe's founding principles of plurilingual and intercultural education (Council of Europe, n.d.a., paragraph 5), which are set out as:

1. **recognition** of linguistic and cultural diversity as guaranteed by Council of Europe conventions;
2. everyone's right to use their language varieties as a medium of communication, a vehicle for learning and a means of expressing their affiliations;
3. every learner's right to gain experience and achieve a command of languages (language of schooling, first language, foreign language etc.) and the related cultural dimensions according to their personal needs and expectations, be they cognitive, social, aesthetic or affective, so as to be able to develop the necessary competences in other languages by themselves after leaving school;
4. the centrality of human dialogue, which depends essentially on languages. The experience of otherness through languages and the cultures they carry is the precondition (necessary but not sufficient) for intercultural understanding and mutual acceptance.

PETaL assumes these principles as its own and, among them, the right of all learners to master different languages, together with the cultural dimensions associated with them, according to their personal expectations and needs are enhanced, so that the subject can develop the capacity for self-learning that will enable them to learn other languages in the post-school stage. On the other hand, the experience of otherness through languages culture is especially relevant to the PETaL approach, establishing it as a necessary (though not sufficient) precondition for the achievement of intercultural understanding and mutual acceptance.



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Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier, & Panthier (2016) provide a model of how various elements of an ISCED 0 curriculum can be linked. The novelty of this proposal, according to the authors, is the fact that the curriculum is considered less in terms of the competencies to be achieved by the learner than in terms of the responsibility and initiative of the teacher or educator. Thus, the priorities identified for this level are: making use of the linguistic and cultural repertoire of the pupils, highlighting the plurality and internal diversity of the class with a view to ensuring acceptance of the children's primary identities, and acquiring the relevant skills in the language of socialization/schooling, thus allowing the construction of guided concepts and the possible introduction of a first foreign language.

The PETaL approach adopts the general characteristics of this model in that languages and intercultural education are its basic principles. We also find other relevant aspects that coincide with the PETaL approach: the emphasis on the use of play, the importance given to discursive variety and oral language practice.

Provide broad definitions and discussions of the topic and incorporate views of others (literature review) into the discussion to support, refute, or demonstrate your position on the topic.

## Bilingual and Intercultural Education

PETaL is an approach to bilingual education, specially designed to address the teaching and learning of second languages among students from 0 to 8 years old, whose axis is found in intercultural education. PETaL is strongly influenced by the quintessential European dual approach: CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). Let us see in what way and how the general principles of CLIL (as a dual language approach which fosters the integrated learning and teaching of both languages and content) are an important projection for PETaL.

Most international agencies and institutions, including UNESCO and the OECD, recognize the need to improve the skills and attitudes of 21st century learners so that they can and do communicate in an intercultural manner. For the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, n.d.b., paragraphs 1-2), intercultural education is linked to languages and takes the form of the creation of a space in the classroom where contact between cultures and interaction with difference and otherness are encouraged.

The need to implement intercultural education in bilingual approaches has been widely discussed in the literature, where remarkable authors explain the indissoluble connection between language and culture, which means that this link must be extended to classroom practices. Kramsch (2011) established a clear association between intercultural competence and languages, thus confirming a long tradition represented by other authors who have intensively discussed this union (see Risager, 2011 for a review of the most important studies in this field).

CLIL research has also focused on the analysis of the affective factors surrounding L2 learning for the learner. Thus, we find that learners in CLIL itineraries improve their level of motivation (Sommer & Svenson, 2020), decrease anxiety levels (Ohlberger & Wegner, 2019), improve their self-esteem (Roiha & Mäntylä, 2019) and their self-efficacy (Jaekel, 2018), and decrease the level of attrition in the L2 learning process (Turner, 2019). Research has also analyzed the effects of CLIL implementation on learner personality factors and, among the most recent studies, we find that CLIL learners report better and higher risk taking than their non-CLIL peers (Foltyn, 2019), more empathy (Martínez-Serrano, 2020), less inhibition (Efstathiadi, 2019), and higher tolerance of ambiguity (Simons, Vanhees, Smits, & Van De Putte, 2019). Moreover, CLIL students significantly improve their L2 level and their level of content acquisition (Agencia Andaluza de Evaluación Educativa, 2019).



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Therefore, and assuming that culture and languages are a clear pair, the theoretical and practical framework of Coyle's "4Cs" (1999, 2002, 2006, 2007) provides the CLIL approach with a powerful tool which has been the subject of much research and application in the classroom. The 'culture' component of the 4Cs refers to intercultural education in the CLIL approach. The role of culture in CLIL is critical and research has a predominant status in establishing how it is introduced into the classroom, what learning objectives it addresses, and what the assessment measures are. For example, Sudhoff (2010, p. 3) proposes CLIL as a "catalyst for fostering intercultural learning"; and Méndez García (2013) believes CLIL can be a great construct for developing intercultural attitudes and skills, and be a way of making sense of the world. The final objective must be, on the one hand, to acquire the intercultural communication competence (Byram, 1997), which is based on four areas (knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior) and, on the other hand, to foster intercultural understanding which, according to Hill (2006), encompasses the cognitive and affective areas of human beings. Thus, culture / intercultural education is considered by Coyle (2009, p. 107) as: "[…] a challenging one – not least because of the flexible nature of CLIL and its range of contextual identities, but essentially the relationship between culture and learning in general, and language learning in particular, is open to interpretation and debate."

However, several studies have pointed out that the implementation of the intercultural axis in CLIL is not developed in almost any educational institution. Coyle (2007, p. 550) explains that this axis receives little attention from researchers: "Whilst intercultural learning and understanding potentially permeate CLIL learning and teaching, there is currently little research which explores the role of culture in CLIL."

In the same vein, Coyle, Hood, & Marsh (2014, p. 54) conceptualize the 4Cs framework, giving culture (i.e. the intercultural axis) the major status it has in CLIL:

*Culture […] is a thread which weaves its way throughout any topic or theme. Sometimes referred to as the 'forgotten C,' it adds learning value to CLIL contexts, yet it demands careful consideration. For our pluricultural and plurilingual world to be celebrated and its potential realised, this demands tolerance and understanding.*

Therefore, the intercultural axis, despite its structural importance in CLIL, is a difficult construct to implement, whose incorporation into this bilingual approach has been identified as a necessity.

In spite of the clear interdependence of both constructs (language and culture), and the unquestionable need to incorporate the intercultural axis in the second language classroom, research indicates that serious difficulties are found in this regard. PETaL, as a bilingual education approach in ECE (for students aged 0-8), incorporates the intercultural axis as structural to the model. Classroom planning and theoretical principles are based on intercultural communicative competence (Bryam, 1997) and on its various components (knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior). Farrell (2018) supports the need for culture to be present in the early education stage, because the development of the intercultural axis offers students the opportunity to interact with other cultures.

Farrell & Pramling Samuelsson (2016) abound in the idea of the disparities in which the children of the 21st century live (and coexist) in conditions that these authors call "seismic movements". On the one hand children of the planet are facing unprecedented patterns of inequity and poverty, whereas there are some other children who enjoy apparently unlimited possibilities when it comes to participating in ICT and social networks that offer them plenty of opportunities. These disparities invite researchers to ask interesting questions about the conditions children need to learn and thrive. The Early Childhood Education Forum (ECEF, 1998) held in the United Kingdom already indicated that educators in the 21st



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century would need to take on the education of children in a context that reflects a multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious society. Siraj-Blatchford, & Clarke (2000, p. 70), in the same vein, state:

*All childhood programmes should reflect multicultural and equity perspectives regardless of whether they are developed for exclusively English-speaking children or for children from a range of diverse backgrounds and languages. A culturally responsive curriculum and staff who understand and respect the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children in their care can make a difference.*

The need to incorporate intercultural education into a bilingual approach to ECE in the twenty-first century is therefore not just an ornament or a political issue; it is a *sine qua non* condition for quality education. Intercultural education goes beyond education about linguistic and cultural diversity because it involves educators and students in a continuous challenge to stereotypes and contributes to the development of inclusive attitudes and behaviors (Gorski, 2008). Furthermore, the development of intercultural competence is one of the keys to educating the citizen of the 21st century. Lonner & Hayes (2004) explain that intercultural competence is a multifaceted concept that includes aspects concerning emotional (Goleman, 1995), contextual (Sternberg, 1988) and interpersonal (Gardner, 1993) intelligence, which combine to form a person who is emotionally caring but controlled, sensitive to interpersonal dynamics and genuinely perceptive when in complex and highly interactive situations (Gardner, 1993). Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier, & Panthier (2016, p. 10) define it as this: "Intercultural competence, for its part, is the ability to experience otherness and cultural diversity, to analyse that experience and to derive benefit from it."

For Keith (2010) and Pratas (2010), intercultural education implies a transformation in the power relations among people, as well as in the way the curriculum is designed and implemented. The international guidelines on intercultural education developed by UNESCO in 2006 sought to address these concerns. The three basic principles set out (UNESCO, 2006) on intercultural education are:

- To respect the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education.
- To provide each learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.
- To enable learners to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups.

These guidelines, therefore, encompass a rights-based approach to education, critical awareness of the role of education in combating racism and discrimination, anticipation of learner heterogeneity, and learning in children's mother tongues.

We cannot forget, however, the need to include second languages in the catalogue of children's rights because, today, they are the essential construct that teaches children to understand, communicate and deal with diversity. In this sense, Heyward's intercultural literacy model (2002) specifies language competence as the necessary tool for the subject's participation in intercultural processes: "the understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participation and identities necessary for successful cross-cultural engagement" (p. 10). Similarly, Siraj-Blatchford, & Clarke (2000, p. 20) indicate the importance of languages for children's social development:



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*There is no doubt about the importance that language plays in the lives of children. Language involves more than learning a linguistic code with which to label the world or to refer to abstract concepts; language also involves learning how to use the code in socially appropriate and effective ways. It is not just a question of learning the words and grammar of another language, you must also know how to use them in socially acceptable ways.*

Cook (2016) states that a survey of L2 trainees of different ages and cultural backgrounds reveals that "people want to learn a language for getting on with people more than they do for job opportunities" (p. 154). In other words, one of the factors that increases motivation for language learning is found in the social aspect of language and, therefore, helping to cover this need in the first years of an individual's education can only contribute to improving their possibilities of relating to other inhabitants of the planet.

Therefore, access to second languages must be considered one of the fundamental rights of the child, despite the fact that there is still no express recognition by official international bodies such as UNESCO, which recognizes the right to play (UNICEF, 2020, right No. 31); the right to education to develop one's talents and skills (UNICEF, 2020, rights No. 28 and 29); and the United Nations, which recognizes the right of the child to complete primary education (United Nations, 2015, right No. 2). The right to learn languages, as a necessary construct for the recognition of the cultural diversity of peoples, for communication among the inhabitants of the planet and for the necessary socialization of the individual in a global world should then be included among the universal rights of the child.

Intercultural education, as we were already advancing, does not find great repercussion in the approaches of infantile education, in general, nor in the bilingual approaches of ECE, in particular, due to the fact that, on the one hand, its implementation presents serious difficulties (Gómez-Parra, 2020). On the other hand, ECE (either bilingual or non-bilingual) is a particularly demanding educational stage, where the training of teachers should have remarkable levels of demand because the quality of the educational programs offered to students depends on them (Zepeda, Castro, & Cronin, 2011; Rao, Sung, & Wang, 2016). This is confirmed by the results of Report 320 on ratios, group sizes, and teacher qualifications and training in ECE by Munton, Mooney, Moss, Petrie, Clark, & Woolner (2002, p. 114): "Better staff training has positive effects on not only the quality of staff:child interactions in early years settings, but also on salaries and thus staff turnover."

Although the quality of ECE teacher training is not always guaranteed by the possession of a university degree (Hyson, Tomlinson, & Morris, 2009), it is recognized as one of the keys to the quality of ECE (UNICEF, 2019; OECD, 2017). This need for excellent training for ECE teachers is even greater in bilingual pathways (García, 2016, p. 367):

*However, the emerging research suggests that in order to create optimal development and learning environments, general best practices for ECEC must be enhanced for young students developing two languages simultaneously. These include bilingual exposure and use in early learning programs, bilingual instruction and assessment practices, and appropriate teacher training/development.*

The need for specialized teachers is sufficiently well reflected and demonstrated in the literature, which states with solvency the reasons why teachers in early childhood education must have quality training. The OECD, for example, indicates that the quality of children's play improves when teachers have a university education of at least four years (OECD, 2017, p. 91): "Playroom quality also seems



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to be higher when educators have at least a four-year long university degree (Early et al., 2007; Howes, Phillips, & Whitebook, 1992)." In the same vein, Mathur (2015, p. 58) states:

*Intensive in-service training and support to earn college degrees in early childhood education will not only equip the teachers with the knowledge they need to design and appropriately participate in children's play, but it will also allow them to draw on their cultural knowledge to implement play-related activities in early childhood settings. While this is an easy concept to embrace, it is hard to execute. […] Appropriate teacher preparation will go a long way in increasing verbal communication during play and minimizing the time children spend waiting, gazing, or cruising around without purpose.*

Whitebread et al. (2012, p. 46) expand the range of training to be addressed by early childhood education teachers:

*Alongside a major research push, extensive training for all those involved in the care and education of children, concerning the psychological processes embedded in playful activity, the essential qualities of play, the role of adults in supporting it and its benefits for learning and well-being is vitally important.*

The PETaL approach has been purposefully designed to address language teaching and learning from the principles of intercultural education. As analyzed, the need to implement the intercultural axis is a priority for bilingual education approaches due to the undeniable connection between language and culture, the learning of which must be a primary objective in ECE curricula. The advantages of bilingual and intercultural education are numerous. For Zepeda, Castro, & Cronin (2011) it is important to bear in mind that children who learn a second language on bilingual routes have a multidimensional task. On the one hand, they have to learn the oral domains (vocabulary, phonology, syntax and pragmatics) and those related to literacy (phonological awareness, knowledge of the alphabet, printed conventions) of a new language. On the other hand, they also have to learn the social rules of interpersonal relationships and a set of beliefs and values, which may be different from those acquired at home. It is essential, these authors continue, that teachers understand the complexities of the various domains of development and learning in these learners in order to design and implement effective practices in the classroom. With the new language, children on bilingual pathways are learning a new culture and therefore whether this experience is positive or negative will have a strong influence on their future success in school and in life. The development of intercultural communication competence (Byram, 1997) is at the heart of the PETaL approach, where the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior of the individual must be in conjunction and act in unison to facilitate intercultural understanding among early childhood students. This intercultural understanding, according to Hill (2006), covers the cognitive and affective areas of the human being and its achievement in the PETaL classroom is paramount for the approach. Therefore, the training and development of intercultural communication competence in the PETaL approach must address the four main areas that define it: knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior (Byram, 1997). These are discussed in detail herein.

## Knowledge

MacNaughton (1999) states that international curricula in ECE have traditionally underestimated (or even neglected) the inclusion of content. However, research in the area supports the idea that children



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move from being novice learners to experts in different areas, and some emphasis is placed on the idea that new knowledge should be built upon existing one (Wellman & Gelman, 1992, 1998; Inagaki & Hatano, 2002). In addition, socio-cultural theories consider children to be skilled and competent learners who learn in contexts that are mediated and situated in socio-cultural settings, thus enabling their active participation in learning experiences that will later facilitate their insertion into diverse communities (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). Hedges & Cullen (2005) explain that the research vision on content in ECE curriculum is polarized. On the one hand, there are authors who argue that content-based curricula are contrary to the way children think and learn and that, therefore, these approaches invite inappropriate, formal, and pedagogically demanding pedagogical views. Examples of this school of thought are Curtis (1998), Corrie (1999) and Nutbrown (1999). However, subject-based learning outcomes are considered desirable by other authors, such as Marcon (2002) and Wylie, Thompson, Hodgen, Ferral, Lythie, & Fijn (2004). On the other hand, there are arguments that subject knowledge is essential to support children's learning, among which we can identify Buckingham (1994), Feasey (1994) and Cullen (1999). Research also suggests that teachers who are confident in their subject knowledge are more likely to recognize and maximize learning through children's play experiences (Anning & Edwards, 1999).

Coste, Moore, & Zarate (2009) explain the need to include content areas in plurilingual and intercultural approaches. We understand, then, that content (which we conceptualize as "knowledge about the subject") is a *sine qua non* condition in a bilingual approach such as PETaL. Although it is true that the subjects mentioned (e.g. history or geography) do not seem to be suitable for infant education (at least, not as they are understood in a usual primary or secondary education curriculum), we believe that the adaptation of contents to the PETaL classroom, filtered by culture (as indicated by Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009) are necessary for the correct construction of the intercultural and plurilingual competence.

Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier, & Panthier (2016, p. 78) use the term "learning areas" or "fields of expertise" to refer to content that should be included in ECE curricula:

*This level of schooling does not yet involve "subjects" but, rather, "fields of experience" and "learning areas", which may well be called by some other name. Language plays a key role here alongside other semiotic resources, such as drawing, body movement, music and play.*

Therefore, for the PETaL approach, being a European approach strongly influenced by CLIL, the construction of knowledge into learning areas, whose purpose is to lead early childhood learners towards intercultural understanding, is a priority. Thus, knowledge about rhythm, music and dance in different cultures, overcoming certain basic stereotypes (adapted to the age of the learners), eating habits in different cultures, the meaning of clothes, or learning to play games from different cultural traditions are considered learning areas (i.e. knowledge) that the PETaL classroom passes through the sieve of intercultural education in order to offer them to ECE pupils to help them build their intercultural communication competence and foster intercultural understanding. This knowledge is added to linguistic knowledge, which is inductively included in the classroom. Both should be learned in an indissoluble way because language and curricular contents are carriers of culture and, as such, both contribute to the construction of the intercultural communicative competence.



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## Skills

For Moran, Youngdahl, & Moran (2009) culture is learned, and childhood experiences exert a strong influence on an individual's personality. Therefore, intercultural skills among early childhood must be fostered among learners because, more than likely, those will be part of their desirable intercultural personality as adults. That is, if these skills come from intercultural education, teachers nowadays will be educating the citizen of the 21st century in those aspects that are consubstantial to the nature of human beings: values, beliefs, assumptions, and, therefore, behavior appropriate to the era in which, more than probably, they will have to live with/through otherness. All this is learned through the socialization process that children experience in the classroom, where methodological procedures and theoretical supports of the approaches used must be adapted, so that ECE teachers can work with different values, assumptions and cultural beliefs that enhance the development of intercultural skills. The formation of intercultural skills has to be a conscious training process, which should offer students opportunities for personal transformation through reflection. In this sense, Push (2009) suggests the role of educational programmes in providing in-depth exposure to other cultures, emphasizing the education of intercultural skills and providing opportunities to reflect on the educational experience. Similarly, Dziedziewicz, Gajda, & Karwowski (2014) advocate the need for multicultural and intercultural initiatives to be introduced into the school curricula of ECE students, in line with the studies by Kim, Greif Green, & Klein (2006), and Ponciano & Shabazian (2012), because, as Dziedziewicz, Gajda, & Karwowski (2014, p. 40) state:

*Early development of these skills not only enhances children's identity and knowledge about cultures, but also stimulates the development of openness and sensitivity to others. These are important benefits as stereotypes and prejudices are observed even in very young children (Powlishta et al., 2004).*

For Süssmuth (2007): "educational policies must equip youth with the ability to live peacefully with persons from other cultures, religions, ethnicities, and social backgrounds" (p. 202). Therefore, intercultural skills have to be educated in a formal context (i.e. the classroom), where educational policies and programmes play an active role in planning and development.

Intercultural skills in ECE are considered essential in the PETaL approach and they need to be developed alongside the literacy and numeracy skills that are essential for effective communication in 21st century society. Intercultural skills are structured into four major blocks in the PETaL approach: cognitive, digital, social and emotional, becoming school the appropriate place to learn them because, as Süssmuth (2007, pp. 198–199) states: "Schools are the most important institutions in which these intercultural skills can be taught and learned". In the case of pre-school children (0-8 years), intercultural skills must be adapted to this age range in order to make them accessible to their abilities and developmental possibilities.

*(i) Cognitive skills*. PETaL will provide students with the necessary tools to facilitate the development of cognitive skills that allow them to become independent thinkers, while developing empathy (an essential characteristic for intercultural education). In addition, pupils must acquire the necessary linguistic knowledge to be able to communicate with their peers and deal with solutions to problems of coexistence in the classroom, apply logic, and integrate into a globalized world. These cognitive skills must enable them to understand that the different religious, ethnic and linguistic differences in the world in no way threaten their own identities. For example, the PETaL classroom will include role-plays among classroom procedures (adapted to the stage), which allow the ECE learner to experience otherness by putting



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themselves in the place of others, to understand ambiguity, to accept difference and to work in groups. Role-plays can also be used for problem solving and communication in inter-/multicultural contexts.

*(ii) Digital skills*. They are today a *sine qua non* condition in school curricula, which situations such as the international pandemic experienced in 2020 prove to be essential at any educational stage. The digital gap that may exist in the skills of ECE pupils (Suárez, Rodrigo, & Muneton, 2016) must be overcome. That is why PETaL incorporates them as a curricular priority, housed within intercultural communication competence. Moreover, the early initiation of students into digital skills can significantly improve their long-term academic results (Hurwitz & Schmitt, 2020), taking into account that the time dedicated in the classroom to the development of these skills must be properly planned to be of educational quality (and not of leisure in networks, for example). The specialized literature has shown that, contrary to the popular idea that the children of this century are digital natives and that they have arrived in this world with an innate digital ability as a result of belonging to an era with growing digital connectivity, there is a great variation in the level of digital ability of children due, fundamentally, to economic, social and cultural differences. Studies show that digital literacy improves throughout childhood (Livingstone, Mascheroni, & Staksrud, 2015). During the early years of childhood, children's digital skills improve as they practice certain operational tasks that become more difficult over time: from being able to move a touch screen or use a mouse, to using a tablet or computer independently (Marsh, 2016).

Thus, PETaL considers digital skills within the intercultural communication competence, which must be developed from a social point of view because both (digital skills and intercultural communication competence) are closely related (Vandoninck, d'Haenens, & Roe, 2013). Barret, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint-Gaillard, & Philippou (2013) discuss the relationship between the use of social networks and the development of digital competence "Despite the possible negative influences and the inherent risks, using social media and other online tools can also develop intercultural competence" (p. 26), because it brings proven benefits to the subject. 3D virtual spaces, for example, are a useful tool in the PETaL approach for the recreation of intercultural contexts, where ECE students can develop their intercultural communication skills through audio, video, animation and even interactivity. The development of this type of virtual projects offers a versatility that, nowadays, has immense pedagogical possibilities and that, surely, will improve and increase in a short period of time due to the rapid development of ICT.

*(iii) Social skills.* These skills, by definition, can only be acquired and improved in community, which the PETaL approach understands as diverse and plural. The construction of the cultural identity of individuals requires an understanding of their belonging to a social group, which for Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint-Gaillard, & Philippou (2013, p. 13), is a particular type of social identity. Social groups are always heterogeneous and society conceptualizes them under a process of "essentialization", which Hecht, Faulkner, & Baldwin (2006) define as follows:

*Essentialization, which occurs when one treats a process as a fixed element or a heterogenous collection as homogeneous, is a two-pronged danger. First, scholars often treat cultures monolithically, as if all those of a single nation or even subgroup have the same cultural characteristics. This obscures differences within culture. Second, these definitions can obscure the dynamic nature of culture. For example, an elemental description of a tribe or cultural group and the image of that group (sometimes written years ago) are fixed, frozen in our minds, while the culture itself continues to shift and change (p. 56).*



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Therefore, the work of the teacher must begin by banishing the concept that cultural groups are homogeneous in their composition. Then, they must instill in children's education the idea that cultures are subject to a necessary and unstoppable evolution, which makes them changeable.

PETaL suggests the implementation of cooperative learning techniques (Johnson & Johnson, 1989) as a valuable instrument for social skills education. Moosmüller & Schönhuth (2009) explain that the development of social competence involves communication skills, cooperation, conflict resolution and empathy, all of which are present in cooperative learning and which, for Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec (2013), consists of the use of small groups of students in the classroom so that they work together to maximize their own learning and that of their peers. For Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint-Gaillard, & Philippou (2013): "Co-operative learning embodies principles which are central to intercultural competence: learners work together to achieve a common goal in a respectful, appropriate and effective way, using their plurilingual competence" (p. 38).

*(iv) Emotional skills.* These skills are, perhaps, the most complicated to address, since a mismatch in the child's emotional universe can impede the development of the skills necessary to relate in typically social contexts such as the family or school (Campbell, 2006). Therefore, the proper development of emotional skills will improve the chances of having an adult population that will have the right competencies to enable them to live together in a multicultural and plurilingual society.

Darling-Churchill & Lippman (2016) define the social and emotional development of the child (0-5 years) as an emergent skill, which aims to: "form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; and explore the environment and learn — all in the context of family, community, and culture" (p. 1).

For their part, Denham, Bassett, Zinsser, Bradburn, Bailey, Shewark, Ferrier, Liverette, Steed, Karalus, & Kianpour (2020, pp. 55–56) identify educators as key promoters of social-emotional learning (SEL) in five important areas of learner competence: (a) self-management, the ability to regulate thoughts, emotions and behaviors; (b) self-awareness, including the ability to recognize one's own emotions; (c) social awareness of the culture, beliefs and feelings of others; (d) relationship skills, the ability to communicate effectively and work well with peers, and to build meaningful relationships; and (e) responsible decision-making, including the ability to plan for the future, and to solve social problems. Therefore, cultural awareness and empathic capacity are among the areas of competence that emotional (or socio-emotional) skills are capable of developing. Pre-school education programs in the United States, according to these same authors (Denham, Bassett, Zinsser, Bradburn, Bailey, Shewark, Ferrier, Liverette, Steed, Karalus, & Kianpour, 2020), mostly incorporate "emotional awareness" and problem-solving techniques as part of their curriculum, and the legislation supports this with funds dedicated to assistance, training and programming, making socio-emotional learning increasingly relevant and interesting academically.

The PETaL approach addresses the emotional universe of the student from a modern perspective of education by applying mindfulness techniques in the classroom.

## Attitudes

Attitudes are a further component of intercultural competence, and the need to foster and develop intercultural attitudes has been proven by the literature, which indicates that cultural knowledge and awareness are not sufficient for the subject to operate a long-term change (Walton, Priest, & Paradies, 2013). These authors conclude that by calling for school-based interventions that are informed by best practice



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approaches at a whole school level in order to effectively develop students' intercultural attitudes and skills (Walton, Priest, & Paradies, 2013).

The PETaL approach assumes the attitudes identified by Barrett, Byram, Lazár, Mompoint-Gaillard, & Philippou (2013) and applies the implementation of intercultural encounters in the classroom to foster respect for diversity, empathy, curiosity and otherness, which must be cultivated from childhood. Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint-Gaillard, & Philippou (2013, p. 7) define "intercultural encounters" as:

*[…] an encounter with another person (or group of people) who is perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself. Such encounters may take place either face-to-face or virtually through, for example, social or communications media. […] Thus, in an intercultural interaction, one does not respond to the other person (or people) on the basis of their own individual personal characteristics – instead, one responds to them on the basis of their affiliation to another culture or set of cultures. In such situations, intercultural competence is required to achieve harmonious interaction and successful dialogue.*

PETaL assumes this conception in the planning of ECE classrooms and uses intercultural encounters to develop attitudes of openness, curiosity and respect, as well as the desire to empathize with others who do not belong to the same culture. Intercultural encounters should also serve to develop observation skills, awareness of one's own culture and discovery of others, as well as skills to adapt and improve empathy.

## Behavior

Intercultural behavior is structured in two main areas: (i) verbal and (ii) non-verbal behavior (Barrett, Byram, Lazár, Mompoint-Gaillard, & Philippou, 2013; Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier, & Panthier, 2016; Shi & Fan, 2020). Noels, Yashima, & Zhang (2012) indicate that: "There is a continued interest in how nonverbal and verbal behaviour differs across cultures" (p. 59). For Risager (2000), intercultural competence has a behavioral dimension (based on body language), and a cognitive dimension (offering knowledge and perspective on the world). PETaL directs its attention to the intercultural behavior (verbal and non-verbal) of ECE students.

Intercultural education should develop inclusive attitudes and behaviors (Gorski, 2008). By cultivating different repertoires of behavior from childhood, we can contribute to the effective management of individual identities in intercultural communication. Byram (2012) discusses the importance of behavior as an indicator of an individual's interculturality: "The emphasis on behaviours as indicators of understanding and as performance skills would, in the same vein, allow us to observe and to measure people's interculturality as a state of mind, as well as their ability to act interculturally" (p. 87).

The importance of educating the child's intercultural behavior has been confirmed by the literature. Giles & Smith (1979) explain that symbolic cultural systems frequently combine objective and affective references that require a directive force (that is, an educational program that has the ability to put them together in order to offer them to students in a productive learning process). The PETaL approach places procedural pedagogical emphasis on experiential learning as the best way to influence the behavior of a student who, because of the characteristics of their age, is not going to "learn about" something, but rather "learn something" (Byram, 2012, p. 90).

Intercultural behavior, in its two aspects (verbal and non-verbal), must be educated from childhood to allow the individual to develop in a society that is, by all accounts, increasingly plural, intercultural and global (European Parliament and Council of Europe, 2006), where encounters with diversity are the basis



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for the peaceful coexistence of peoples. Giles & Smith (1979) advanced that one of the basic objectives of language learning is to make the individual aware of cultural communicative differences, providing them with a cultural communicative behavior to accommodate, to a certain extent, a different behavior.

Verbal expression is essential because it reveals attitudes that the school context can address, where a certain code of verbal behavior is applied (even if students do not comply with it, as is the case in situations of harassment, blackmail or hazing) (Beacco, Byram, Cavalli, Coste, Cuenat, Goullier, & Panthier, 2016, p. 67). Non-verbal behavior is highly dependent on the culture in which it takes place (Yang, 2020), and its education in a formal context must be a sine qua non in second language programmes. Shi & Fan (2020) conclude that inappropriate non-verbal behaviors can cause potential failures in intercultural communication, and these authors show the need to incorporate non-verbal communication skills in the L2 classroom in order for students to be able to communicate across cultures. This study also suggests that teachers should use more non-verbal behaviors in language classrooms to improve study motivation among students.

PETaL, following Kramsch (1998), advocates the importance of establishing a place in the classroom where students can understand each other through the dialogical exchange of ideas, emotions, stories and visions, to be pursued through verbal and non-verbal communication, conceptualized in PETaL "enriched context". Mutual understanding seems to be an important factor in intercultural competence (Shi & Fan, 2020), which in ECE can be pursued, for example, through storytelling, where students can interpret different roles that allow them to develop verbal and non-verbal behaviors (Couto-Cantero, 2018) in intercultural contexts. The human mind is prepared to interpret stories from a very early age and, according to Reese, Yan, Jack, & Hayne (2010), it is also a primary way of learning about ourselves.

Thus, narration can be combined with theatre techniques, because "drama is a highly valued strategy to foster the Communicative Competence in a natural and spontaneous way, interacting with other individuals as it happens in real life contexts" (Casanova-Fuentes & Couto-Cantero, 2018, p. 53).

## Discussion and Conclusions

The society of this century has to claim the professional work of an exceptional teacher of children's education, whose training has to be the best that institutions can offer. The PETaL approach has been carefully structured to meet the needs of ECE at the international level, with the aim of instilling the necessary skills among 0-8 pupils to help them face the changes that the 21st century diverse and plural society brings. Intercultural and bilingual education in ECE are the key themes of the PETaL approach, which are integrated them into a unique and coherent educational programme (PETaL EMJMD) to offering 21st century future teachers the opportunity to develop a unique range of skills and knowledge.

The quality of children's education is a priority issue for most international bodies, which do not hesitate to declare its importance. The European Commission (2014, p. 3) states: "At a time of unprecedented changes, the importance of giving all our children a solid start by providing quality early childhood education is central to the European strategy for smart and sustainable growth, the EU 2020 strategy."

Therefore, the need for specialized and quality training for ECE is evident, considering the global social changes that are taking place and that, until now, were unknown to human beings. Intercultural education in the school curriculum, as we have seen throughout this chapter, is a way of educating children to know how to avoid prejudice, overcome stereotypes, live in diversity and accept difference. Following Keith (2010) and Pratas (2010), the PETaL approach implies a transformation in the way the school curriculum is designed and implemented. Moreover, the role of plurilingualism is essential because it



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contributes to communication between peoples; and finally, the role of play and toys as constructs that contribute to the construction of the child's emotions and to their physical and cognitive development is unquestionable.

All these topics are placed in the theoretical body of the PETaL approach, which is a novelty for quality early childhood education in the world.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Approach:** Theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2002, p. 20).

**Attitudes:** Attitudes characterize the disposition of the individual to understand and accept diversity in a specific cultural context.

**Behavior:** Things people say and do (adapted from Storti, 2009, p. 275).

**Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree (EMJMD):** It is a prestigious, integrated, international study programme, jointly delivered by an international consortium of higher education institutions (HEIs) and, where relevant, other partners with specific expertise and interest in the study programme (EACEA, n.d., paragraph 1).

**Intercultural Competence:** It is the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures that we recognize as being different from our own (Guilherme, 2004, p. 297).

**Knowledge:** It is an abstract concept. Humans acquire knowledge about things by generalizing from particular samples, which are actualized through the senses (adapted from Widdowson, 2004, p. 549).

**Skills:** It is the activity of encoding and deciphering signals as physically manifested in a particular medium (adapted from Widdowson, 2004, p. 550).



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# Chapter 11
# Craft and Project Work for Young Language Learners:
## Setting Up Projects to Maximize Language Learning

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## ABSTRACT

*Most young learners love craft projects, whether it's drawing, coloring, or creating. For this reason, many language teachers have incorporated craft projects into their classes. Although craft activities are enjoyable, there is a real risk that very little language acquisition may take place, if the planning and realization of the craft in class is not carefully carried out with language as a priority. This chapter will explain the benefits of incorporating craft projects within a second language learning curriculum and how these activities can be adapted to maximize language acquisition. There will be a clear explanation of the pedagogical background to incorporating craft projects as well as detailed descriptions of the types of craft projects that might be the most effective, and how to adapt craft projects to incorporate some of the best practices of teaching English to young learners.*

## INTRODUCTION

In many language learning classes for young learners, craft projects have become an integral part of the syllabus. When set up well and implemented effectively, these can involve numerous language learning opportunities. Unfortunately, in some cases craft projects do not have a language learning outcome. Learners may create beautiful art work, but no language acquisition occurs while craft time takes place. In language classes, even if one of the goals is art or project work, language acquisition should always occur.

Creative arts allow language to be incorporated in a variety of different ways. Naddeo found that CLIL art classes can be, "appealing, cross-cultural and flexible" (2019, p.73). Art and craft classes can

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incorporate a range of activities and skills improving listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary acquisition, as well as incorporating intercultural cultural studies. The theory of Comprehensible Input (Krashen, 1981) is one of the most robust theories in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). It states that to acquire a language, language learners require a huge volume of input in the target language at a level just above their current level (i+1). This input can be provided in a variety of ways through listening and reading. Craft classes are an ideal place for learners to be provided with copious comprehensible input with visual clues for scaffolding. In this chapter teacher talk and simple videos will also be introduced as ways to provide copious comprehensible input. In addition, it has been shown that incorporating culture in language learning is vital for learners to understand the people and meaning of the language being studied. Genc and Bada (2005) state that, "without the study of culture, teaching L2 is inaccurate and incomplete." Crafts are an ideal way for young learners to understand the people and cultural beliefs of the target language. Finally, when vocabulary is introduced in the context of craft projects, it allows learners to encounter words naturally, leading to a far deeper understanding of the language. Nation (1990) stated that in order for a word to be fully known, the learner needs knowledge of its meanings, form and use. Introducing vocabulary in craft projects can allow learners to encounter vocabulary in a variety of different ways. This enables learners to create new meanings and play with language creatively. Deeper understanding of vocabulary gives the learner a multi-dimensional view of language.

This chapter will look at various ways in which craft projects can be incorporated in elementary school age language classes to encourage language acquisition, as well as other learning benefits of craft projects. The chapter will outline how successful craft projects can be planned and implemented while detailing how projects can be adapted to be made more beneficial for language learning. The chapter will start with a theoretical background to incorporating craft projects, then go on to explain the types of projects, which are likely to promote language acquisition in a variety of ways. Practical explanations of how craft projects can improve language acquisition through solid pedagogy with differentiated and personalized learning will be clearly explained. Data was gathered through practical observations of elementary school art and project classes over the last 10 years. All of the activities have been implemented by the author, and adapted to improve language acquisition opportunities.

## BACKGROUND

Literature was gathered through internet searches on research into early childhood education as well as standard literature on second language acquisition (SLA). Most of the research was from the last ten years, but older seminal studies were also included. Due to the limited research into the effect of art or craftwork on language acquisition, it was necessary to include a variety of research only related to craftwork or only related to second language learning. This has led to a broad selection of literature from various fields of education research.

In the last twenty years content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has become more and more popular. CLIL is a term that has been adopted in order to include all activities in which the foreign language and content subject are learned simultaneously (Coyle, 2006). It is built on the simple premise that learners can acquire a second language through content subjects. Arts and crafts are an ideal way for this to be done. Commonplace vocabulary such as colors, shapes and stationary items can be introduced naturally along with everyday actions such as cut, fold, paint, color and glue (The British Council, n.d.). According to Coyle (1999), a successful CLIL lesson should combine elements of content learning,



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language communication, thinking skills and culture. Although not all craft projects incorporate all of these elements, many could be adapted to include more of them. Art might be the content, but science, nature and other content areas could also be included in craft projects. Through focus on the craft project, young learners will naturally acquire language without focusing on the language itself. In this way language and content can be incorporated in the same lesson.

## Comprehensible Input

The easiest and one of the most effective ways to incorporate language acquisition in a craft class is through comprehensible input. It is often recommended that comprehensible input be provided through extensive reading programs, but for young learners, who are still developing their literacy skills, the challenges of decoding the text can inhibit language acquisition.

Experienced English language teachers naturally adjust their language to their learners. This means that the majority of language produced by a skillful teacher will be at an i+1 level. Teachers can easily make language more comprehensible by slowing their speech, repetition, paraphrase, emphasizing important words and gestures. All of these are characteristics of teacher talk (Frey, 1988). Craft projects are a way in which this type of comprehensible input can be incorporated in language classes in a variety of very natural ways. Due to the time taken to create a craft, the teacher's speed of talking will naturally be slowed down and there will be many opportunities for repetition and paraphrase. In addition, gestures and demonstrations by the teacher can provide extra scaffolding to understand the language (Bernad, 2014). If craft activities are held on a regular basis, learners will become accustomed to common verbs, such as glue and cut as well as vocabulary such as scissors and paper.

Videos are also an excellent way in which comprehensible input can be incorporated in craft activities. There is a plethora of videos online showing craft projects for children. Although most of these are not aimed at second language learners, the language is controlled in order to be understood by children in their first language. The video might be too fast for second language learners to understand in one listening, but through re-watching and pausing with the teacher adding explanations, paraphrases and gestures, the video can be adapted to the i+1 level (Gaab, 2014). Some videos are accompanied by written explanations in basic English. These subtitles or written explanations can be printed out and incorporated as reading activities in the lesson, especially for more advanced learners.

Written input is another way in which learners acquire language. Lee, Quinn, and Valdés (2013) found that science classes were rich language learning environments through. They observed that science classes immersed students in environments that use language to accomplish a task. Through following written instructions, learners need to fully understand the written text. This can also be done with cookery instructions. Seedhouse (2017) wrote that cooking was an effective way of making language learning motivating. These genres of writing are useful for language learners, although as the language used in these activities is sometimes low frequency, rewriting of the instructions or scaffolding through demonstration or video may need to be offered by the teacher.

## Promoting a Variety of Learning Styles

Another way in which craft projects may be beneficial to language learners is through teaching in different ways to suit a variety of learners. Gardner (1993) proposed a theory of multiple intelligences, which is a theory that humans do not have one IQ, but multiple IQs and different individuals have different ways



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of approaching tasks. Although he was clear that these were not learning styles, they have been used to create theories that different learners learn in different ways, such as visual, auditory, physical, verbal and logical (Suran & Yunus, 2017). There has been a lot of discussion as to whether this theory is true, but most teachers acknowledge that different styles of teaching seem to appeal to different learners and that there is no one size fits all (Asadipiran, 2016). Hattie (2011) states that providing learners with various ways to access content will improve learning. The theory of distributed language learning poses that language acquisition stems from participation that engages learners with multiple resources (Faltis, 2019). Through connecting craft projects to the theory of alternative intelligence, it could be said that rather than teaching to a learner's own preferred learning style, all students should be encouraged to learn through a variety of teaching styles in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the language. Through observing facial gestures, movement, touch and colors language can be more comprehensible for learners (Bernad, 2014). Explaining tactile concepts such as hard, and soft will not be understood nearly as well through text as when learners can touch and feel something (Shrager, 2014). From this point of view, it can be assumed that offering young learners multiple ways to learn language can bring the language to life in a way that conventional textbooks cannot. Although it might be assumed that craft projects would involve a visual learning style, crafts can involve various auditory, kinesthetic, verbal and logical styles of learning. The most effective learning occurs when learners use a variety of learning styles suited to the content (Khazan, 2018). Through craftwork learners need to listen to the teacher's instructions, engage with tactile objects, interpret the instructions to create originality, and reflect on how they could change it to make it look or work better.

## Personalized and Differentiated Learning

Second language learners can sometimes feel marginalized through their lack of English communicative competence. Although they can express opinions fluently in their native language, they can feel held back in a second language, especially when the teacher has a strict 'English only' policy within the classroom. Arts offer second language learners opportunities to express themselves and communicate through another medium. When learners are allowed to excel at one thing, their confidence and self-esteem in general often improves. Craft projects also offer opportunities for a variety of learners with different language abilities to work together and produce a group product. Although some learners might have stronger language skills, others might be skilled at drawing or painting. In the case of reading and writing, it can be difficult to incorporate a variety of levels, but by providing different levels of scaffolding, craft work can be easily differentiated. By its nature, creative arts should be individual and personal. Personalized learning has been shown to improve motivation in all learners (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Personalized learning helps learners to be intrinsically motivated to learn, so that they can choose to learn in the way that they want (Bray & McClaskey, 2017). Personalization can occur through levels of language, content choice, variation of processes and different end products. In the case of craft projects learners can be given freedom to produce what they want, how they want by allowing learners to choose the way in which they complete the craft and also by giving choices of materials.

## Pushed Output

The theory of comprehensible input has often been criticized as being only half of the interactive process. In order for learners to truly interact it is necessary for them to produce language. Adams, Nuevo, and Egi



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(2011) stated that if modifying language to provide comprehensible input is beneficial, then the production of modified language by the learner might be even more beneficial, especially if the modified language is based on corrective feedback. Pica and Doughty (1985) found that when non-native speakers engage in genuine communication with each other, as opposed to a native-speaker interlocutor, they appear to experience a greater degree of involvement in their negotiation for message meaning. Through group craft projects this type of natural negotiated meaning often occurs. Lee (2017) states that comprehensible input is not enough and that students need pushed output with corrective feedback. In addition, she found that the benefits of corrective feedback were greatest when learners received corrective feedback from their teachers. Requesting help or craft materials push output, but also allow opportunities for corrective feedback. Describing a craft they have made or reading a storybook they have written allows learners to have control over the language they use, making it easier for them to produce language.

## Understanding of Content Material

Over fifty years ago immersion programs were first started in Canada with the aim of creating similar conditions that characterize first language acquisition, for second language learners (Genesee, 1985). More recently there has been a steady increase in the implementation of immersion programs around the world (Supriyono, Saputra, & Dewi, 2020). These programs teach a variety of content subjects in the second language. Language learning is incidental, motivation for the second language is created through a desire to engage in interesting and meaningful communication. Genesee (1985) states that the success of any program depends on the quality of negotiation of meaning between the teacher and the learner. In recent years CLIL has been developed, building on the idea that learners are motivated through interesting content, but acknowledging that focused language teaching can produce noticing, which then aids the learning process. Whether the craft activity is viewed as full immersion with little language teaching or CLIL, there are undoubtedly benefits to introducing a second language through content.

The content might be the art itself, but can also be literature, science or culture. Whatever the content, craft projects can lead to deeper understanding of content material. In the simplest form, a written or oral story can be converted to a picture based on scenes or puppets to represent characters in the story. Shiobara (2015) found that when learners made puppets based on the story, they read the story repeatedly and in more detail than when they were just asked to read the story and answer comprehension questions. The act of converting written text to a visual representation involves focusing on details that could be ignored when just reading the text. This can be very effective with fiction, but it can also be effective with non-fiction. For example, when learners are reading about animals in nature, creating a craft model of the animal or their habitat can recap and deepen content knowledge. Other examples might be to draw a map of a journey or an area where animals or indigenous people live.

## Developing Fine Motor Skills

Fine motor skills are one of the most important components in early childhood education (Syafril, et al., 2018). These skills are those concerned with the small muscles in the hand, they are necessary for controlling the fingers and thumb. They can include weaving, cutting with scissors, playing with dough and coloring with pencils and crayons (Syafril, et al., 2018). In learning to write it is essential that young learners have developed fine motor skills in order to hold a pencil or pen, and to correctly form lines and shapes. Sometimes just practicing writing might be enough, but to develop the strength and dexterity to



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perform precise pencil work, building the muscles through other activities can be helpful (Gill, 2020). Not only do activities practicing fine motor skills have physical benefits, they have also been found to improve cognitive abilities (Syafril, et al., 2018). Grissmer, Grimm, Aiyer, Murrah, and Steele (2010) found that fine motor skills were a strong predictor in future math and English proficiency. According to Syafril, et al. (2018) 30-60% of the school day for very young learners should be focused on fine motor skills. Time spent on craft projects can contribute to this.

### Incorporating Culture in Language Teaching

Foreign language teaching must incorporate not only grammar and vocabulary, but also culture in order for individuals from different cultures to communicate effectively. Culture and knowledge of culture is essential to negotiate understanding and to overcome communication problems between members of different cultural groups (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2018; Kramsch, 2004). Materials that can be used to teach culture to young learners include all sorts of authentic texts, videos and stories (Savic, 2013). Young learners construct their knowledge from working with objects as well as ideas, the richer the experience, the more they will learn. Savic (2013) considers that young learners learn best through hands-on concrete experiences, in a low stress environment with a focus on meaning, making craft activities an ideal medium to learn culture.

## CRAFT PROJECTS PROMOTING DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT MATERIAL

One of the most effective ways to teach young learners is through storytelling (Lichtman, 2014). Stories allow the introduction of memorable contexts and exposure to different cultures (Savic, 2013). Expanding the enjoyment of stories through puppetry has long been an effective teaching technique. It also lowers learners' stress and increases their confidence in the target language (Insani, 2017; Toledo & Hoit, 2016). Toledo and Hoit (2016) observed that student participation and motivation increased dramatically when talking time in the language class was changed to puppet time. In a study by Shiobara (2015) it was observed that when students made their own puppets that they read stories in detail and understood the material more deeply. By combining the craft activity of making puppets with puppet shows, learners can deepen their learning and practice spoken language.

### Planning a Craft Lesson

When incorporating craft projects in language lessons CLIL is a method in which teachers can look objectively at the way in which they want to teach the lesson. CLIL lessons have a clear goal of language acquisition, whereas in immersion classes the language learning occurs incidentally. Before the lesson begins the teacher should consider how much of the lesson will be content focused and how much will be language focused (Evans, 2019). The language focus might be through input, such as listening to the teacher, listening to videos or reading instructions. The focus might be output, such as asking the teacher for clarification and describing the project to the class, or it might be written as in writing a comic strip and writing up a science project. Learners need to be supported, helping them to notice language, but also looking at the structure of the language not only the meaning. Providing models and corrective feedback



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focusing on language, will help learners to improve accuracy. In all these cases the teacher needs to plan for the language acquisition and ensure that this is not forgotten in the excitement of the project itself.

On the other hand, the teacher also needs to plan the content focus of the lesson. How will learners be engaged in the project to maximize motivation? The content focus needs to be ability appropriate and allow for a variety of interests. There needs to be an opportunity for personalization as well as guidance to achieve something beyond their current ability.

*If your learners feel incapable, they will become disheartened and uninterested. Conversely, if they can see the goal is achievable they will do their best to achieve and, if they achieve, they will thrive. (Evans, 2019)*

There are a variety of ways in which a lesson can engage all learners. One of the best ways with a craft project is to allow for copious personalization. Giving basic instructions and then letting learners develop a project in their own way will keep most learners motivated. Allowing learners to choose colors and ways to decorate the project, also gives them a sense of control. Another way in which the lesson goals can be made achievable for all learners is through scaffolding. This might mean scaffolding of the English language through providing extra explanation in the first language, or scaffolding of the skills needed to complete the project. Having projects prepared to a variety of levels can help. For example, there could be three levels of skill with some learners receiving ready cut out templates, some learners receiving a template and cutting it out themselves, while some learners receive plain paper or card and draw their own picture without a template. In addition, rather than giving each learner a finite number of craft items a wide variety of materials could be made available, letting learners choose what they want to use. In this way learners can personalize their own crafts to a larger degree. It was observed by the researcher that some learners prefer to devote time and energy to one project, whereas other learners prefer to work more quickly on multiple projects, this can also be allowed for in craft projects.

## CRAFT PROJECTS TO MAXIMIZE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

### Craft Projects Providing Comprehensible Input

In general, all craft projects in language classes should incorporate language input, through written or spoken language. Although CLIL lessons are not supposed to consider grading language (BBC, n.d.), it is natural for the input to be made comprehensible. This can be done through the teacher monitoring their spoken language or written text, through repetition, or by incorporating visual clues. It is important not to provide so many visual clues that the language input is no longer necessary for comprehension. This section will now look at the three main ways in which input can be provided.

### Teacher Input

One way in which teachers provide input is by explaining to learners how to do something. Explaining how to make a leaf picture, for example, provides ample opportunities for the teacher to speak in the target language. The teacher might display a variety of pictures for inspiration. Then the teacher may explain to learners in steps how to make the pictures, showing them different variations. The teacher



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needs to choose quite a simple craft if the learners are going to be able to understand without seeing a step by step demonstration. In addition, the teacher can warn learners what not to do, such as "Don't use too much glue." This type of input requires learners to listen carefully as there are no visual clues to aid understanding.

## Video Input

There are many videos on the Internet showing how to do projects. Although most videos are not made for language learners, the language is usually graded for children. Even so, the audio in videos is often too fast for second language learners to understand with one viewing, and sometimes uses low frequency vocabulary that the learners may not know. Due to this, teacher support and scaffolding are usually necessary. Watching the video numerous times as well as pausing whilst showing are necessary. Repetition is a great way to reinforce learning as well as making the input comprehensible. The following is one way in which video input can be used to maximize comprehension.

1. Show the whole video to learners once.
2. Show the video again, pausing at key moments. The teacher can use these moments to repeat or paraphrase each step, or elicit each step from the learners.
3. Turn off the sound, ask learners to recount each step whilst watching.
4. Start the project showing each step of the video, or eliciting the steps from learners.

Eliciting the steps of the video from learners is a very effective way to encourage pushed output as well as comprehensible input.

## Written Input

With more advanced learners, who are reading fluently, written input leading to a craft activity can encourage learners to read the text more carefully. Creating a picture of a character or scene in a story is one way in which written input is used to create a craft activity, but there are other more direct ways in which written input can be used to create craft activities. A common way is to use instructions, as in a cookery recipe. Recipes are a special genre of writing. Learners need to follow each step precisely in order for the recipe to be successful. In addition, learners need to focus on specific details such as quantities and measurements. A mistake between a tablespoon and teaspoon could make a big difference in the final result. At the end of the lesson learners have something to eat as well, which can be highly motivating. Some examples of easy cooking projects are making pancakes, popcorn or smoothies.

Another way in which written input can be incorporated in a craft project is through science activities. In an experiment, not only can learners experience the excitement of chemical changes and creating something fun to play with, it can also lead to a discussion of scientific principles. If the teacher wanted to focus on language, they could point out the form of verbs used to give instructions. Good examples of science experiments are creating slime to demonstrate changing states between liquid and solid, or using chromatography on filter paper to demonstrate how colors separate.



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## CRAFT PROJECTS INCORPORATING MULTIPLE LEARNING STYLES, PERSONALIZATION AND DIFFERENTIATION

Although there has been some criticism of Gardner's multiple intelligences and in particular whether this should be evidence for teaching to different learning styles (Armstrong, 2018), most teachers would agree that some styles of teaching appeal better to certain learners. For example, a learner who does not like reading can be motivated to read if they are provided with a graphic novel. In the same way, learners can be encouraged to write through creating comic strips and picture books.

### Visual Learning Style

For young learners, creation of their own picture book can be very motivating. To help young learners develop characters and storyline this should be done over a period of time building up the story in stages. First of all, learners need to choose a story. It can take learners a long time to think of an idea for a story, which is often time in which no language acquisition is taking place. Most learners will already know many of the most popular fairytales, so asking learners to adapt a fairytale can be much quicker than creating a story from scratch. By giving learners a limited number of stories, or even just one story and asking them to adapt it, the learners have a clear starting point. After choosing a story, learners can then start creating their own characters. If students draw the character first, they can then use this as a springboard to describe the character in writing. Using the picture for inspiration, a variety of adjectives can be elicited. For beginner learners it might be one adjective such as 'an ugly princess'. For more advanced learners, strings of adjectives can be taught, 'a short skinny yellow bear'. In this way language focus can be naturally incorporated into the lesson. Having drawn some characters, the learners can then start writing the story. The teacher can encourage development of character as well as teaching new vocabulary and spelling. Once the story has been chosen and the characters have been drawn, a setting should be chosen. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce a variety of vocabulary. With beginner learners, words like 'forest', 'castle' and 'palace' can be taught, but with more advanced learners more unusual settings can be introduced, such as a 'smelly lagoon'. This can be done through showing learners pictures and asking them to describe what they can see. Again, the pictures of settings will help learners to write. It can be very difficult for learners to create a beginning, middle and end to a story, which is why following a well-known story and changing it, can be very effective. At each stage of the story learners should be encouraged to draw the picture first, then write the story. The final stage in any project should be a presentation. In this case learners can design a book cover, then the books can be read aloud to younger learners, or displayed for caregivers to see. Emerging readers can gain confidence through reading a story they have written. The vocabulary and grammar should all be within their own capabilities, as they wrote the book. They should also take pride in their own work. Through following a story over a period of time and progressing step by step, learners can be encouraged to develop the descriptive language of the story, whilst producing something substantial, of which they can be truly proud. Learners who excel at drawing can have pride in their pictures, while more proficient writers might have more detailed stories, which can give them a sense of accomplishment. Using this as a craft project means that both confident and emergent writers can participate in the same project.

This project has been described for younger learners, but it could easily be adapted for older learners using comic strips and animation as a springboard. Through this type of project, the drawing acts as a springboard to encourage writing, as well as allowing for differentiation of writing abilities.



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### Physical (Kinesthetic) Learning Style

Not all learners are experienced and skilled when it comes to drawing, and a lack of interest, confidence, or both can lead to a lack of enjoyment. Using a variety of materials to create crafts is one way to make projects appeal to all learners. Crafts made with clay and papier-mâché can be a way in which learners who are not as interested in drawing or colors can develop their creativity. Using clay, papier-mâché or another tactile substance, learners can feel the language. Clay is an excellent way for learners to reproduce cultural artifacts, deepening their understanding of the culture as well as learning English. Replicating ethnic artifacts such as Maori necklaces is a way to incorporate the study of culture in a craft class. These physical activities can be explained either verbally by the teacher, or through written instructions. If papier-mâché is being used learners can learn how to make glue with flour and water, as well as creating the papier-mâché shape. A piñata made from papier-mâché could also incorporate a lesson on Mexican culture. In this way the physical activity is incorporating reading or listening and culture, increasing the learning opportunities.

### Differentiated Learning and Personalization

Providing printed pictures from magazines or the internet as well as allowing students to draw their own pictures can differentiate learning for students with various artistic abilities. In particular, if learners can be offered a variety of ways to create the activity, they can use their preferred style. This is not to say that all learners shouldn't be encouraged to do activities that they are not skilled at, but the balance of activities can be adjusted so that students can choose to do more of what they are good at, or enjoy. Craft projects can offer opportunities not only for a variety of language abilities, but also a variety of artistic abilities. Some learners may want to add decorations such as sequins and glitter to any project. In the case of the clay activity, some learners can make the basic shape, where others can draw designs and patterns on the clay or push beads into the clay. Having a variety of materials available allows learners to choose, enabling personalization and differentiation.

As stated above, projects can be prepared to different levels allowing learners to be assisted in how much they need to do. Depending on the age and ability of learners, they will have different levels of skill for activities such as cutting with scissors. Some learners with less developed motor skills will be very slow at cutting causing frustration and taking away from the time when they could be doing more creative stages of the project. It is usually better to have all learners try to accomplish a task, but by providing a variety of materials with different levels of preparation necessary, all learners can progress at the same stage making the goal achievable for all.

## CRAFT PROJECTS TO ENCOURAGE MODIFIED OUTPUT

Craft projects are also an ideal way to encourage students to speak in the target language. This can be done through asking for instructions, as well as recounting the steps of a project or making a presentation about a project they have made. By giving learners a limited amount of instructions, they will be forced to ask the teacher for clarification. Sometimes too much information hinders language learning. For example, if the learners watch a video with very clear visual instructions on how to do the craft project, the learners do not need to listen to the language. By only providing spoken instructions, learners are



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required to listen and are pushed to ask for clarification when they don't understand. This is very effective with paper crafts. Showing the finished product and only giving basic instructions, learners will be encouraged to ask the teacher for clarification.

*Teacher: Cut narrow a strip of paper.*

*Learner: How wide?*

*Teacher: It should be about 5cm wide.*

*Learner: How long?*

*Teacher: It should be about 20cm long.*

*Learner: Can I use any color?*

*Teacher: Red paper is best.*

In all cases the communication should be focused on meaning not form. The teacher can model correct sentences, but does not need to explicitly teach learners. In this way learners develop English listening and speaking naturally at their own level. The advantage of using this type of input in a craft project is that learners are motivated to listen and speak, but also it is obvious if the instructions were correctly understood as the product is very visual. Although a variety of textbooks use origami instructions, these can be very difficult to understand without watching someone perform the fold or looking at a picture. Simple crafts will provide the best opportunities for comprehensible input and pushed output.

There are also numerous opportunities for pushed output through information gap activities. One way is for one learner to only be given partial written instructions. Other members of the group are given the rest of the instructions. Learners have to share their instructions with the group members in order to create the whole project. Another way is for learners to be given instructions to create different projects. After the project is completed they then teach other learners how to do the projects. Teaching is one of the most effective ways to learn.

## CRAFT PROJECTS PROMOTING DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT MATERIAL

Craft projects are a natural way to deepen learning of content material. For example, in a theme on space and planets, learners can read that the giant outer planets are about ten times the size of the terrestrial inner planets, but not until they actually make scale models will this become visually clear.

### Creating 3D Replicas

With nature projects, by creating a 3D representation of planets or geological features, learners will have to study the original in detail. In this way rather than a traditional style of comprehension questions,



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the learners need to read all the details in order to be able to accurately recreate the item. The teacher's main role in this case is to focus learners on details. How many peaks are there in the range? How big is Jupiter? The craft does not need to be a perfect replica, the important point is whether or not the learners have understood and tried to recreate the details from written text.

Another way to encourage learners to study content material is having them create 3D versions of the animals and insects they have studied. There are numerous images of craft activities relating to animals online, but these need to be carefully adapted to make sure that they are representative of the real creature. If the craft is going to deepen knowledge of the content, then as much as possible it should be made accurately. Learners should be encouraged to draw the correct number of eyes and legs. The teacher can also teach specific body part names, such as 'mantle' and 'suckers' for an octopus. In addition to the visible parts of the creature, learners can be encouraged to add images and notes to show the internal organs. A fascinating point about an octopus is that it has three hearts. This can be displayed visually to help learners remember. In addition, learners can be encouraged to study a variety of colorings and replicate a sub-species rather than a generic creature. Instead of drawing an imagined turtle shell, learners can be encouraged to look at a variety of turtle shells and choose which sub-species of turtle they will create. This can also be true of butterflies and many other animals and insects.

### Puppet Show

Reenacting stories is beneficial for learners and helps them to understand and appreciate stories. Creating dramatic performances can be time consuming when there is limited classroom time, but puppet shows can often be performed much more quickly. Puppets can also be used to review the characters in a story. When learners start making puppets they need to read the whole story very carefully trying to find out what the characters looked like, what they were wearing, and any other inferences, which could help them to create a puppet of the character. When this is done as a group project it can be even more effective, each learner can work on one character, but they need to interact with their group members to check that the set of puppets fit together. When the main characters of the story have been made, the story can be acted out by learners. Using puppets is a very effective way of focusing on oral English. By separating body language and voice, learners can focus on only one aspect of output. This is great intonation practice, as well as reading practice.

## CRAFT PROJECTS DEVELOPING FINE MOTOR SKILLS

With young learners it is important for them to develop the small muscles in their hands in order to write neatly. This can be achieved through practicing writing, but can also be achieved through other activities such as cutting, threading, and sticking. In these cases, providing crafts that involve small pieces is very important. Even very young learners can develop motor skills through putting stickers on a page. As learners get older, cutting with scissors and gluing small items is also effective. In addition, doing crafts with small beads and sequins requires learners to be careful and precise. Craft projects involving collage and decoration are especially beneficial. Many of these activities can also be tied to decorations for festivals incorporating culture as well as fine motor skills.



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## CRAFT PROJECTS DEEPENING THE UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The easiest way to incorporate culture in craft projects is through creating decorations. Nearly every culture and religion around the world has culturally specific festivals, which have their own decorations. These decorations often involve fine motor skills as well as introducing cultural beliefs. These can be religious such as Christmas and Hanukkah, but can also be country specific, such as the star festival in Japan. Some examples of cultural craft projects are dream catchers to explain Native American beliefs about how humans and nature are connected, Aborigine art, to explain Aboriginal beliefs about nature and Australian geography, or Maori necklaces to explain Maori beliefs about the circle of life and how humans are connected to the earth. The lesson can start by explaining to learners something about the native history and culture, then describe the parts of the craft, and what each part is representative of. These crafts are often a little more complicated than simple paper crafts, often involving weaving and threading, so probably need a demonstration rather than just oral input. There are other crafts such as Aborigine dot painting, which can teach about traditional art. Whatever the time of year there is always a cultural festival taking place. Combining intercultural communication and crafts, can bring culture alive for young learners.

## ADAPTING CRAFT PROJECTS TO IMPROVE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Art classes can incorporate a wide variety of activities (Naddeo, 2019), but craft activities do not need to be a stand-alone class. By incorporating crafts in a variety of English classes, the learning of both language and visual arts can be accomplished. If the teacher observes that the learners are engaged in the craft project, but no language input or output is occurring there probably needs to be some sort of intervention. One way that this can be done quickly and easily is through teacher input. The teacher can repeat instructions and give a running commentary; e.g. "These look wonderful, I really like the colors you are using. When you have finished coloring, you should cut out the shape." This is even better when the teacher circulates giving personal comments to individual learners and asking questions. A second way is for teachers to ask learners questions while they are working on the project; e.g. "What is this?", What color are you going to paint the body of the animal?" As the learners respond, the teachers can then ask for clarification, giving corrective feedback and eliciting modified output. Learners can be asked to make presentations of their project to class members. Another way to lead to language learning from a project activity is with discussion questions related to the project, as in a science project making slime, discussing the difference between a liquid and a solid. Learners could also be asked to write step by step instructions after making the craft describing how to create the project or even try making a video to teach other learners. Converting spoken instructions or written text into something visual leads learners to process the language in various ways. Conversely, when learners convert something visual into written language, it can have the same effect. The more ways that learners play with language, the more they will understand it.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS ON INCORPORATING PROJECT WORK IN ESL CLASSES

Whilst incorporating projects in classes with young learners can be highly motivating, teachers need to have a clear goal of the lesson. As stated at the start, in a CLIL lesson the teacher needs to decide whether the goal of the lesson, is language or content and plan for how this will be accomplished. CLIL is not the only way to incorporate language in a craft activity. Through considering comprehensible input, pushed output and culture there are many ways in which language learning can take place. Teachers need to consider whether they could increase the amount of language learning at every stage of the project. They also need to consider how the project could be differentiated to allow for different abilities and learning styles within the class. As personalization of any type of learning is motivating for learners, teachers need to consider how they could increase ways for learners to personalize their art and craft projects. Occasionally teachers come to a project with a set idea, but when they allow learners to be creative, wonderful things can happen. Time is always a challenge in the classroom. Teachers need to set realistic goals for the time allowed. If the time is limited, the craft projects might be introduced in the classroom to be completed at home rather than using valuable classroom time. Craft projects often take longer than anticipated, and teachers often fail to allow for clean-up time and learners remaking the project after making a mistake.

## CONCLUSION

As can be seen in many of the previous craft ideas, comprehensible input, pushed output, personalization and culture are rarely separate. When designing a craft project, teachers can try to incorporate a variety of learning goals within one project. Crafts can provide learners with numerous ways to acquire language as well as other skills to promote learning. By providing a varied curriculum including art and craft activities, learners are able to learn in a natural, motivating way. Young learners in particular are full of curiosity and imagination, craft projects provide ways to use their imagination and creativity. If these projects are well designed and implemented, they can encourage language acquisition without learners even realizing it. If the curriculum learning objective is primarily language learning, then the craft activity needs to be clearly focused on one of the language learning objectives. This does not need to be narrowed to vocabulary and grammar, there are a variety of ways in which craft projects can achieve learning objectives with young learners. Craft projects can provide excellent learning environments in which students learn English naturally and enjoyably.

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