

LEARNING TOGETHER TO BE BETTER FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Dana HANESOVÁ (ed.)



**Learning Together
to Be
Better Foreign Language Teachers**

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Foreword

On June 14-15, 2024, an international conference for foreign language teachers in Slovak schools took place at Matej Bel University, with significant support from the Cultural and Educational Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (project 011UMB-4/2022 called “Creation of a web portal for methodological support of foreign language teaching in primary education”). The project responds to the challenges related to foreign language teaching in the Slovak Republic. Its aim has been to provide theoretical-research-based, and at the same time practical and easily accessible, methodological support for foreign language teaching at primary level, which reflects current international education policies and national education strategy in the 3rd decade of the 21st century (Recovery Plan of Slovakia, part 7: Education for the 21st Century, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, Innovated State Education Program - Primary Education, etc.). In particular, it aims to support the process of transforming the still prevailing transmissive way of teaching foreign languages, with typically a teacher dominance, into pupil-centred teaching. The tool for this methodological support, created via the project, is a web portal for foreign language teaching (ISCED1) called *jazykyhravo* (teaching languages in a *playful way*), based on theoretical research information (in the field of linguistics, primary pedagogy and related disciplines), as well as proven methodological procedures for teaching foreign languages, including examples of good practice.

The conference provided considerable space for the mutual sharing of experiences among language teachers at the pre-primary and primary educational levels. This book of proceedings is a collection of presentations that focused specifically on this topic. Although the contributions took various forms – lectures, seminars, and workshops, they all aimed to provide teachers with opportunities for further education and the development of their professional skills.

The presentations, whether theoretical-didactic or practical-training in nature, fulfilled the following requirements: (a) alignment with the expectations for developing global competencies at the ISCED1 level, but also across the education system, necessary for life in the 21st century; (b) alignment with every child's right to education that corresponds to their developmental, personal, and educational specifics – including needs in the area of foreign languages and learning abilities; (c) the principle of participation. The principle of participation was evident at the conference in at least two levels: 1) in participation of teachers, experts in linguo-didactics and primary education, and methodologists from the Slovak Republic and from other countries, creating an international linguo-didactic network; 2) in participation of students (both lower secondary and higher education students) as well as of the wider educational public. The

main emphasis of most contributions was on creating a space for children / pupils and their construction of their own knowledge and skills through their own positive experiences with a foreign language. One of the main outputs of the project - a book by prof. Katarína Vančíková “Inclusive approach to teaching foreign languages” - was distributed at the conference to the participants.

We hope that this collection will fulfil its purpose of empowering teachers to create a relevant foreign language learning environment. We also hope that it will enable teachers to develop their personal professional competencies, knowledge, attitudes, skills, abilities and motivation to teach the youngest generation to learn foreign languages in a meaningful way - and thus to be able to communicate in a culturally and linguistically varied world.

Dana Hanesová and the KEGA team

Learning Languages Playfully and without Fear

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Abstract: This contribution provides a brief look at two of the pillars of language teaching in primary education, appropriate to the specificities of the younger school age learners. The teaching of foreign languages in primary school must be age appropriate. Children under 10 or 11 still think primarily in concrete terms. They learn mainly through experience and play. It is through play that they can acquire a language naturally, without fear, often unconsciously, and in a way that creates a solid foundation of language skills for the future.

Key words: foreign languages, play, fear, children, primary education, younger school age learner

When children learn a foreign language, perfection and flawlessness cannot be expected. Even repeated practice does not guarantee to acquire foreign language fluency and immediate response in various situations. What matters are spontaneous reactions as an expression of their engagement and internal motivation, connected with the experience of performing in a foreign language. It is important to respect their right to make mistakes and seek support in their native language during lessons.

Research findings indicate that if children experience anxiety and stress during the learning process, it has a negative impact on their success in learning a foreign language. This stress often arises from not understanding of the foreign language expressions used by the teacher (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). The tension from the unknown weakens the child's cognitive development. Concentration decreases, perception diminishes, and the functionality of short-term memory is minimized. Children who experience high levels of anxiety during learning, when they do not understand what is being said to them or what is expected of them, tend to avoid activities in the foreign language, not only passively (listening, watching) but especially in active participation. Reluctance to respond nonverbally or verbally may be mistakenly interpreted or diagnosed as:

1. the child's indifference or laziness
2. a dislike of the instructor
3. learning difficulties, etc.

It is important to identify whether the child is in the so-called "silent period" (during which they may focus on understanding the language before they start producing it as expected).

Achieving success and fostering a positive attitude towards the willingness to learn a foreign language in children requires careful compensation for the negative Smet effects of fear and stress they may experience.

The key factor in eliminating negative feelings of fear and anxiety in children is the creation of a pleasant and supportive environment (Smet, 2018):

- Through fun and playful activities where engagement and enjoyment bring the child into an emotional state of joy and satisfaction with the activity they are currently doing (a playful and experiential approach),
- By respecting individual needs (appropriate amount of material, suitable pace),
- Using a differentiated approach—some children are more prone to experiencing fear and anxiety,
- Allowing spontaneous reactions in a way that suits them (offering choices), including in their native language (though not permanently),
- Recognizing and appreciating (both verbally and nonverbally) even small steps of progress in learning in order to boost children's confidence,
- Encouraging interaction and communication without pressuring individual performance,
- Not forcing them to speak in the foreign language if the child does not feel ready or comfortable, and not demanding immediate verbal responses.
- Do not assess mistakes directly or correct them outright; instead, respond to errors through so-called reframed sentence constructions, dialogical situations, etc. For example, it is effective to reformulate the sentence structure or word with the correct form or pronunciation.
- Provide indirect, gentle feedback that focuses more on meaning than on form (we do not teach grammar directly).
- Create an atmosphere of mutual respect, acceptance, and togetherness through group or pair activities.
- Encourage joyful social interaction and use humour.
- Don't be afraid to apply less traditional techniques such as exercise, relaxation or meditation (briefly, to divert attention away from the state of fear).
- Continuously ensure that the child understands the expression or request, even in their native language.
- Use appropriately challenging learning materials (games, songs, stories, etc.).

Paying attention to children's emotional well-being while learning a foreign language leads to the effective functioning of their cognitive abilities, enabling them to achieve expected results when appropriate teaching methods and strategies are used (Kim & Kim, 2017).

The main method how younger school aged learners to acquire foreign languages without fear is play (Lynch & Vargová, 2020). Play is the foundation of so-called experiential learning of a foreign language, where both guided and spontaneously created situations allow children to fully engage emotionally ("immerse themselves") in a role,

event or current activity (Parker et al., 2022). Due to their ontogenetic nature, children experience these guided situations as real experience.

Through play children gain entrance to direct experience (Pramling et al., 2019). The child's own activity, during which they achieve what is known as "flow," ensures longer periods of concentration - a mental state where children lose track of time and don't even realize they are learning. Children's involvement in play fosters their associative thinking, connecting their native and foreign languages.

Play in experiential learning has several functions. It enables children to know themselves better, strengthens their spontaneous expressions, eliminating stress and any fears, engages them in activities that respect their learning styles and their interests in familiar topics, meets children's needs, is a means of developing literacy, including emotional, physical, social and creative skills.

For preschool and early school-aged children, play is a natural strategy for learning new knowledge and skills. Play serves various purposes (e.g., just for fun and enjoyment) and doesn't necessarily have to include an educational goal. However, in an educational context, play is characterized as a spontaneous, episodic, engaging and creative activity, providing instinctive physical or mental "immersion" into active tasks (physical or mental). It involves an emotional experience, which is a strong and key factor in motivating children to want and be willing to learn something new, while also enabling the retention of new knowledge in both their short-term and long-term memory at a subconscious level. The experience of play, as an emotional state, shapes their internal motivation, strengthens children's focus and enhances their attention and willingness to remain engaged in the activity. Therefore, creating interactive activities in a playful form allows the child to fully experience the present moment. The experience is crucial for the child's deeper thinking, though it is not the goal but rather a means of learning. It is a key factor for the subconscious perception, understanding and retention of vocabulary and sentence structures in a foreign language (not through drilling without understanding meanings or using a grammar-centred approach, i.e., explaining grammar rules).

It is important to remember that:

- The attention span of younger school-aged children is still fluctuating, so it is essential to alternate activities, engage all senses and incorporate movement, which children own at this age.
- In teaching through play, we focus more on the process than on the result. This creates flexible, enjoyable and internally motivating learning without fear. Such an emotionally relaxed environment helps the child gain greater social confidence, language self-assurance and communication skills.
- The function of toys and objects at this stage of learning compensates for the yet undeveloped ability to communicate verbally in a foreign language. A non-verbal response through toys and real objects shows that the child has understood the context in the foreign language. Creating a positive emotional atmosphere can be achieved through appropriate teaching methods that support emotional

engagement by allowing children to express themselves freely and creatively. These methods provide contextual learning through meaningful scenarios on topics relevant to the children's everyday lives. Methods that allow experiential learning through play include:

- Total Physical Response (TPR) – an interactive method that uses instructions to perform physical actions as a response to understanding. In this way, children respond non-verbally. Their mutual interaction leads to the development of ways that will later form verbal expression.
- Pantomime,
- Dance and movement games,
- Dramatization,
- Games with logical thematic connections.

For effective teaching, it is important to have a wide "reserve of games," including materials for their implementation. In such a game archive, there should not be a shortage of word games, card games (flashcards) and similar activities. Different approaches to play-based learning are also available on the project website <https://jazykyhravo.umb.sk/>.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that teaching languages at the primary level, with a focus on the learner, should undoubtedly include playful learning, allowing students to acquire a foreign language without fear. This is primarily achieved through experiential learning and play (Sturges, 2003). It is recommended that faculties responsible for teacher education place emphasis on these pillars and highlight them in the evaluation of pre-service teaching practice.

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Young EFL (Foreign Language) Learners in Europe: Thirty Glorious Years

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Abstract: The author presents how EFL instruction to young learners started in Europe. It looks at the nature of knowledge in the 21st century, and the way public education has tried to meet the challenges of these changes. Instead of imparting students with pure knowledge, the focus has shifted towards competence, leading to significant changes in foreign language teaching. Age has also been identified as a new decisive factor. Early EFL has been recognized and appeared throughout Europe.

Key words: young learners, early start, language acquisition, EFL programmes.

Introduction

This presentation intends to look at the situation of early language learning in Europe from two aspects. The first is concerned with theoretical considerations, examining whether and to what extent it is necessary, feasible, or at least desirable. The second aspect is mainly practical.

Since early language learning has been a widespread practice in the majority of schools in Europe, it seems topical to take stock and compare how individual European countries meet the challenges of the 21st century. In today's world, being able to speak foreign languages is a global phenomenon. Monolingualism seems to have lost its monopoly position and is increasingly becoming regarded as a "curable disease". This is a huge change compared to most of the 20th century, when language skills were not seen as necessary and therefore not always viewed positively. In school curricula, a foreign language only appeared around the age of ten, in a small number of hours, and the goal wasn't to develop communicative skills. However, alongside some political and social changes significant steps began around 1990: early language learning became an independent discipline, with its own content and methodology, and professionals were trained in this field. This presentation recent article looks at the past 30 years of early EFL, highlighting the reasons that led to success.

Part One: The role and place of early language learning before the 1990s. Early language learning as a phenomenon

In the last decade of the 20th century, a significant number of elementary school students became language learners, both in Hungary and in Europe, to an extent never seen before. As a result of the inclusion of the youngest age group in public education, specifically 3- to 6-year-olds (kindergarteners), the consumer market for foreign language learners has significantly expanded in recent decades. In Hungarian public education, kindergarten language development had no tradition. However, beginning in the 2000s, yielding to the ever-increasing social and parental pressure, it became the practice in many kindergartens that language teachers appeared once or twice a week, or that kindergarten teachers without special language preparation held extra classes. These forms did not prove to be effective, and it sometimes happened that the child was discouraged from any contact with the foreign language for a long time. It has been proven that a language teacher who possesses a language to a high degree cannot successfully teach elementary school or kindergarten students on the simple basis that she gives them less of the many language skills. The experiences clearly seemed to confirm what the profession had formulated long ago, that the foreign language development of young children is a special task that can only be performed well by professionals specially trained for this purpose. Nowadays, however, there are still many misunderstandings, misconceptions, and bad attitudes. The best way to dispel them is to provide professional information and learn about good practices in early language development.

The following opinions are most often voiced by those who oppose early foreign language development:

- The preschool child is too immature for this level of mental stress.
- The child hasn't learnt his/her mother tongue perfectly.
- Early language education has no significant linguistic benefit.
- Learning a foreign language takes time away from play.
- There are no specialists who can perform the task.

Below, I will try to help those interested in the topic to find their way around the above opinions.

The research of the last decades, as well as the good practice observed in the field of early language development, have greatly contributed to the definitive change in the view that a foreign language is an unnecessary burden for the child. The starting point must be that learning a foreign language does not mean the same for the child as for an adult. Specialists use separate terms to designate the foreign language development of students under ten and over ten. The former is called language acquisition, the latter is known as language learning in the conscious, traditional sense. For a teenager or an adult, learning a language is hard work, imprinting of words and rules, formation of inhibitions, a lot of invested energy and little success. On the other hand, language acquisition is an unconscious process similar to the acquisition of the mother tongue, during which repeated verbal stimuli are linked to certain, clearly distinguishable situations. The student does not apply the grammar rules but feels them. The student does not consciously apply grammar rules but intuitively feels them. The environment is

stress-free and supportive, encouraging students to take risks and speak without fear. Performance is not measured in the traditional way with grades and mistakes are allowed, because everything will fall into place later through natural communication with adults or older children. The primary goal of communication is to deliver the message to the recipient, not to train the correct language form. A great step towards the distinction of acquisition and learning was made by Krashen in his Acquisition and Learning Hypothesis (1983). With the recognition that, if children **learn differently**, they **should be taught differently**. This notion gave birth to a new discipline: early foreign language teaching.

THE ACQUISITION – LEARNING DISTINCTION

Acquisition language	Learning language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Similar to child first language acquisition - “pick up” a language - Subconscious - Implicit knowledge - Formal teaching does not help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal knowledge of language - “knowing about” a language - Conscious - Explicit knowledge - Formal teaching helps



Table 1/Picture 1: The difference between language acquisitions and language learning (according to Krashen, 1983)

In light of the difference between language acquisition and language learning, it is clear that activity- and emotion-based language development appropriate to the nature of children's thinking and learning is not burdensome for the child. Since it is not a matter of conscious learning, but of language acquired during activities that provide experience. The child is not faced with memorizing long texts, learning the grammatical rules of the foreign language or solving spelling problems. It does not require the child to make a mental effort that is burdensome compared to his age as it merely provides an opportunity for him to get to know a foreign language used in his environment and learn as much of it as he can at his own pace.



- ### How should young learners encounter foreign languages?
-
- The illustration shows a white 3D figure standing between a red arrow pointing left with the word 'No' and a green arrow pointing right with the word 'Yes'.
- paper and pen activities
 - drilling words
 - learning grammar in a direct way
 - through permanent error-correction
 - reading course books
 - through activities
 - being in interaction with others
 - through perception
 - in situations that are meaningful to them

Figures 1 and 2: How acquisition happens in case of young learners and how should young learners encounter foreign languages

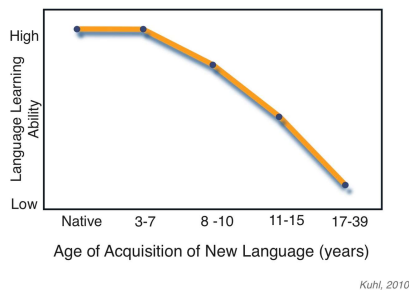
Setting the mother tongue against the foreign language, or the rise of the foreign language being at the expense of the mother tongue, is also a common argument against early language development. Those who claim this do not realize that there is infinite room for languages in every human brain. The average healthy person is linguistically multicompetent, i.e. his brain is not only capable of storing one language. Words learned from one language do not displace words from the other language. The trend is quite the opposite: a person who learns a second language also speaks his mother tongue more beautifully and correctly, since his general language and thinking skills are more developed than those who only know one language. We can also expect a positive result

when learning a third and all subsequent languages. The positive relationship between mother tongue and learning a foreign language was already pointed out by Goethe when he wrote: "A person who does not speak foreign languages cannot know his mother tongue well."

We should also realize that learning our mother tongue does not end when we reach school age. People always learn more and more new words in their mother tongue, since the language does not remain unchanged. It also lives and develops through different ages. Our ancestors also spoke their mother tongue, only the content of the language has changed over time. There are words that are not used or have fallen out, and there are new concepts for which new words have been created. It is enough to think that the generation that lived before us did not know such everyday words as computer, internet, offline or online.

A common counter-argument regarding early language learning is that there is no big difference between the effectiveness of language learning started before the age of ten and language studies started later. Language knowledge acquired more naturally is better utilized, and the emphasis on the once-perceived significant gap in knowledge is minimized. It is true that during early language development children do not acquire actual knowledge of the target language at the same pace as in the later period. However, this is true for all other subjects as well. The result in mathematics is also more impressive at the age of 11-12 than in the first grade, but this should not be a reason for children to only start learning mathematics in their teens. The length of time spent learning a language is just as decisive as if the child were learning music or sports. The time factor is decisive for the development of skills. The child's articulation base can only flexibly adapt before a certain age, which is the reason why little ones learn a foreign language almost without an accent, while older children or adults, even with correct grammatical forms and an impressive vocabulary, mostly speak with an accent.

What is the best time for acquisition? Why is Age a Factor?



Kuhl, 2010

Critical Period Hypothesis



Figure 3: The diagram shows that age is an important factor in language acquisition

During the examination of bilingual children, it was found that children who use multiple codes are more developed than their monolingual peers not just in their language skills. If the child experiences early on that a concept cannot be expressed with just one word (for example, a table remains the same if it is called table, tisch, tavola, trapeza, etc.), his thinking will be more flexible and suitable for associations. Your learning strategies will be more varied and targeted as a result. In addition to the skill-developing effect of a foreign language, it is also clear that a child familiar with a foreign language can claim a different, larger slice of the world as his own. Perhaps he has a teacher who speaks the language as his mother tongue, or, which is not uncommon nowadays, he is taught by a native Hungarian, Slovak, etc. teacher who has spent some time in the language area. In this way, the child's cultural horizon expands, and if the teacher is good, he will certainly develop a positive attitude towards both the language and its speakers.

The most important characteristic of early foreign language development is that it takes place during activities. The main activity of a small child is play; therefore language sessions are always embedded in games, meaningful activities appropriate to the child's age. Children's learning is based on words and their meaning to a much lesser extent than that of other age groups. Therefore, for the child, movement, action, reception with the senses and interpretation from situations all serve to create meaning. Among basic language skills, listening comprehension is present in every session. The child is surrounded by a 'language bath', which provides him with the foreign language in a safe environment and in a loving atmosphere. The child has time to process what he heard and

the teacher does not demand immediate language production. At first, it is enough to give a physical response to the instructions, for example: peel your banana, bite into it, wash your hands. With this method, you can convey important vocabulary to the child, and you can even check whether he has understood, as his movements clearly show this. Singing, music, rhythmic movement, dancing and storytelling all help the child to acquire language input in a way that is appropriate for his age. Movement, rhythm and rhyme create an experience. The structure of the stories is independent of language, so the child is able to create meaning even by relying on background knowledge. It is also common to play board and round games in language sessions. Some parts of the kindergarten pedagogical programmes are particularly suitable for use in a foreign language, since the child pays attention not to the language form, but to the message and the content. This is the basis of the success of bilingual education forms, which are widespread in Hungary and beyond.

In conclusion: In the last decades significant progress has been made in the field of foreign language teacher training. For example, in Budapest the Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education at ELTE University has been training kindergarten teachers who are able to carry out their day-to-day kindergarten work in English or German for years. Specialists graduated from the Faculty are well positioned in any field of early foreign language development.

Part Two: Recent changes in the practice of early language learning in Europe

We are now going to examine the factors that contributed to the introduction of early language learning in Europe. The introduction of EFL in public education was due to some socio-economic changes in the last decades of the 20th century, such as:

- migration: participation in an international labour market,
- globalization: working in multicultural settings
- use of communication technology: working in virtual contexts,
- attitudinal changes: knowledge of languages and bilingual education started to be seen as an added value.



Figure 4: World has become a 'global village'

These changes, together with the appearance of new theories on how children learn (see: Krashen), had an impact on the ways of teaching. A new type of knowledge was born where, instead of knowledge-transmission, competence was placed in the centre. The shift from knowledge-transmission to competence resulted in need for a new

type of knowledge in general. This new type of knowledge has seven distinctive characteristic features:

- It is integrated, interdisciplinary
- It is delivered through tasks, dialogues and discussions
- Its goal is: **knowing of** something, not **knowing about**
- Its focus is on the learner
- The teacher is a facilitator who helps the learner to learn
- The learner is an active partner

Skills development is seen in a much broader sense. It involves cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills besides only subject-related ones.

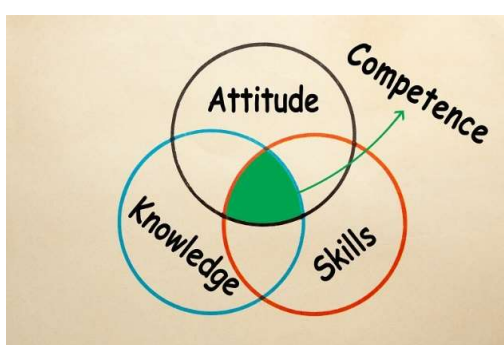


Figure 5: The diagram shows the elements of competence (knowledge in the traditional sense is only part of it)

The new type of knowledge in general (see above) had implications on new type of knowledge of languages in particular. The most important changes are seen in table No. 2:

A New Type of Knowledge of Languages

	Until the 1990s	After the 1990s
Function	Preserve and trasmit high culture	Knowledge that can be applied
Learners	Elite/selected groups	Mass population
Content	Traditionally accepted	Useful
Main feature	Language is knowledge to be learnt	Language is a skill to be developed
Methodology	Through teacher-centred, didactic teaching	Through learner-centred, active learning

Table 2: Comparison of type of knowledge of languages before and after the 1990s

Alongside a revised view on early language learning, with the recognition of the nature of the early start, some practical steps and measures were taken in Europe, and research has started from the last decade of the 20th century.

- 1995 EU Council Resolution: promotes innovative methods and provides bilingual education
- 1995 White Paper: encourages most effective practices in order to be proficient in 3 European languages
- From 2000 onwards: Socrates, providing CLIL-type provision, Comenius, targeting the staff, Erasmus and development of curricula
- ELLiE (Janet Enever, 2011): The first overall research on the provision of early language learning in Europe. Its main findings highlight the importance of adequate language skills and age-appropriate pedagogies for effective FLL in primary schools across Europe.



Figure 6: The front cover of the first overall research on early language learning in Europe (2011)

Early foreign language teaching in public institutions in Europe has gained more significance. The tables below will show the difference:

Young Language Learners Show Up



Starting age in some European Countries:

Age 3: Belgium (German Community)

Age 5: Cyprus, Malta

Age 6: Austria, Croatia, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain

Age 7: Estonia, Finland, France, Poland, Sweden

Age 8: Belgium (French Community), Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia

Age 9: Denmark, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Slovenia, Turkey, Switzerland (German Community)

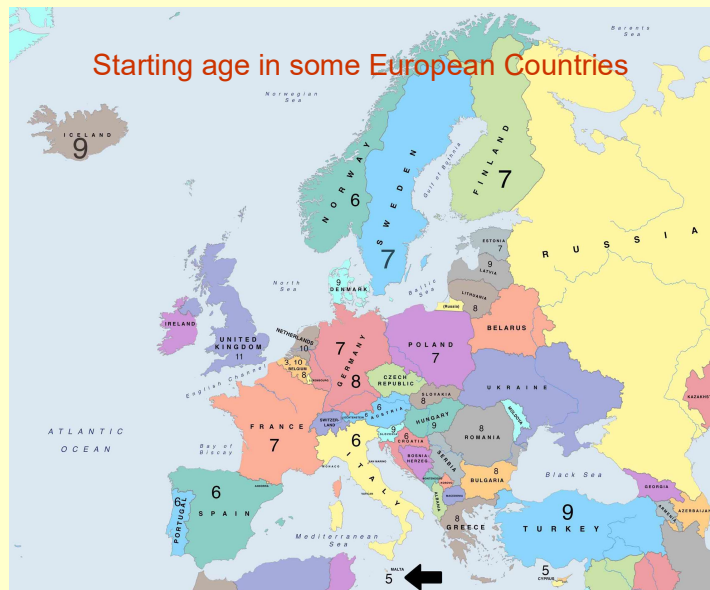
Age 10: Belgium (Flemish Community), Netherlands

Age 11: United Kingdom, Switzerland (French Community)

Not required: Scotland, Ireland

Table 3: Starting age in some European countries

Starting age in some European Countries



Map 1: Starting age in some European countries

Provision of Early FL Education in Europe: Compulsory Start Age

	7 years or below	8-9 years	10-11 years
1990	2	1	25
2013	14	11	3

Table 4: Compulsory starting age in a table form

The difference is evident in the second decade of the 21st century. The majority of countries in Europe offer early language teaching under 7 years or below while 20 years ago the ordinary starting age was 10-11.

The factors that may contribute to young language learners' success are shown in the table below:


Successful young language learners

Do not

- listen to lengthy texts
- memorize vocabulary lists
- do much individual or frontal work
- meet permanent error-correction
- work under stress

But

are offered activities such as solving tasks, playing games, doing experiments, making posters, learn in interaction, in stressfree atmosphere



Benefits of the Early Start

- Early start - early multi-competence
- Higher degree of language and thinking flexibility: When using several codes, the child first learns that the same concept can be expressed in several ways
- It develops language and thinking skills
- It develops learning strategies
- It broadens your horizons and your knowledge of the world
- Develops a positive attitude towards the foreign language It has (also) a specific linguistic benefit



Table 5-6: What makes learning fun for young learners? and: Benefits of the early start

Conclusion

Looking back at the past three decades of language teaching for young learners in European schools offers a valuable perspective. It reveals a significant trend: a shift towards a more student-centred approach, emphasizing competencies rather than just grammatical knowledge. This transformation demands the commitment of every language teacher, but it is a change worth embracing, one that will soon impact the lives of all students. Many progressive teachers, especially in Hungarian bilingual kindergartens and primary schools, have already positive experience with this approach and the fruit of their work is already evident.

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Cultivating Curiosity and Creativity: STEAM integration in primary and preschool CLIL teacher training

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Abstract: The contribution presents traditional and innovative methodologies for raising and nurturing students' curiosity and creativity within the context of primary and preschool CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teacher education at ELTE University Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education in Budapest. Integrating Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) elements into the training programme will give participants insights into practical approaches and techniques that may enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes in all relevant fields. Drawing from experiences of in-service and pre-service teacher education, the author shares hands-on activities, project ideas and visual examples that can inspire future and practising educators to utilise STEAM opportunities in their young learners' EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and CLIL classrooms. Only enthusiastic teachers can achieve children's holistic development, shape the next generation's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and autonomy, and educate creative and curious adults. Therefore, teacher training courses should be engaging and exciting to make exploration a challenge worth undertaking for all.

Keywords: CLIL and STEAM, teacher education, online/in-person, 6 C's model of CLIL, curiosity and creativity

Introduction

To effectively educate today's children, it is essential to employ a methodology that stimulates and sustains their curiosity, creativity and motivation to learn. These attributes are crucial for navigating and succeeding in the increasingly complex world they will face as adults. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology, combined with STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) activities and principles, offer an ideal framework for achieving this aim.

Only competent and enthusiastic teachers can support children's holistic development, enhance their knowledge, abilities, attitudes and autonomy, and educate them to become creative and curious adults. Therefore, teacher training programmes

should be exciting and engaging to activate and nurture the required qualities, beliefs and teaching skills in future teachers.

This contribution presents traditional and innovative activities and techniques, online and in-person, for raising and maintaining students' curiosity and creativity within the context of CLIL teacher education at ELTE TÓK¹. Integrating STEAM elements into the training programme gives participants insights into practical approaches that encourage student engagement, help motivation and improve learning outcomes in all relevant fields. Drawing from experiences in teacher education and TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners), I will share hands-on activities, project ideas and examples to inspire future and practising educators to utilise STEAM opportunities in their young learners' EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and CLIL classrooms.

Background

Since 2006, ELTE TÓK has offered early CLIL teacher training courses in English for kindergarten trainees in full-time and part-time programmes at the B.A. level. In 2008, a CLIL module was also launched for primary teacher trainees. The students have linguistic and methodology courses, both foundational and related to various disciplines, such as science and environmental studies, music, P.E. or arts and crafts. The Department of Foreign Languages and Literature is responsible for the English language specialisations and CLIL programmes. Our EFL staff always used digital resources to a certain extent, but emergency online education during the COVID-19 pandemic posed immense challenges for teachers and students alike. Fortunately, ELTE TÓK could successfully cope with this task and, since then, has effectively employed digital tools, platforms and applications in their training programmes.

CLIL is defined as “a generic term to describe all types of provision in which a second language (a foreign, regional or minority language and/or another official state language) is used to teach certain subjects in the curriculum other than the language” (Eurydice 2006:8). It is an innovative educational approach in which a foreign language is used as a tool in learning a non-language subject when both language and the subject have a joint role and can be used from kindergarten to higher education (see Eurydice, 2006; Majers et al. 2007; Mehisto et al. 2008; Coyle et al. 2010; Frigols et al. 2011; Hanesová 2015ab; Kovács & Trentinné 2016 among others).

The CLIL approach integrates foreign language learning with subject content, structured around the 4 C's: content, communication, cognition and culture (Coyle et al. 2010). I frequently incorporate STEAM elements in the CLIL teacher training programmes at ELTE TÓK that are aimed at primary school teachers and early childhood educators majoring in English. I aim to support students' firsthand experiences in active learning and holistic development while exploring cross-curricular connections in a meaningful and enjoyable way. To create a theoretical background, I propose expanding the original

¹ ELTE TÓK: Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education, Budapest

4 C's framework of CLIL to a 6 C's model, adding the two extra elements of creativity and curiosity. Both these aspects that are well-suited to the STEAM approach.

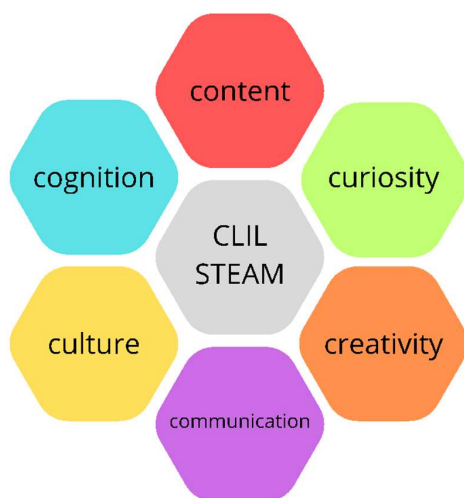


Figure 1: The 6 C's model proposed by Trentinné

In the following sections, I will present several STEAM-related activities and projects I use in my CLIL teacher training courses. I will also discuss the opportunities offered by online education, which proved particularly effective during the digital transition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.²

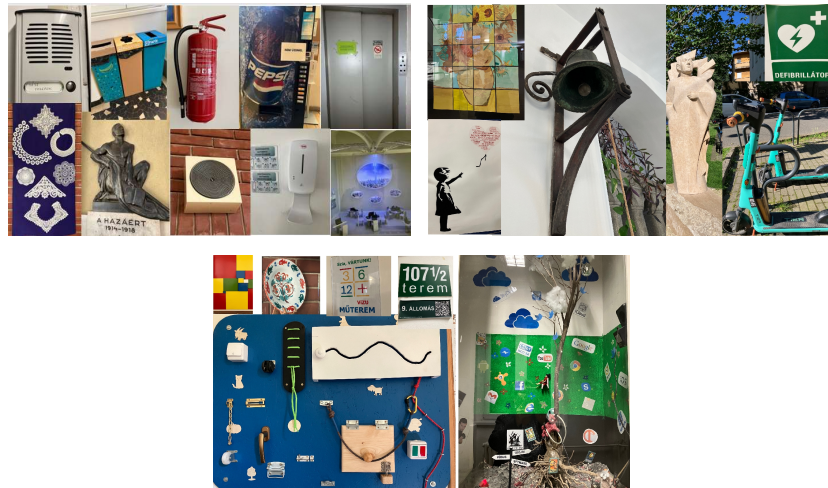
STEAM activities and projects

I have introduced several STEAM-related tasks and projects in my CLIL courses lately to foster all the six C's of CLIL in my classes: curiosity, creativity, communication, cognition, content and culture learning using an additional language of instruction. In the following sections, I will describe some activities in detail. They include traditional and digital learning methods, experiential learning through field trips and fun activities emphasising a holistic approach to education and many cooperative tasks.

STEAM is everywhere!

A small hunt through the university building to search for STEAM at ELTE TÓK. Students had to find items related to STEAM in pairs and take pictures using their cell phones. (See some examples of students' photos in the Figures below.) The activity showed the students that science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics surround us in our everyday environments. After returning to the classroom, the pairs were asked to share their favourite photos, comparing what they noticed and collected in each category (i.e. the components of STEAM) to see if they had found the same items.

² The author is a member of the MTA-ELTE TÓK Children's Digital Language Pedagogy Research Team



Figures 2a, 2b and 2c: STEAM is everywhere at ELTE TÓK (Photos: Trentinné)

Study trips and field trips

Various trip types, both large and small, real and virtual. With the students, we went on professional excursions to local destinations such as an ice cream shop, a nearby shopping mall, a museum, the city centre, or virtually to the rainforest, the Great Wall of China and even the White House. Course participants could observe elements of STEAM in real life and diverse environments. They were also invited to complete specific tasks before, during and after the field trip – both from the perspectives of future teachers and young learners. These tasks were related to STEAM, or the 4 C's: content, culture, communication, and cognition. These real hands-on experiences fostered content knowledge, increased motivation, and supported students' practical pedagogical competences. When specific locations were inaccessible, we took advantage of the opportunities provided by the digital world, using virtual field trips and feeds of live webcams. There were numerous opportunities, famous cultural sights and destinations available to visit online during the pandemic to aid educators, children and adults worldwide. Unfortunately, some virtual field trips are no longer available, but the operating ones provide enormous learning opportunities.

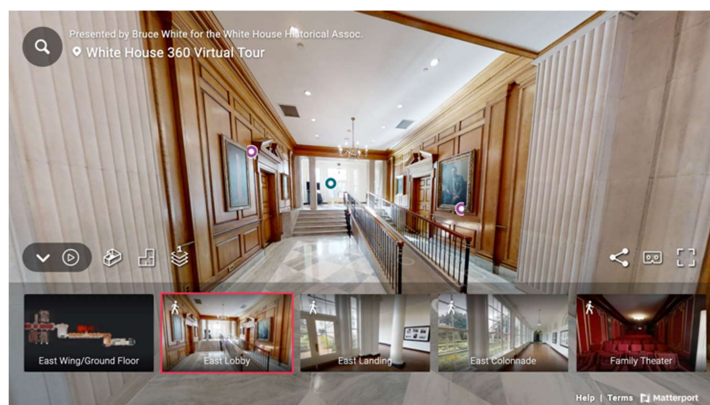


Figure 3a:

Virtual field trip to the White House (Source: 40 amazing virtual field trips, URL1)

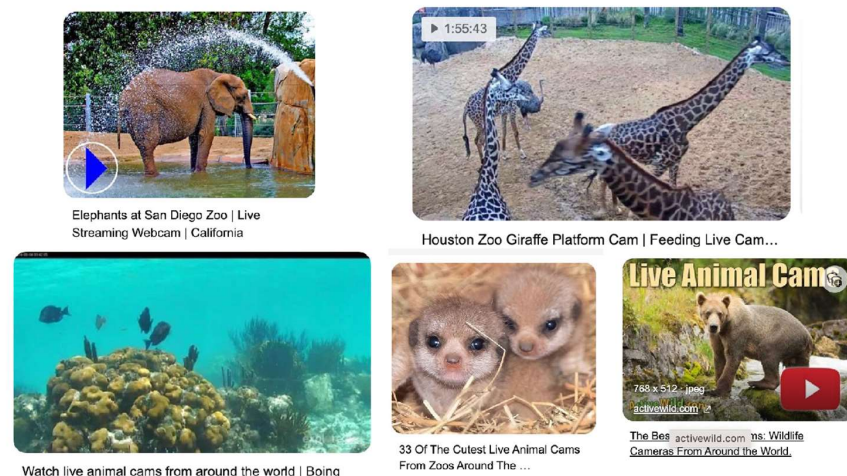


Figure 3b: Virtual field trip:
Collection of live webcams (Google search: live webcams, animals)

Biodiversity hunt

This activity combines elements of biology and environmental science with exploration in various contexts. They ranged from the university garden, where in pairs, they could explore the natural flora and fauna during the class, to their home surroundings, where they were asked to identify areas individually that demonstrated local biodiversity. Such activities aimed to raise future teachers’ awareness of the endless educational opportunities a school garden (or a playground, nearby park or street) can offer to young learners while also allowing students to learn to appreciate nature as individual adults. The most exciting findings included rosehips, firebugs, butterflies, worms and ladybirds in the university garden.



Figure 4: Biodiversity exploration in the university garden and the neighbourhood
(Photos: students and Trentinné)

Inviting a guest lecturer to class

Guest lecturers can raise motivation and curiosity immensely, and they provide expert opinions, exciting insights and new perspectives. Inviting authentic professionals always tends to enrich the learning experience for all. Such occasions can inspire students and broaden their horizons and understanding of how STEAM fields operate in professional, authentic contexts. In an online class, we had the chance to welcome a young Space employee who gave an enjoyable presentation and shared her knowledge and expertise with us. She also provided practical supplementary materials, suggested age-specific scientific projects for young learners and answered the future teachers' questions. She appreciated our students' curiosity and education-related, intelligent enquiries.

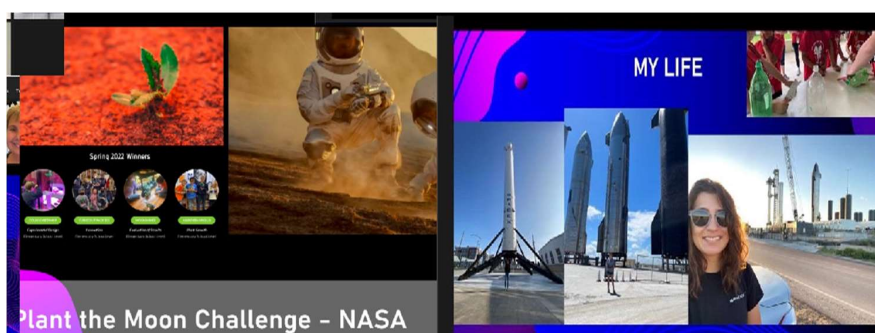


Figure 5: Screenshot extracts of the online class with a guest lecturer
(Source: NASA URL2)

Micro-teaching – Science experiments and art projects

Hands-on experiments and projects in the classroom. These micro-teaching activities help students apply theoretical knowledge (e.g. the scientific method and particular science-related concepts) in practical classroom settings. The aim is to foster curiosity, support understanding and allow for creative expression in all age groups. In CLIL teacher education, it is also essential to practise dual focus, i.e., providing, for example, science knowledge and target language development in a meaningful context. While student teachers practise introducing and managing the experiments and art projects, giving proper instructions using subject-specific vocabulary and adjusting their language use to their learners' proficiency level, they also target all six C's in action. When in-person teaching was unavailable, micro-teaching was completed by creating and sharing online tutorial videos. See figures for both offline and online solutions.



Figure 6: Two experiments in class that integrate science and art (Photos: Trentinné)

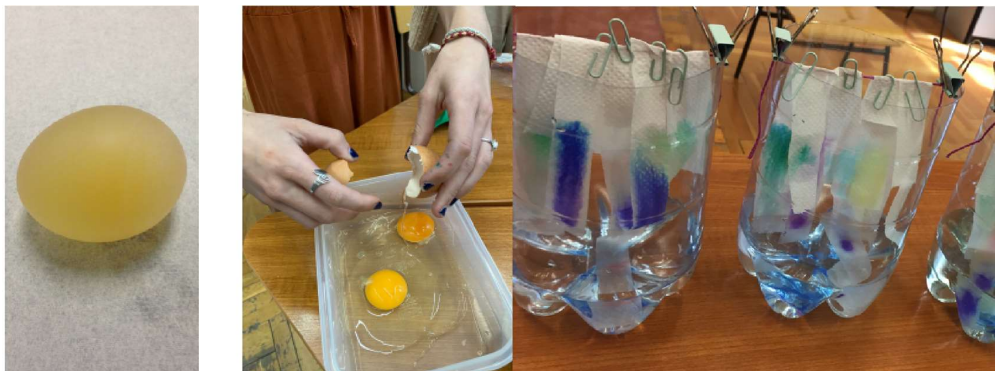
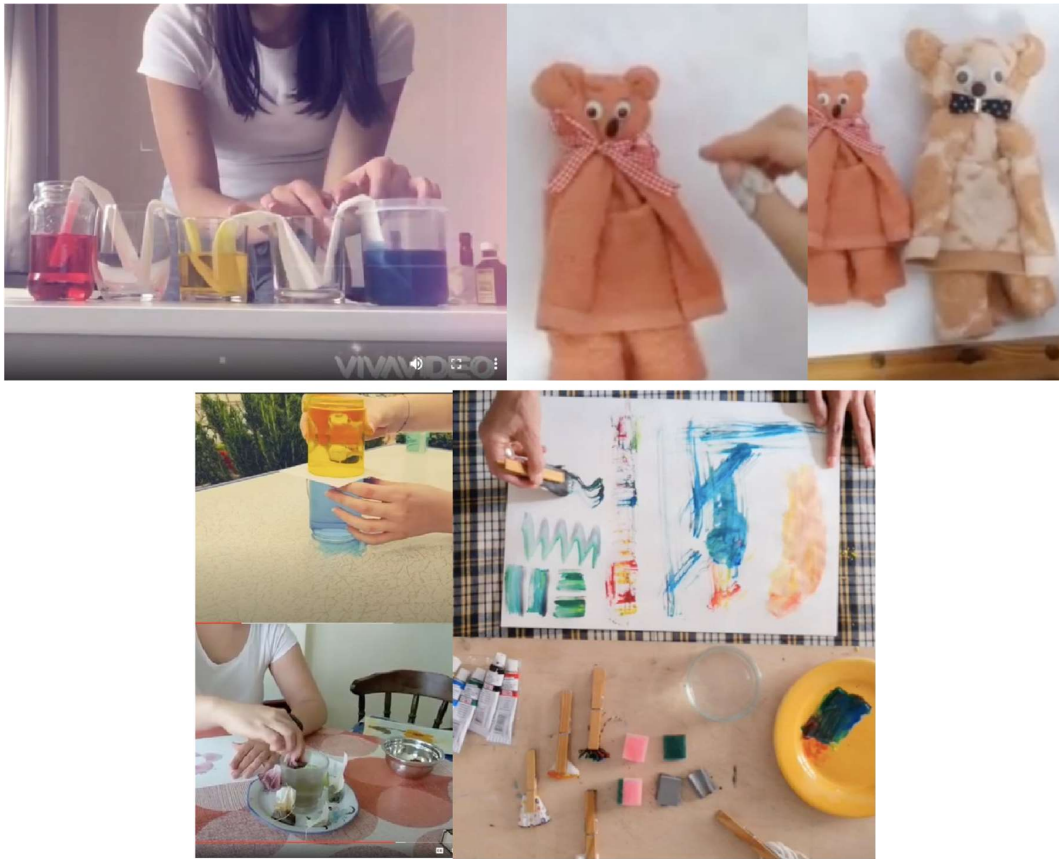


Figure 7: Students' micro-teaching CLIL activities: two experiments with eggs and one integrating art and science (Photos: Trentinné)



Figure 8: Students' micro-teaching CLIL activity: creating a musical instrument to integrate arts and crafts with science and music (Photo: Trentinné)



Figures 9 and 10: Screenshots of students' online tutorial videos during online education (Photos: Trentinné)

Saving energy at ELTE TÓK

This project focused on real-world global problems with a specific personal and local touch. Students were asked to work in groups and brainstorm energy conservation ideas at their institution. This initiative had a factual background problem and a real purpose since the faculty had to reduce energy use a great deal then. The activity taught students the importance of sustainability and practical ways to apply STEAM knowledge to environmental issues whilst employing creativity. There were some traditional and common energy-saving ideas. Still, students also came up with innovative suggestions showing their dedication to saving resources, and the whole process raised awareness of the significance of the energy situation. The collection of students' ideas and suggestions was finally shared with the management.

Science fair

At the end of the term, we organised a science fair which is a traditional educational event in Anglo-Saxon school systems, as known by most movie viewers worldwide. A science fair encourages students to develop their own scientific projects to

demonstrate their understanding and application of scientific concepts. It also provides an authentic platform for showcasing students' creativity. I started the programme by presenting the official trailer of the Science Fair movie (URL3) to set the scene, and after the presentations, students were encouraged to participate in creative STEAM-related activities and challenges.

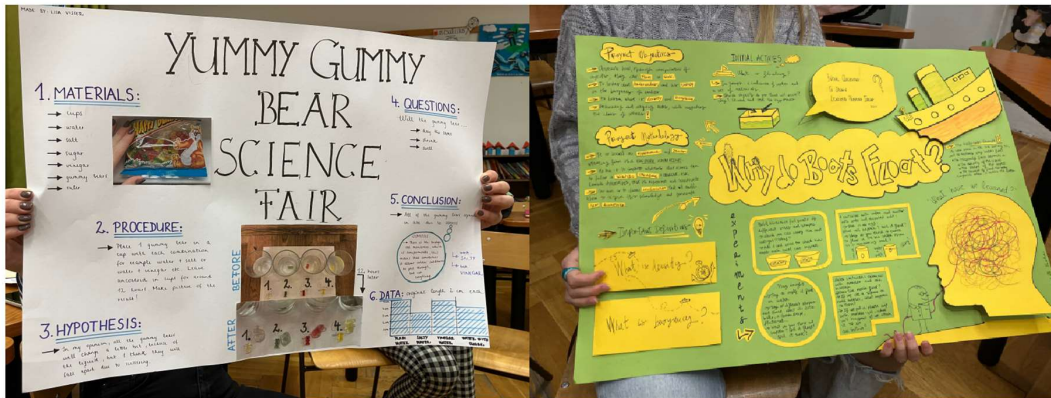


Figure 11: Science Fair contributions: poster presentations (Photos: Trentinné)



Figure 12: Science Fair contributions: experiments: volcano, density and super blob (Photos: Trentinné)



Figure 13: A STEAM-related group challenge connected to the Science Fair (Photos: Trentinné)

Learning with digital tools

In teacher education for the youngest generations, personal face-to-face teacher-student connections and traditional games, materials and teaching aids are still in favour (e.g. science experiments, art projects, use of books and realia, etc.), but the integration of digital teaching resources during classes ensures that students are exposed to a variety of methods and materials. It also supports different learning styles and keeps engagement high while preparing for 21st-century challenges. We used the faculty's 24 iPads in classes to get acquainted with free educational apps. We also enjoyed using augmented reality Smarty cards to learn about planets, animals, and dinosaurs.

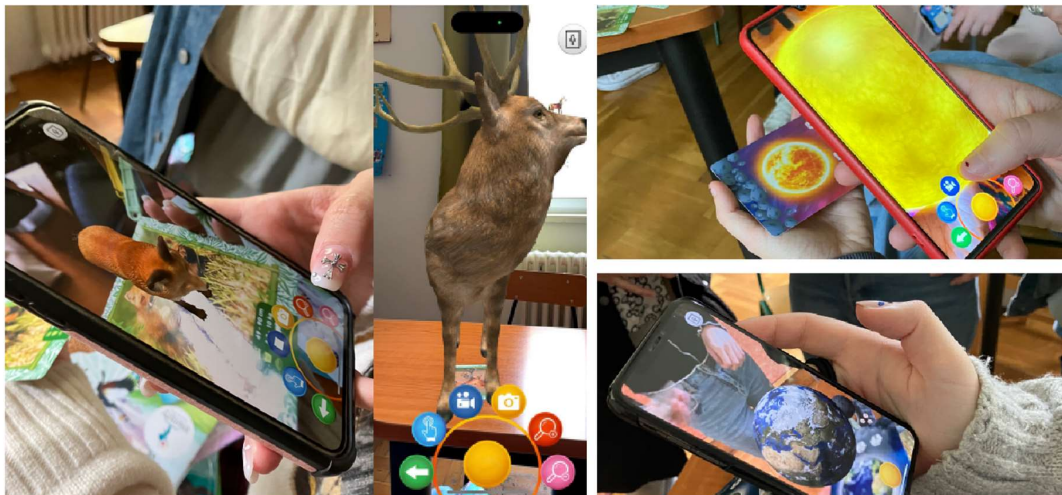


Figure 14: Smarty augmented reality application and cards in use (animals and planets sets) (Photos: Trentinné)



Figure 15: Students exploring the Human Body application (cleaning hands, removing germs) using the university iPads (Photo: Trentinné)

Assessment in traditional and online forms

The same applies to assessment, where face-to-face oral exams, handcrafted mind maps, and online portfolios can all be used. Using digital tools and applications to create online portfolios allows students to document and share their work with their teachers and peers. It serves as a form of assessment and helps students develop their digital literacy skills. In one course, the students were invited to present the evidence of their semester's work in the form of digital collections, using, e.g. Padlet, Canva, Flipbook, Cewe, Genially, and Facebook, amongst other applications. So they were able to create their own websites, blogs, videos, photo books or imaginary professional profiles. In another course, students had to take an oral exam based on their handcrafted mind map.



Figure 16: A student's handcrafted 3D mind map prepared for the oral exam
(Photos: Trentinné)

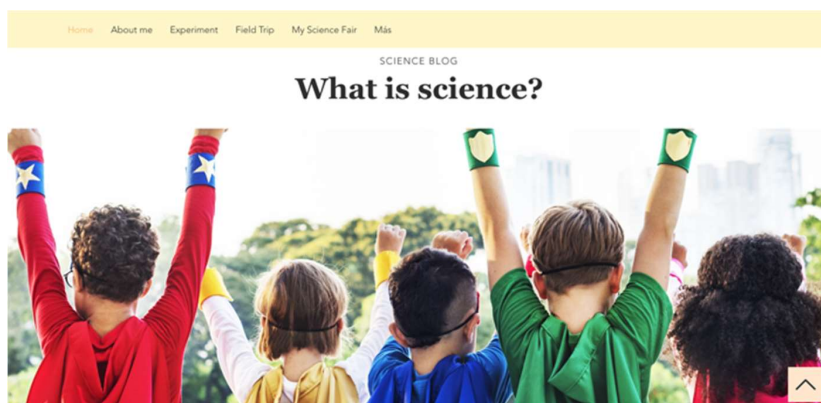


Figure 17: Screenshot of a student's science portfolio in the form of a self-designed website

Conclusion

In conclusion, using a blend of traditional and more innovative educational methods, techniques and materials while integrating STEAM elements into the CLIL teacher training programmes, ELTE TÓK offers well-rounded instruction that supports the original four C's framework and also the suggested six C's model of CLIL. I believe that besides content, communication, cognition and culture, in the 21st century, it is essential to cultivate creativity and curiosity.

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- URL1: Virtual field trips: <https://www.weareteachers.com/best-virtual-field-trips>
- URL2: Nasa website for kids: <https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/>
- URL3: Science Fair movie trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkzPBm-WznU>

Listen. Make. Draw. Sing. Clap

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Abstract: In our global world, the importance of knowing languages cannot be overstated. A growing number of countries are in favour of an early start, which means that foreign language instruction starts very early in pre-school.³This process needs qualified pre-school teachers who possess all the competences, knowledge and skills to teach in bilingual pre-school environments. Therefore, an increasing number of universities all around the world offer pre-school education programmes. Here is an example of how the students specializing in bilingual pre-school education at Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education (henceforth ELTE TÓK⁴) are taught the methodology of bilingual pre-school visual art and music courses.

Keywords: training programme, competencies, pre-school, bilingual methodology courses, visual arts, music

Introduction

At ELTE TÓK the pre-school education programme can be completed through two routes: a programme for Hungarian students who study the programme in Hungarian and an English programme which is fundamentally the same as the Hungarian programme, but is taught exclusively in English and is also open for international students. However, after the first year of implementing the programme in 2019 the number of the Hungarian students has outweighed the number of the international⁵ students. The reason for this seems to be the appealing fact that, after having completed the training, students obtain an internationally recognized degree in pre-school education.

In the Hungarian programme various specializations can be chosen, amongst which one is the so-called bilingual education specialization. For the English programme students, the bilingual specialization is the only choice. The international students take an oral entrance exam in Spring to establish aptitude. For the Hungarian programme

³ Another possible path is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) starting from the first year of elementary school. Due to limited space, since this is only an elective course for the students who study primary education and specialize in English at ELTE TÓK I shall exclusively focus on the pre-school programme in this paper.

⁴ Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Tanító-és Óvóképző Kar (ELTE TÓK)

⁵ Since 2019, students from China, Mexico, Iran, Portugal, Egypt, Korea, Japan, the United States of America, The Republic of South Africa, Serbia, India, Bangladesh and Venezuela have undertaken the English Programme.

students go through the Hungarian university entrance process and so do the Hungarian students who would like to undertake the international programme.

Once they have been admitted to the Faculty, they are required to name and rank three specializations⁶ they want to study in order of preferences. The Hungarian students who opt for the bilingualism specialization have to take a language entrance exam. The students who are admitted to this specialization usually have high level English skills, well above B2. From the moment the bilingual specialization has been chosen content-wise the two study routes are the same.

The first year covers the fundamentals of teaching, such as pedagogy, psychology, research methods, mother tongue language and literature, maths, science, music, visual art, physical education, sociology, along with English language development (language courses for three semesters, English Phonetics and Phonology) and methodology courses (English Children's Literature 1, English Children's Literature 2). Then more specific, bilingual education focused courses are taught beginning with the foundations of bilingual education. It is in the third semester when the first bilingual methodology course starts, which is the Methodology of Bilingual Visual Art Course⁷.

The Methodology of Bilingual Music Course is taught in the fifth semester. Students also receive instruction in the Methodology of Bilingual Science and Physical Education during their studies. The Methodology of Bilingual Visual Art and Music courses are complementary courses where the basic principles of how to approach and teach art and music in kindergarten are laid. The approach of how to teach art in the kindergarten is in line with Pataky's (2020) view and the music education is based on the Kodály method (Forrai, 1995) and Houlahan & Tacka's (2015) approach to Kodály's music teaching method.

In the bilingual methodology courses, in accordance with Kovács & Trentinné Benkő (2014), the focus is more on the English language itself, language acquisition and how to support language acquisition in pre-school along with the subject content requirements taking into account the characteristics of the very young learner and how they acquire languages. Another aim of the bilingual methodology courses is also to improve the students', the future pre-school educators', language skills, by enhancing their vocabulary of visual art and music while teaching them how to give instructions. Scaffolding in teaching art and music in English is taught with the one basic principle, that

⁶ It is mandatory for the pre-school educator major students (with the exception of those admitted to the nationalities major) to complete compulsory elective subjects and specializations. ELTE TÓK offers six specializations, which are part of the basic training and one of which must be completed: 1. "Preparation for leading English-Hungarian (Native language) bilingual kindergarten classes" specialization. Admission requirements: successful language examination. 2. "Helping the kindergarten-school transition" specialization. 3. "Early Childhood Education" specialization. 4. "Education for Sustainability" specialization. 5. "Diversity and inclusion in kindergarten" specialization. 6. "Complex motor development" specialization. Admission requirements: successful P.E. aptitude test.

⁷ In the workshop I focussed on the two courses I generally teach. In this paper only the content of the Methodology of the Bilingual Visual Art and the Methodology of the Bilingual Music courses are described and discussed.

they are going to teach this subject content in a foreign language. Yet another aim of the two courses is to read and be able to talk about visual art and music related articles and topics in English. However, besides language input, various English-speaking-countries-specific elements are also introduced, such e.g. making and also using play dough and finger paint and of course the historical background is also being discussed along with how these compounds could be used in kindergarten and how language acquisition may be supported by utilizing them. By conforming to Knight (2004) and New & Cochran (2007) who highlight the importance of combining international and intercultural elements into teaching, a multi- and intercultural approach is applied to the two courses which provide a profound pre-text for introducing festivals of the English-speaking world.

To sum up, the foundations of the bilingual methodology courses are laid in the first year when general educational, pedagogical, psychological and foundations of bilingualism courses are taught, supplemented with the kindergarten curricular content and the different subjects they study at the Faculty (see above). It gives the students a sturdy underpinning for what they are going to learn about in the bilingual methodology courses.

The Methodology of the Bilingual Visual Art Course

The Methodology of the Bilingual Visual Art Course is taught in the fourth (Spring) semester⁸. The students have a 45-minute session every week for 11-12 weeks. The basic principles discussed are relevant for the Methodology of the Bilingual Music Course as well. The course starts with a pre-course task when the students are required to watch an old, but very useful film titled *A Child's Guide to Languages* (1983)⁹ and answer some questions before they come to the first lesson (see Appendix 1). This helps them to freshen up what they have learnt in the foundations of bilingualism course. With their knowledge of the foundation course refreshed and having seen the film and answered the questions on the first lesson, the aims and requirements (Appendix 2) are discussed and the course description uploaded to the course Teams group. The fundamental principles are then laid down. The main topics discussed are language acquisition versus language learning and issues related to it.

The theoretical background relies heavily on the findings of (second) language acquisition research. Chomsky (1965) stated that humans are born with an innate Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which is a theoretical construct that enables individuals to acquire their mother tongue and, by extension, additional languages. The LAD suggests that children have an inherent ability to understand and generate the rules of language from the input they receive. This innate capacity is most active during the early years of life, making early exposure to a second language essential. According to Krashen (2013) language acquisition in young children differs fundamentally from language teaching; it involves creating an immersive environment where children can

⁸ From next year the course will be taught a semester earlier, in the third semester.

⁹ Here is the link to the film: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7myq5y> (last retrieved 15, July, 2024.)

naturally absorb and use the language through exposure and interaction rather than formal instruction. In accordance with his *Input Hypothesis* (1985), three key elements facilitate language acquisition:

- comprehensible input,
- the right to be silent,
- and a stress-free environment.

Comprehensible input refers to language that is slightly beyond the current level of the learner's understanding but made accessible through context and scaffolding. In addition, Krashen emphasizes the importance of allowing children to remain silent until they are ready to speak, recognizing that listening and processing are critical parts of language acquisition. Furthermore, a low-stress environment helps to reduce the affective filter, which can impede language learning when anxiety or pressure is high. Thus, pre-school educators who expose children to English in a natural, stress-free setting, without forcing them to speak before they are ready, create ideal conditions for language acquisition.

Therefore, combining Krashen's emphasis on providing comprehensible input in a supportive environment with Chomsky's concept of the LAD underscores the importance of starting language exposure as early as possible. In a kindergarten setting, integrating English through songs, stories, and everyday interactions allows children to naturally acquire the language, leveraging their innate linguistic abilities and creating a foundation for future fluency. In support of this approach, Bialystok (2001) claims that it not only facilitates English language acquisition but also supports overall cognitive development, as learning multiple languages enhances problem-solving skills and cognitive flexibility. In conclusion, early and immersive exposure to English in a kindergarten context, guided by principles previously discussed, provides children with a strong foundation for language acquisition. These are the basic principles and approach that provide the theoretical background for the bilingual methodology courses.

The students are also required to make a piece of art and craft activity and bring to the first class. Since the Spring semester starts in the middle of February, it seemed appropriate to choose a Valentine's Day craft activity. Students in groups take turns showing their ideas and the group members are expected to name the materials and tools used. In the end a whole class discussion is held. The aim of this activity is to see how well they can name tools, materials and compounds in English. For the next lesson the students have to visit Mrs. Brown's website¹⁰ or her Youtube or Instagram ideas. The questions they have to answer refer to the materials, the compounds, the tools, the techniques and the products: *On what? With what? How? What is made?*

On the following lesson, the tutor devices four big sheets of paper and hangs them on the wall with these four questions on the sheets, one on each sheet of paper. Students

¹⁰ <https://mrsbrownart.com/> (last retrieved 18, July, 2024.)

in small group walk around the classroom with a felt-tip pen and add items which have not been written yet. This is a good revision of what they have found on the website, in the videos or on Instagram. By reading what the other groups have written is yet another opportunity to practise and remember these vocabulary items and expressions. On this lesson they are also given a 150-item vocabulary list (see Appendix 3) in their mother tongues they are asked to find the English equivalents for. These vocabulary items are then revised in each lesson with the help of online or 'old-school' (Pictionary, Activity, etc.) vocabulary practising techniques and materials. I prefer Wordwall and LearningApps¹¹ activities. Another application that works well is any kind of dice roller application where you can write words on the sides of the dice. Then students roll the dice and name the items. I found it especially useful when I had a lot of international students in the group. I could write the art words in all the different languages (e.g. on one side of the dice I put ecset (Hungarian) /pincel (Spanish)/ pinsel (German)/ فُرْشَاةُ الرَّسْمِ (Arabic). One concept is various languages on one side. They had to provide the English word: paintbrush. In groups they could roll the dice and also check the meaning together.

From the third class, students have to read short articles on teaching art in the kindergarten. In pairs they are required to make paper-based quizzes for their group members¹². This means a total of approximately 12-15 articles and quizzes. So sometimes we have two quizzes in a lesson. They can use and vary any kind of testing techniques. Most of the time students appear to be amazingly creative and use 3-4 different ones, such as gap-fill, multiple choice, true and false statements, questions, matching definitions and concepts, crosswords, etc. in one quiz. During the semester, in addition to the Valentine's Day craft, they are expected to make a product for a song where the techniques, the skills developed and the colours are specified, in the fourth lesson. Examples are to make a craft activity using colouring within the boundaries of lines, use ripping and rolling skills, develop gluing skills and use the basic colours. This activity is an introduction to the instructions. Again, in groups they have to present their craft activities using the relevant art vocabulary, thus providing an opportunity to practise it. On this lesson they also receive a list of possible art instructions which are in their mother tongue and so have to be translated into English. They have to upload their solutions to Teams assignments. Once the instructions have been checked, the students receive the instructions list in English, which needs to be learnt for the next lesson. From then on, along with the vocabulary, instructions are also being continuously checked. Two of the most popular games have proved to be the Relay¹³ and the Wordwall Simple

¹¹ e.g. <https://learningapps.org/view29717406> ;

¹² Earlier online testing applications were allowed. I found that they were notes useful as a piece of paper and pen. Therefore, from last semester these quizzes are to be prepared on paper.

¹³ Put your class into two or three teams of approximately equal number of players per line. Each team gets a pile of art instructions. The one at the front picks the first card and reads out the instruction in the mother tongue for player number 2 who says it in English. If correct, number 1 runs to the end of the line. Next number 2 picks the next card. and so on. The winning team is the one that finishes off the pile first.

Cards games. There are usually two big Festivals celebrated - Easter and Mother's Day (from the next semester they will be Halloween and Christmas). The whole lesson is devoted to peer-teaching, to the festivals and making the products. By this time, most of the vocabulary and instructions have been learnt. Students in groups of four (e.g. AAAA; BBBB; CCCC; DDDD) prepare an art activity. The table where they sign up is visible for the whole group in Teams. There should not be duplicates, Students in their groups are expected to carefully plan, discuss all the materials needed and instructions for the craft activity.

The students are also required to provide and bring all the ingredients for the session. Then in the next lesson they are re-grouped (ABCD; ABCD; ABCD; ABCD). In their new groups they have to teach their group members how to make the art product. They are required to do everything to provide comprehensible input, talking and scaffolding in a stress-free environment letting the 'learners' have the right to be silent to ensure that language acquisition is taking place. Evidently, this is an artificial situation, yet a useful rehearsal for the real kindergarten classroom. The screenplay is more or less the same for the two Festival peer-teaching sessions.

During the semester, to provide yet another opportunity for practising art vocabulary and giving instructions, students have to make a video of any chosen art activity. Only the age-group is defined. The link to the video is added to the portfolio. Two or three lessons before the end, the students present their festival posters. On the very first lesson, when the requirements of the course are discussed they all pick a Festival that is celebrated in the English-speaking world and is suitable to be celebrated with kindergarteners. The posters can be paper-based or online posters. They should contain the history of the given Festival, how it is celebrated and one craft activity, which has to be carefully planned with the ingredients, instructions and the stages of how to make it. The product needs to be made and presented in class.



World Elephant Day poster¹⁴

¹⁴ All the photos of the students' works are used with the kind permission of the creators of them.



St.Patrick's Day poster

The final end-of-term task for the course is to make an art portfolio. This portfolio can be paper-based or online in any format the students prefer and it should contain all the work done in the course, logically structured with a cover and content page. The specifications for it are sent to the students. The portfolio has to be handed in one week after the course finishes.

The Methodology of the Bilingual Music Course

The Methodology of the Bilingual Music Course is taught in the fifth semester. The students from the next semester will have a 45-minute session every week for 12 weeks. The lessons used to be 90-minutes. The first lesson starts with the requirements of the course and, also, revision of the main principles of the bilingual methodology courses (see above). Not much time is spent on language acquisition and the main issue of bilingual education. They are required to set the frame for the course, refresh and keep alive the knowledge already learnt. The arrangement of the course is more or less the same as the methodology of visual art course. There are articles to read, quizzes to be prepared in pairs and also vocabulary items (musical instruments, musical notation) and music instructions to be learnt. One of the main requirements is to learn and know 50 English children's songs well, which will be tested on the first week after the course has finished. The songs are learnt gradually, about 5-6 per lesson, and practised at the beginning of each class with the help of a song bag. This bag is made of fabric with a musical notation pattern and is filled with little toys which represent each song learnt. This is an idea that can be transferred to the pre-school environment. Students pick a toy and that song is sung.



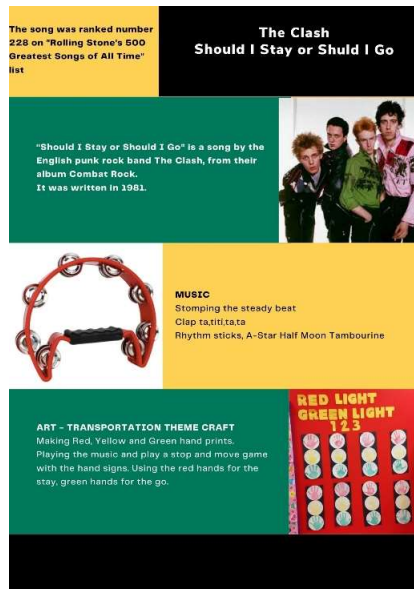
A song bag

The songs with an accompanying video are uploaded after the sessions into the Teams group. The vocabulary is taught and practised the same way as in the art classes. The rhythm instruments are taught in the form of an art and craft activity. Students in groups (see art activities) sign up and plan how to make a rhythm instrument (maracas, castanet, jingle bells, rhythm sticks, etc.) and in the following class they make them. As for knowing and practising music instructions, all the students receive three games: a music, a rhythm and a dance game, the description of which they get. They have to teach their peers how to play the games using the right vocabulary and instructions¹⁵. The students are also required to teach each other a music and song game in pairs.¹⁶

The reason for these activities is to provide hands-on practice for the students of giving instructions in front of a group. The rhythm games offer, besides practising giving instructions, an opportunity to use rhythm instruments. During the course we learn about how to use classical music and the topic is introduced with the help of film music such as *Planes*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Kungfu Panda*, etc. Then the names of the classical musical instruments are discussed. Finally, some useful ideas of how to use classical music in pre-school are presented, e.g. marching to music, dancing, using scarves or rhythm instruments. On the following lesson the students in pairs are required to present a classical music idea relevant to the pre-school environment. A whole session is devoted to pop music and how to approach pop-music with pre-schoolers.

¹⁵ Storms, J. (1995) *101 Music Games for Children: Fun and Learning with Rhythm and Song (SmartFun Activity Books)*. Deep Books; Storms, J.(2001) *101 More Music Games for Children: More Fun and Learning with Rhythm and Song*. Hunter House; Xue, C. (2022) *Slap, Knock, Pop: Rhythm Game* Independently published (December 11, 2022); Rooyackers, P. &Hurd, C. (1996) *101 Dance Games for Children : Fun and Creativity with Movement (SmartFun Activity Books)* Deep Books;

¹⁶ Conn Bell, P.& Hagen Nipp, S. (2022) *Wee Sing Games, Games, Games*. Mass Market Paperback. CD&Book



A music poster

A music poster is also amongst the requirements of the course. It has to be about a song, any kind of song. The students are to trace the background of the song and design an art activity and a rhythm activity for it. The presentations take place on the last two lessons of the course. While the students are listening to the presentations of the posters in both methodology classes they are expected to fill in a so-called Poster Grid which functions as a while-listening task as well as a reflection and summary of the poster presentations. The posters or photos of the posters are all uploaded to a file in Teams after having been presented. The filled in grids must be added to the portfolio.

Name:	Festival (name+ when is it celebrated?)	What is celebrated?	Art Activity	Comments

The Art Poster Grid

The final task of the Methodology of Bilingual Music Course, is a course portfolio with the same requirements as of the visual art course. By the end of both of the courses

the students have to complete a Feedback Sheet, which helps the tutor tailor and adjust the material and the set-up of the material of the following courses.

What I learnt...	What I expected to learn, but didn't....	What I liked...	What I didn't like...	Comments

Conclusion

After presenting the theoretical background of bilingual visual education and music courses, the presentation demonstrated the steps of practical implementation of lessons in an intercultural context, emphasizing the importance of tasks supporting language foundation, vocabulary expansion, and practising giving instructions in a foreign language for students choosing bilingual specialization, with which we train kindergarten teachers who are confident in speaking the foreign language and able to competently conduct visual education and music activities in English. With this knowledge future kindergarten educators will be able to support the process of foreign language acquisition and convey subject content in a bilingual kindergarten environment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Pre-Course Task

Pre-course task: A Child's Guide to Languages (BBC, 1983)

Watch the film (It is a very old (1983) film, but a very good and really useful one) and answer the questions, please.

- How do children acquire language?
- What is the theory behind child language acquisition?
- What is the 'natural order'? Does your own language learning experience suggest that it exists?
- Are children better learners than adults? What does modern research have to say about this question?
- What three things do children often have when learning a second language that adults do not?
- What is 'comprehensible input'?
- Why is a 'stress-free environment' important?
- Why do children have the 'right to be silent'? Do you agree?
- What does the 'WUG' test prove?
- Have any teaching methods tried to incorporate some of the ideas outlined in the film?
- What, in the opinion of Professor Steven Krashen, is the function of the language classroom?
- How do Canadian immersion schools work?

Appendix 2: Aims of the Methodology of Bilingual Visual Art Course

Aims of the course

- develop skills and techniques to conduct arts and crafts sessions in bilingual kindergarten groups

- develop teacher language for conducting arts and crafts sessions in bilingual kindergarten groups
- help students to transfer their base knowledge of Visual Art into English speaking environment
- develop skills to design activities and weekly/monthly topics for visual arts subject area
- help students familiarise with the arts elements of English-speaking children's literature
- familiarise students with the early-learning environments in English speaking countries
- to learn and to develop skills to support language acquisition

Sounds, rhymes and children's literature

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Abstract: One of the tasks of a bilingual kindergarten teacher is preparing children for literacy skills in English. It involves supporting the children to develop their phonological awareness in English. Phonological awareness comprises the ability to segment speech into smaller units, such as words, syllables and sounds. Children's literature provides the right material for sound play and the work leading to this awareness: nursery rhymes possess melody, rhythm and rhymes. Children with a growing phonological awareness can also create recognise and create rhymes and alliteration, and enjoy playing with sounds. Future kindergarten teachers frequently face the need to develop their own phonological awareness first, as the teaching of pronunciation is generally a neglected field in language teaching/learning. In their pronunciation development course the trainee students first need to establish their own sound awareness, which will enable them to exploit rhymes, chants, songs and poems to design phonological awareness raising games and activities in kindergarten. The author presented an overview of two courses in our bilingual kindergarten education specialisation programme at ELTE TÓK, i.e. Phonetics and Pronunciation Development and Children's Literature, with a special angle on how the team works on students' sound awareness and how they make use of their new knowledge when working with young learners. Some practical examples for games promoting sound play were introduced and tested.

Key words: children's literature, rhymes, kindergarten

The focus of this presentation was on the pronunciation development course at the English-Hungarian Bilingual Kindergarten Education Specialisation (BA in Kindergarten Education, Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest). The course "Phonetics and pronunciation development" is part of the language preparatory strand (Figure 1) of the programme. The goals of the course fall into two main categories. On the one hand, it aims to develop students' sound awareness and improve their pronunciation skills (enunciation, word and sentence stress, intonation). As future kindergarten teachers, they will rely on their voice and serve as models for speakers of English to their young students. On the other hand, the students also become familiar with pronunciation games and activities that can be used to help young children develop their own pronunciation and sound awareness.

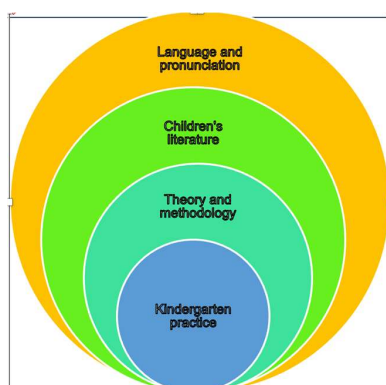


Figure 1 Specialisation in Bilingual Kindergarten Education: Programme overview

Orality tends to play a central role in teaching an L2 (second language) to kindergarten-aged learners (Canepari, Simionato, 2012) and they are considered more successful at mastering good pronunciation than adults (Singleton & Ryan, 2004; Jarosz, 2021; Caleffi, 2022). Young children are able to imitate the pronunciation of the language they are exposed to and can work out the rules themselves (Dunn, n.a.). Some of the reasons for their success may be that they are less inhibited, faster (Lipinska, 2017), have greater articulatory plasticity and are better at identifying phonemes, which they can produce with a high level of accuracy. As they start language learning earlier, they are also exposed to spoken language for a longer time (Caleffi, 2022). They can achieve a native-like accuracy in their pronunciation.

In my experience, which is also supported by the relevant literature (Caleffi, 2022), university students come into higher education with minimal phonetic awareness, as pronunciation instruction is usually marginalised in EFL (English as a foreign language) classes and textbooks as well. The rationale for having the pronunciation course in the kindergarten curriculum is that L2 pronunciation skills can be fostered through explicit teaching. Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2013) claim that there is a significant relationship between the formal instruction of pronunciation and actual improvement in a learner's pronunciation. The acquisition of proper pronunciation for children is significant, because it can later influence their listening, reading and writing skills (Walker, 2016).

The syllabus for the course *Phonetics and pronunciation development* covers both segmental features (sounds/phonemes, sound awareness and phonetic symbols), and suprasegmental/prosodic features (word and sentence stress, stress patterns and intonation in continuous speech). Both parts are significant for the work of future kindergarten teachers. They need to serve as models of English speakers for the children, who will hear them during daily interactions, such as care activities, giving instructions and singing, chanting or reading stories. In general, it can be claimed that children learn English through continuous speech.

For pronunciation development, traditional activities and materials are used, such as listen and repeat drills, minimal pairs drills, sound recognition exercises etc. Learning basic theoretical foundations and phonemic transcriptions are also part of the

requirements. However, some activities that can be used with kindergarten-aged children for phonemic awareness development are additionally integrated into the course and are presented here.

Tongue twisters are ideal for the recognition and development of individual sounds and their repetition can be a source of great joy for the children. The website LearnEnglishKids by the British Council offers a wide selection of tongue twisters, complete with illustrations and recordings (Figure 2). Children in general tend to enjoy playing with sounds.

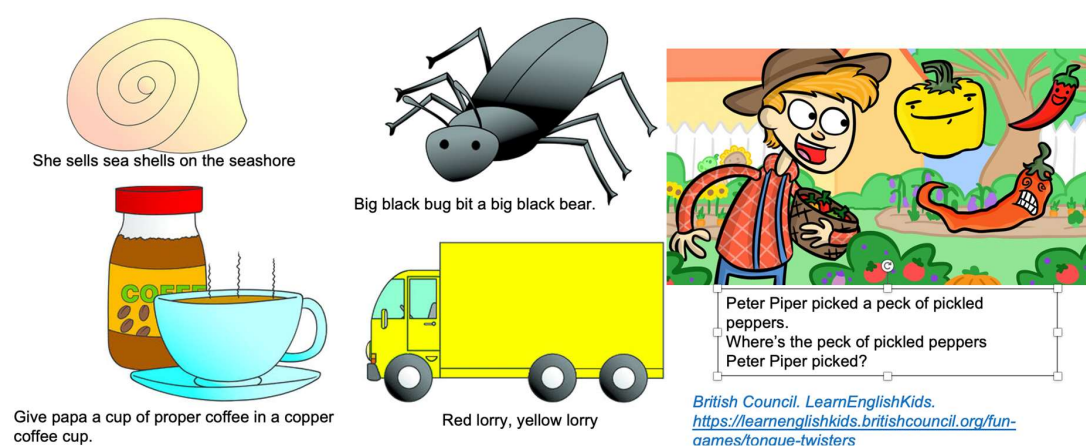


Figure 2 Tongue twisters

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/fun-games/tongue-twisters>

Another example for such playful sound awareness activities is creating nonsense language through replacing the vowel sounds in the repetitive lines of the song *Apples and bananas* by the Canadian singer-composer Raffi (2013). The song is available both on CDs and YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5b-oUqmCQ>).

Nursery rhymes and songs are a treasure chest for working on children's pronunciation, without calling it pronunciation (Knight, n.a.). They offer continuous language, giving the opportunity to acquire language in chunks, with their appropriate pronunciation, stress pattern and intonation. The rhythm and rhyming lines make it more fun and easier to remember them. Nursery rhymes collections are widely available both in print and online formats.

Graham's (1979) jazz chants have been popular in children's language education for decades. Her chants rely on the natural pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in English. However, teachers can create their own chants (Graham, 2006) or involve their young learners in the process, and even a restaurant menu can become a chant (Nixon & Tomlinson, 2005) (Figure 3).



Figure 3 The railway café food chant (Nixon & Tomlinson, 2005).

Rhyming and the distinguishing rhyming sounds can be practised with the help of phonics readers, such as the ones published by Usborne Publishing (Figure 4). Phonics is a literacy teaching method, which is based on identifying the relationship between sounds and letters or groups of letters. A variety of matching games can further help young learners to recognise and match rhyming words. For kindergarten-aged learners pictures are recommended for word recognition. In addition to simple matching cards and puzzles, the visual images can be attached on dice, duplo™ blocks or tiny locks and their keys. Using pegs to mark rhyming word pairs means the children can engage in a manipulative activity.



Figure 4 Usborne Phonics Readers

Finally, picture books and story books are the most complex means for young learners' pronunciation development. Participating in shared reading sessions means children can hear and repeat continuous speech, chunks of language, dialogues, rhyming and repetitive text. Cumulative stories, such as *Brown bear, brown bear what do you see*

(by Bill Martin and Eric Carle) or *We're going on a bear hunt* (by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury) are especially suitable for joint reading activities that can easily involve children's active participation.

Conclusion

Although many students initially join the course with doubts, reservations or even worries, by combining traditional and child-friendly activities pronunciation development can be effective and even a source of joy.

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Breaking Taboos

Project-Based Learning Through Children's Storybooks Made by Advanced EFL Learners

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Abstract: The author presents a comprehensive teaching unit used to illustrate how a basic topic familiar to all EFL learners – the home and family – can be raised to an advanced level for future international preschool teachers already possessing a high degree of language competency in English. Rather than merely repeating the review of familiar vocabulary, the issue of redlining (United States) is used to highlight housing as a human right. The accompanying topic of segregation focuses attention on the fate of the individual families living in redlined areas. A subsequent examination of how mainstream (white, middle-class) families versus minority families are portrayed in the media leads to an investigation into the depiction of families and types of families. As the culmination of this unit, students were asked to create their own storybooks on taboo topics (including biracialism, death, divorce, single parenthood, disabilities and LGBTQ+) for children aged 3-6 years. Samples of their work will be shown.

Keywords: taboo, redlining, segregation, storybooks, advanced EFL learners

This presentation describes how a unit focusing on housing and the home was taught to advanced EFL learners at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education (Budapest, Hungary). This unit was designed to span five, ninety-minute lessons in the second half of a two-semester English course held for future preschool teachers attending the International Kindergarten BA Program. Students enter the program with a B2 level of English; the course aims to increase their proficiency to C1 or C2. Given the nature of the program, students are expected to become educators in an international or bilingual preschool and must be prepared for the differences posed by working in these types of environments.

As the International Kindergarten BA Program enters its sixth year, I have gathered some of the challenges encountered when teaching advanced users of English. It is my experience that most of my students are self-taught in English, mainly by means of the Internet (YouTube, Netflix, etc.). This factor means that their spoken fluency, pronunciation, and listening comprehension competencies are generally quite high and

give the impression of already being at C1 level. While self-education builds the learners' autonomy, this circumstance also means that students have quite often experienced boredom in the English classroom, a feeling compounded by the fact that the same, all-too-familiar, topics have been repeated throughout their years of formal schooling in English. Topics such as the family, the home, food, etc. are usually the mainstay of EFL textbooks. When teaching advanced learners, the question is whether to follow this tried-and-trusted method of repeating the same topics – albeit at a higher level – or to find a set of new topics. My course attempts to balance both approaches by taking a known topic such as the home, expanding it to a more advanced level of vocabulary, and also connecting it to the learners' future profession of preschool education.

The second question that is necessary to keep in mind when teaching advanced learners is that their apparent fluency is frequently not quite as stable as it seems. Compared to their C1 speaking abilities, production of written English is only B2 or lower, particularly as regards spelling. Usage of grammar elements is intuitive rather than conscious. Although the students' fluency is commendable, their ability to switch between different linguistic registers (formal, semi-formal, informal) is inconsistent and their vocabularies remain strongest when it comes to informal phrases or slang. Making the adjustment to formal, academic English is a definite challenge, particularly when it comes to writing. Furthermore, having been exposed to the same range of topics year after year has not necessarily deepened their knowledge, but rather calcified their vocabularies into isolated outcroppings. In other words, little connection is seen between the topic of the home and, for example, that of food or going to the doctor.

A third issue to be faced is an obvious one but may not initially seem like a challenge. In Hungary, very few young men choose preschool education – although this fact is gradually changing as one or two young men now enter the program. As a result, the classroom is dominated by young women, most of whom come from white, middle-class backgrounds. Most significantly, there is a difference between those who originate from the countryside as opposed to the capital city, Budapest. In this case, the challenge is to find a way to expose these learners to life experiences and perspectives that fall beyond what they usually encounter. While the handful of international students (who have come from China, Iran, India, Italy, US, Ukraine, South Africa, Japan and Korea to date) naturally adds to the diversity of the classroom, it would also not be advisable to make these students constantly represent their culture, as if a single individual could accomplish this. Instead, topics and materials need to be internationally applicable so that their experiences can be integrated into the class.

There are four main aims to this unit: the first is to develop preschool educators with a Freirean disposition, as described in the field of critical pedagogy. A Freirean disposition refers to the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, and means that educators must be skilled in problem-posing, critical inquiry and dialoguing while additionally seeking social justice in a way that is humble and expresses love for people (Neumann, 2015). Developing a Freirean disposition is therefore a means of forming the attitudes of future

educators. In order to accomplish this aim, it is also necessary to sensitize students to social issues that are global in nature. These two steps are closely related to the third aim of actively engaging students in the class, thereby breaking the persistent feeling of boredom they often attach to the EFL classroom. Finally, the practical aim of this unit is also to develop learners' English in a holistic way that focuses on listening, speaking, the expansion of lexical elements and writing.

Lesson 1

Lesson 1 introduces the topic as housing, but not the house that students so often remember from their English textbooks. When discussing the difference between house and housing, I draw students' attention to the financial, political, cultural and environmental issues that are related to the topic of housing. These connections are strengthened by creating a mind map together on the board in which the vocabulary for each subtopic is included. For example, the subtopic of "financial" includes words such as "mortgage," "debt," "to finance," "housing crisis" while the subtopic of "environmental" collects words related to the carbon footprint left by home ownership. The subtopic of "cultural" discusses whether multigenerational or single-family homes are common in the students' own culture. Brief youtube videos on the Tiny Home Movement and multigenerational living are viewed and discussed. Students are invited to share their own opinions, while also discussing how the housing crisis affects their own ability to buy or rent housing. The subtopic of "political" is approached from the point of view of government subsidy programs for housing. Students are asked to form an opinion of CSOK, the subsidy program in Hungary that provides financial assistance to married couples who, in return, promise to have one or more children. The homework is to prepare for a debate on this topic.

Lesson 2

After a brief review and warm-up of the previous lesson's vocabulary, the lesson focuses on what advantages or disadvantages there are to CSOK and students are put into two groups, one pro and one contra. Using the debating techniques that were covered in the first semester, students debate whether or not CSOK is a viable choice for young families in Hungary. At the end of the debate, I point out that housing is connected to two basic human rights, the right to affordable housing and reproductive rights. By the end of this part of the unit, students are beginning to see the connections between the seemingly separate issues of housing and politics, for example. To further this process, we then do a listening exercise that is attached to an NPR report on redlining (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5FBJyqfoLM&ab_channel=NPR) , a practice in the United States that came about due to subsidized housing mortgages and resulted in housing segregation. The video discusses how redlining has impacted communities from the perspectives of access to schooling, nutritious food, public safety and health. When we review the answers to the listening exercises and summarize the gist of the video,

students are generally shocked and appalled that access to affordable housing has such an enormous influence on something like access to schooling. This connection naturally leads to a discussion on school segregation and whether or not this is only an issue in the United States or occurs in other countries. After asking the students about their knowledge of their own society, the answer is that, yes, school segregation can be found in all countries and is therefore a global issue. Students are asked whether segregation has influenced their own lives; if they answer in the negative, I point out that our predominantly female faculty and class can be interpreted as a form of segregation. What factors have led to this situation?

Lesson 3

Lesson 3 then shifts from the issue of housing to that of the home, as in the place where a family resides. I ask students to recollect what types of families have been portrayed or depicted in their textbooks, school materials, or even in the media. Students mainly recollect the “standard” image of a white, middle-class family with two children (a boy and a girl) and most likely a dog. This family lives in a semi-detached house with a yard, garage and doghouse (undoubtedly for the sake of expanding students’ vocabulary). I talk about the influence such images have had on our perception of the family and ask students to work in small groups and collect examples of how the family is portrayed in the media, such as in TV series. Due to the fact that most students view series on a wide variety of streaming services, I find it a useful activity for them to collect and share what they are watching because it often occurs that they are all watching different programs. Students mainly refer to the series, *Modern Family*, or *Keeping up with the Kardashians* as a depiction of family life. When I ask them to think of an example that comes from their own country, they usually cannot think of an example. I then bring in examples from my own childhood in the form of *The Donna Reed Show* and *The Brady Bunch*. Brief clips are viewed and I ask students to analyze each. Where does this family live? How do they live? What gender roles do we see? What values are they presenting? What kind of English do the characters speak?

Interestingly, it is simply enough to show the picture of the cast for each show for the students to be able to make educated guesses on how the families in this shows live. While *The Brady Bunch* portrays a “mosaic” family, the topic of divorce or widowhood (it is never very clear how the former partners of Mr. and Mrs. Brady disappeared from their lives) is never mentioned. I point out how there are silences in a narrative because these topics are considered taboo. A taboo topic is essentially any form of family life that does not fit in with the stereotypical model of a mother, a father, two children and one dog. Class discussion then turns to how a minority family is shown and I ask students to collect examples from their own country of how a family from a minority group is depicted in a series or by the media. In Hungary, the only well-known example to come to mind is the *Győzike Show*, a reality show that follows the lives of a well-to-do Roma family who became famous in the realm of pop music. We discuss how the family displays all the

stereotypes of being loud, aggressive, having poor taste and only speaking in dialect. I then show a clip of *Good Times*, one of the first programs to portray an African American family in the United States. Although the family in *Good Times* suffers from all the results of redlining, the fact of redlining is never directly indicated. We return once again to the silences that exist in narratives and communication. The class compiles a list of what topics are silenced as regards families. This list included divorce, poverty, widowhood/death in the family, single parenthood, LGBTQ+ issues, adoption, biracialism and physical or mental disabilities. I ask the class if it is our job as educators to accept these silences or to address them. When students ask how this can be done, I assign them the task of creating storybooks that address one of these issues for age groups 3-6 years. This assignment can be done either alone or in a pair and must consist of both text and illustrations and be five pages in length. The topic can be freely chosen for a selected age group. Any method for creating the storybook can be used.

Lesson 4

Lesson 4 is a recap of the main characteristics of young learners and what stories and language are appropriate for different age groups, from 0-6. I take in an assortment of children's books and ask students to arrange them by age. We explore the books and discuss the difference between textile books, board books and touchy-feely books. We also examine how it is ages 5-6 that are capable of understanding fairy tales as opposed to 3-4, the age group that appreciates stories that are closer to everyday reality. The level of language is examined, from rhymes to short, simple sentences, and then longer sentences. The purpose of this lesson is to provide students with a good background in how to make their storybooks. The class is then given two weeks to create their storybooks. The books will be shown to a class at a book launch held in two weeks' time.

Lesson 5

Two weeks have passed and it is time for the class to show their work. Most students chose to work in pairs. Some used Canva to create a book, which was also fine. Great care was taken in creating stories that were presented in a way that would be appropriate for the given age group. Topics such as biracial families, adoption, divorce, single parenthood, death, LGBTQ+ families and disabilities were chosen and presented with great sensitivity. A considerable amount of creativity and skill was used in completing this collaborative task. After the books were collected, they were put on exhibit at the library in the Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education and were enjoyed by all.

Conclusion

The feedback showed that making the books took a great deal of time and effort, but the students genuinely enjoyed doing it. It seems that the class aims were reached in a way that engaged students while also developing their competencies as future

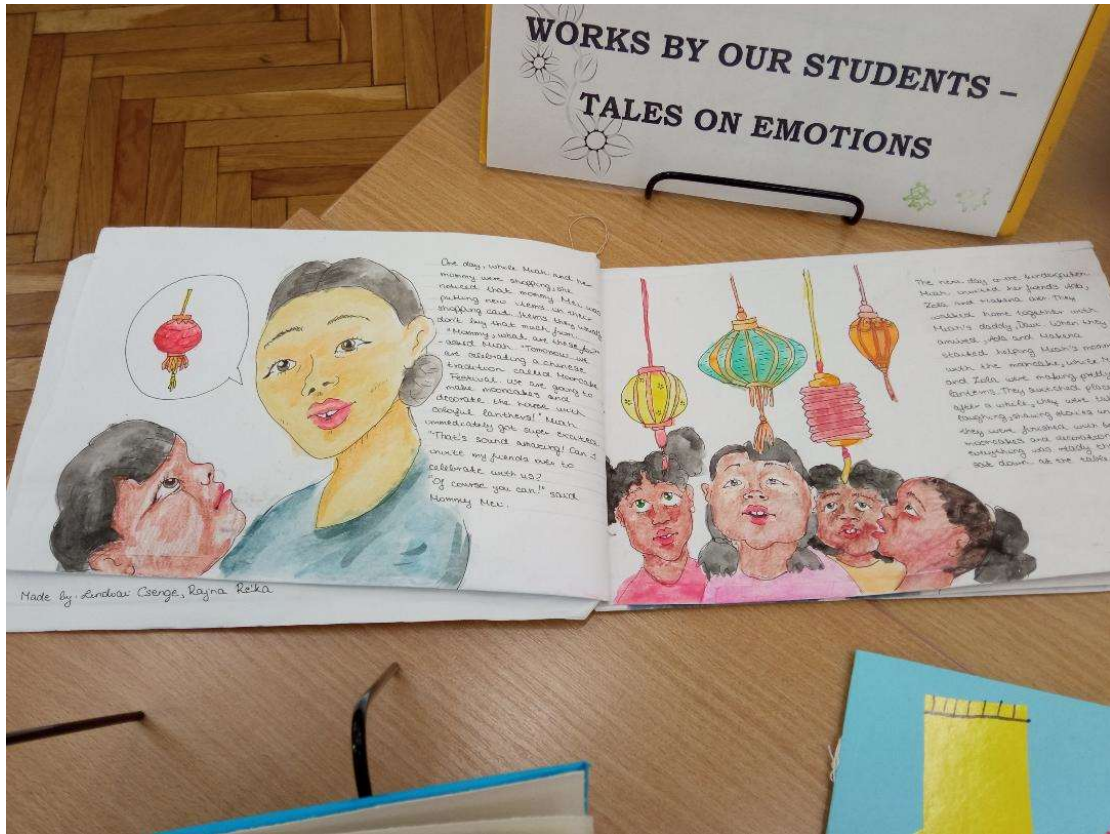
preschool educators. Last but not least, students' least favorite skill – writing – was also exercised in a way that was enjoyable.

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June, 2024. Exhibit at Library of Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. Picture taken by author.



Book created about an African and Chinese family, by Csenge Lendvai and Réka Rajna.
Picture taken by author.



Book created about adoption by Zorka Benedek and Lira Olívia Varga.
Picture taken by author.

A Journey into Playful English Acquisition: Workshop Highlights and Methodologies

Zsuzanna Béni & Antoine Cunningham

Boys and Girls Club of Hungary's Preschool and Afterschool Program
Budapest, Hungary

Abstract: Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has transformative impact on language acquisition, specifically tailored for children aged 3-8. The workshop enabled participants to gain a profound understanding of our innovative CLIL approach at BGC (Boys and Girls Clubs) and its application in language acquisition for young learners, emphasizing the delicate balance between Hungarian and English teachers in bilingual teaching. The workshop delved into the nuances of spontaneous learning processes, offering insights into how our methodology surpasses traditional approaches. Practical strategies for seamlessly integrating English language acquisition into the daily lives of children aged 3-8 were a key focus, providing participants with tangible tools to enhance their teaching practices. By exploring the magic of CLIL and its effectiveness in language acquisition, BGC contributes to the conference's overarching goal of showcasing cutting-edge methods that drive positive educational outcomes.

Key words: English language, acquisition, methodologies, play

Language acquisition in early childhood sets the foundation for lifelong communication skills. In our workshop, "A Journey into Playful English Acquisition with the CLIL Method," led by experienced educators Zsanna Béni and Anne Cunningham, we aimed to immerse participants in interactive and innovative teaching strategies. This workshop reflects the teaching practices and methods utilized for younger learners at the Boys and Girls Club of Hungary's Preschool and Afterschool Program in Budapest, Hungary.

The core of our workshop revolved around CLIL methodology, which combines content and language learning objectives to enhance cognitive and linguistic development simultaneously. Our 13-year successful program at BGC Hungary exemplifies the transformative power of this approach, blending educational content with language acquisition in a natural and engaging manner. Key features of our approach include:

- Free Play: Encouraging natural language use and social interaction.

- Routine Activities and Collaborative Teaching: Creating a consistent, supportive environment for language practice.
- Theme-Centric Approach: Using books and stories to anchor learning activities, such as “Not Inside This House” by Kevin Lewis.

This workshop offers the opportunity to step into the role of BGC Hungary’s educators and their commitment to fostering bilingual proficiency in young learners, specifically children aged 3-8 years, through language acquisition. BGC Hungary’s dedicated instructors employ interactive methods like free play, role plays and movement activities, ensuring age-appropriate language development for children aged 3-8.

By balancing spontaneous learning processes with engaging activities, our workshop aimed to surpass traditional methods and inspire educators to promote language development effectively. This immersive experience promised to inspire and equip educators with practical, actionable strategies to integrate English seamlessly into daily life. Workshop participants experienced exciting activities, incorporating handmade props and lively group discussions. Highlighted activities include:

- Magic Blanket Game: Interactive reading activity that reinforces vocabulary using flashcards and a blanket.
- Hoola Hoop Vocabulary Jump: Kinaesthetic game to promote vocabulary learning through jumping activities with flashcards.
- Shoe Box House Craft: Creative project that reinforces story elements through building a house from a shoe box.

They also gained valuable insights into the benefits of creating an engaging, multi-sensory learning environment for young learners including:

- Empowerment: Gain practical strategies and actionable insights to enhance teaching practices.
- Engagement: Experience a variety of interactive activities that make learning fun and dynamic.
- Collaboration: Network with fellow educators and share best practices for fostering bilingual proficiency.
- Resources: Acquire tangible tools and ideas to implement in educational settings.

Through discussions on practical applications and real-life scenarios, participants were left equipped with tangible tools to enhance their teaching practices and drive positive outcomes for their students. This workshop left educators empowered with actionable insights to elevate teaching practice and drive positive educational outcomes.



BGC Angol Óvodai Program (BGC English Hungary)
<https://angolovoda.com/en/bgc-english-kindergarten-program/>

On and Off in a Science Lab - a language lesson

Istvan Mihaly and his Year 5 Science class

Szabó Magda Hungarian-English Bilingual School, Budapest, Hungary

Abstract: Let's get digital but remain physical - use information technology and your senses in class, plus educate and entertain via useful content. Mix reality and virtual reality, this way you can entertain and educate simultaneously, and most importantly: inspire students. Have fun with a real class, observe us, what is more, take part in our Science lesson, 100% live: 11 year old students and a Science lesson on the premises will show you what is going on in a Hungarian-English bilingual school. You can see a huge variety of methods we use, the way teachers change approaches, how informative content help students acquire a foreign language, plus you can enjoy the outcome of some digital technology and humour in class.

Key words: science lesson, live, 11 years old, children, digital technology

The aim of the lesson: via different methods we can get to know some basics on European landforms, and we can learn about a basic mineral in stones and rocks namely quartz. We simultaneously use online and offline ideas and methods.

1. We warmed up our vocal cords with a song about continents and we had a short interview with some students as some of them were born in the USA and one of them in Australia. Then we formed a river and flowed into Europe, Slovakia...
2. Science is like magic, so we sang a song and the magician (the teacher) had a big box under the Union Jack with a long text snake in it. –A very long paper snake with information about landforms and the topic of the lesson-quartz. The audience helped us read the sentence. It wasn't easy as all the words were written in one long sentence, without being separated.



We are flowing like a river.



Where is the box?



The text snake...

3. Then we wanted to know where we could find minerals. -Students helped and we could put together the word: rock.



We ROCK!!!

4. Landscape attributions were made clear by a run and touch game. We used nice pictures and swatters for this.



Where is the lowland?

5. Then we had a message from Hungary (video footage from the teacher). He desperately wants to find quartz.

<https://youtu.be/V3LrlfFlwuU?si=wd23Yb2oQgFGtTBB>

6. The class helped to find quartz at university on the stage. We also helped a student to become a geologist with special tools like a helmet, a hammer and a magnifier. Then he could test some stones from the High Tatras we had collected during the previous day - and hey presto - sparks appeared on the scene. This proves that quartz can be found in rocks as that mineral has this effect when hit by steel.



7. Then it was time to create the grand finale. We formed the landscapes of Slovakia by using pieces of fabrics and our own body and, with the help of our hand, made trees and other plants. Then we could meet some sheep in the mountains so we could finish our lesson with some recorder music to help the shepherds in the meadows.



Ondrej Koščik / Koscik.photos



We enjoyed our lesson a lot, thank you once again.

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