CHILDREN

AND

ENGLISH

AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Edited by

Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović

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This book is dedicated to Mirjana Vilke (1931-2012), who not only deepend our understanding of early learning of foreign languages but also motivated many of us to carry on with the work she started.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

It is not often that there is a need to publish a book made up of chapters selected from three previously published books. The Croatian national research project *Investigating learning and acquisition of foreign languages at an early school age* (led by Mirjana Vilke) and its sequel *Investigating learning and acquisition of foreign languages in primary school* (led by Yvonne Vrhovac), with their unique experimental longitudinal design and involving four foreign languages, caught attention of the international audience from the very start. The interest has continued to this day. With the growing importance of English as a modern *lingua franca* teaching English to young learners has spread to practically all parts of the world. This global change, combined with a lack of systematic studies into early language learning in the formal setting, has made findings such as those of the Croatian research highly valuable.

The three volumes describing early learning and teaching of English as a foreign language to Croatian young learners from which the chapters in this book were selected – all called *Children and foreign languages* – were published in 1993, 1995 and 2001, respectively. What is quite unique to the three volumes, and to the present book, is that they offer an in-depth view into early teaching and learning of English from two perspectives: the researchers' perspective and the teachers' perspective.

The Croatian experimental longitudinal study of early acquisition of English in formal settings lasted for ten years. Three generations of first graders (aged 6-7) were followed over eight years, that is throughout their whole primary education (up to age 13-14). The wealth of data gathered during those years are used in the chapters to discuss the optimal age to introduce English into the primary curriculum, young learners' characteristics that impact language learning, key aspects of the language acquisition process in young learners, desirable characteristics of teachers to young learners, selecting appropriate language input and teaching strategies, as well as outcomes of early learning of English as a foreign language in the formal school context.

The motivation for a reprint of the chapters referring to early learning and teaching of English as a special collection emerged from the feedback we have been getting at conferences, the frequent references made to the Croatian study and the constant demand for the three volumes which are nearing the 'out of print' status.

We hope that the collection will reach all those interested in early learning and teaching of English as a foreign language and will continue to enhance the understanding of this phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

*C*hildren and English as a foreign language is a collection of chapters selected from the following three books on the Croatian longitudinal project which started in 1991 and ended in 2001:

Vilke, M. & Vrhovac, Y. (Eds.) (1993) *Children and foreign languages* (I). Zagreb: Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb.

Vilke, M. & Vrhovac, Y. (Eds.) (1995) *Children and foreign languages* (II). Zagreb: Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb.

Vrhovac, Y. (Ed.) (2001) *Children and foreign languages* (III). Zagreb: Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb.

The included chapters focus on learning English as a foreign language and the findings of the 1991-2001 Croatian national longitudinal project(s) that have provided insightful data into early learning and teaching of English in the formal school context. The findings described here have been presented and discussed at numerous conferences and have been recognised by international early language learning experts accross the world as innovative, valuable and in many ways relevant to any context in which English is taught as a foreign language.

While most chapters refer to English, some offer a comparative look into the learning and teaching of French, German and Italian as well – the other three foreign languages included in the project. The texts are kept almost intact, except for minor technical and language changes made in order to make the book a coherent whole. The chapters are organised in such a way that they are grouped into five sections according to the main focus. Thus, the book consists of sections focusing on the context of the study, characteristics of young learners, classroom processes, acquisition of various aspects of English, and on outcomes of early learning of English.

The first section (*The context*) contains two chapters written by Mirjana Vilke. In the first, which was originally an introduction to the 1993 book, she offers a kind of 'identity card' of the project. In the second chapter she sets the scene in which project investigations were carried out.

Focusing on the young EFL learner includes three chapters. The first and the third chapters, written by Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović, present results of studies on young learners' attitudes and motivation, and on their language learning strategies. In her chapter, Maja Rijavec offers a very interesting analysis of young learners' characteristics and behaviour from the teacher's perspective.

The third section (*Focusing on the young EFL learner classroom*) focuses on what is still a largely under-research and highly topical issue in early foreign language learning: classroom processes. Seven chapters are included in this section. The opening

chapter by Mija Jagatić looks into the impact of group size and intensity of teaching on early EFL teaching and learning. In the next two chapters, Lidvina Štokić and Vida Nikpalj discuss two most used teaching strategies in the young learners classroom: teaching through music, verses and drama. They offer interesting ideas and describe their own experiences in using them with the project children. Teaching the content of other school subjects through the medium of English is discussed in the following three chapters. Lidvina Štokić's chapter sets the scene for the 'language across the curriculum' approach to teaching young foreign language learners and shares her experience in teaching two geography topics in her English lessons. Mirjana Tomašević-Dančević, in two chapters, focuses on integrating Art and Environmental education into English classes. Like Lidvina Štokić, she offers evidence on how beneficial such integration can be for both English and the other subjects, as well as for development of young learners' creativity. The section ends with Majda Rijavec's chapter, in which she makes excellent suggestions for dealing with the inevitable shortcomings of textbooks for young learners.

The fourth section (*Focusing on acquisition of grammar, lexis and reading skills*) opens with a chapter in which Mirjana Vilke discusses others' studies as well as her own, which offer convincing research evidence that grammar teaching approaches should be age appropriate. Marta Medved Krajnović, in the next chapter, describes her study into introducing multi-word units to young EFL learners and what their successful acquisition requires. Reading is the topic of even three chapters in this section. In the context of teaching young learners reading is often dealt with in an unproductive way, hence this much space is devoted to this particular skill. In her two chapters Renata Šamo lays the theoretical basis for understanding reading as an interactive process (in her first chapter) and discusses the concepts of 'strategic reading' and 'strategy-oriented teacher' (in her second chapter) based on her own study with young learners. In the last chapter, Smiljana Narančić Kovač and Danijel Likar describe their study in which they found that young learners (seventh graders) can read and comprehend unabridged and unadapted shorter literary texts if they are age- and competence-appropriate.

The last section (*Focusing on linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes of early learning of EFL*) includes three chapters. Milena Kovačević offers higly revealing insights into first-graders' use of English based on data she collected by means of an oral interview she carried out with 105 project children. Mirjana Vilke, in her chapter, describes the main findings of the Croatian project at the end of the fourth year. She comments on the achieved insights regarding the best age to start learning English in school, the required teacher competences, as well as the optimal teaching conditions and procedures. The second part of the chapter presents interesting results of her study on young

learners' acquisition of personal pronouns and prepositions. In the very last chapter of the book, Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović displays findings of her research on attitudes and motivation of young learners after four years of learning English. These are presented as non-linguistic outcomes, the results that are highly important but often ignored when evaluating early foreign language learning.

We hope that readers interested in early learning and teaching of English as a foreign language will find this collection interesting, useful and stimulating.

Section 1: THE CONTEXT

Mirjana Vilke

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of the joint venture of a team of people – of practicing teachers interested in research and researchers interested in school practice – with the aim of improving foreign language competence in Croatia. It was a venture the start of which coincided with the start of the war into which Croatia was forced in order to preserve her independence and freedom – a savage war during which many people lost their lives and numberless families suffered.

The autumn and winter of 1991 were hard times for Croatia, but it was exactly then that 350 first readers aged 6-7 started to learn a foreign language as part of the regular school curriculum, the first time at that age in the history of our schooling. The teachers working with them seemed more like magicians than teachers. For 45 minutes every day the war was forgotten and children happily took part in all sorts of entertaining activities. Only the bags and blankets in a dark corner of the classroom, ready for the shelter, were a reminder of air-raid alerts, and the fear of shells and bombs.

The Identity Card of the Project

The project is sponsored by the Croatian Ministry of Education and the educational authorities of the city of Zagreb. The research part is supported by the Ministry of Science and conducted by a group of ELT specialists from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb. The project is a part of a network of similar projects in 20 European countries and Canada in a medium term programme entitled *Language Learning for European Citizenship*, under the umbrella of European Council in Strasbourg.

In the autumn of 1991 English, French and German were introduced into the first grade of 12 primary schools in Zagreb. A total of 352 pupils, aged 6-7 years, were included in the project. Italian was also introduced but on a different organizational basis.

In the year 1992/3 second-graders continued their foreign language course on the same organizational basis, and additional 22 schools joined the project, the majority of them in Zagreb, but some also in Rijeka, Split and Pula. At the time of writing this report (February 1993) the total number of children (not specially selected) is a little over 1000.

The organization of children and languages is as follows:

English/German	4 first-grade classes in Zagreb
	1 first-grade class in Rijeka, Split, Pula
	4 second-grade classes in Zagreb
French	4 first-grade classes in Zagreb
	1 first-grade class in Rijeka and Split
Italian	2 first-grade classes in Zagreb

Each ordinary school class is split into two groups of 12-15 children who have five periods of foreign language weekly, one per day.

The classes are taught by secondary school teachers with a university language degree and additional training for working with young children. They cooperate closely with the class teachers who in most cases have some command of the language being taught.

The basic objective is the gradual development of communicative competence so that in the course of their primary and secondary school children will gradually learn to use the foreign language in real life situations, and in later stages the foreign language will even be able to be used in the study of other subjects.

The basic tasks in the first and second year of teaching are:

· to arouse a genuine interest of the child in the foreign language and culture,
· to develop skills of listening and speaking with special attention to good pronunciation. As these children cannot yet read and write in their mother tongue – Croatian – at the beginning of the course, it is recommended that reading and writing should be introduced in the third term of the first year at the earliest, and
· to interest children in aspects of the target culture of interest to their age.

Class activities are varied and of very limited duration, ranging from songs and games to drama and story telling. TPR is exercised to a large extent. Croatian is used only when a genuine need for it arises, the assumption being that after a certain number of contact hours with the foreign language such a need will be reduced to a minimum. The atmosphere in the class is relaxed, stress-free and potentially entertaining. All activities are in conformity with the abilities, potentials and interests of children of this age.

Parallel research is carried out in all four languages. The number of children included in the longitudinal and crossectional parts of the Project research varies from 50 to 200 per language in the experimental classes and an identical number in the control classes. Control groups are recruited among peer-classes not learning any foreign language, and from among beginners of the foreign language at 10+, depending on the requirements of the particular research aspect.

It is expected that the research will provide a verification of the results of early language learning at this age obtained both in Croatia and elsewhere, combined with new insights into the process of learning. For this reason affective, cognitive and neurological factors are being examined as well as the nature of language input to which the child is exposed.

The hypothesis yet to be proved is that children starting a language at the age of 6-7 can learn it as successfully as those starting at 10+ if certain conditions are met, and that at the earlier age they have the unique advantage of being able to master the phonological system of the foreign language with near-native accuracy. If this hypothesis proves correct, it will be a convincing reason for persuading the educational authorities to introduce foreign languages into the school system in the first grade. This would give children ample time to handle the foreign idiom by the time language learning blocks start and when strategies of teaching and learning foreign languages need to be altered.

A more detailed account of the various research tasks will be given in contributions to this publication. Here, only some of them are mentioned:

1. Attitudes and motivation of pupils, teachers and parents towards the particular foreign language and its culture have been examined by interviews and questionnaires.
2. At the end of the school year achievement tests have been administered to register the degree of proficiency in
   a) pronunciation
   b) listening comprehension
   c) the use of selected morpho-syntactic structures
   d) the use of vocabulary with special reference to Piaget's spontaneous concepts, the hypothesis being that spontaneously acquired concepts are more easily remembered.

It has also been hypothesised that the achievement results in different languages – English, French, German and Italian - will vary due to different extrinsic motivation and different contrastive status of the respective languages in Croatia. For this reason comparative achievement tests will be carried out at the end of the third year of the project. Error analysis will also be carried out at that stage as a different typology of errors is expected in learners' interlanguage in the four languages.

The research team consists of an SLA expert for each language:

English – Mirjana Vilke, M.A., Ph. D., coordinator of the Project

French – Yvonne Vrhovac, M.A., Ph. D.

Italian – Nives Sironić-Bonefačić, M.A., Ph. D.

attitudes and motivation specialist – Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović, M.A., Ph. D.

psychologist – Božica Bartolović, M.A., Ph. D.

doctoral candidate, Lidvina Štokić, M.A., a link between theory and practice, also teacher of English to first and second graders

novice researcher in English, Milena Kovačević, B.A., working towards her M.A. in SLA

The researcher in German had to leave the team for private reasons so the language adviser of the Ministry of Education, Mira Kruhan, B.A., a German specialist, kindly joined to help the work go on.

All these have presented reports illustrating their results in a little more than a year of work on the project.

The publication also contains reports by practicing teachers who describe the various procedures of their successful work and share their experience with colleagues. Some of them are already engaged as authors and co-authors of teaching materials for this age group or act as tutors to less experienced teachers.

Mirjana Vilke

EARLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN CROATIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

We give here an account of the 1973 Zagreb project introducing early learning of English because a number of strategies used then served to a certain extent as a model for the 1991 project. Also, a number of tentative conclusions about the process of children's acquisition of a foreign language reached then are tested in the present project.

In the years following World War II compulsory primary education was extended from four to seven and soon to eight years. Russian was introduced as the compulsory foreign language in the fifth grade of primary school. But in the first grade of secondary school children could choose English, German or French as a second foreign language. Year 1949 saw the Cominform events and the split between former Yugoslavia and former USSR. Russian lost its priority and became only one of the foreign languages to be chosen from. It was then that English began to dominate the educational scene in Croatia and became the first and most popular foreign language. In the course of time foreign language learning was moved back from grade five to grade four (age 10).

In 1973 a pilot project was organized in Zagreb to investigate the possibilities of foreign language introduction at a still earlier age. The pilot dealt predominantly with English, but some classes of German and French were included at a later stage.

The ultimate aim of introducing early learning of a foreign language was the production of competent bilingual speakers throughout the country.

Our concern was when and how to start a foreign language to ensure a sound basis for realizing our goal – a bilingual speaker. Appealing though the idea of a community of bilingual children might be, we are, for reasons of economy, interested in it only marginally – as a possible by-product – our main target is the bilingual adult capable of using a foreign language in his life and work.

The reasons for an early start seem to stem from three different sources:
· the findings of neurophysiology, and developmental psycholinguistics
· empirical and experimental evidence derived from the results of acquiring a second language by groups and individuals through a variety of immersion programmes organised in the countries where the target language is indigenous
· empirical and experimental evidence derived from the results obtained by formal classroom tuition in different sociocultural settings in the learners' mother-tongue environments.

We must be cautious in considering neurophysiological evidence which, as Roberts (1973:105) has already cautioned, is derived from the study of the abnormal. Devel-

opmental psycholinguistics, on the other hand, observes the behaviour of children acquiring their first language (L1), thus neither of these investigations is directly connected to the acquisition of a second language (L2). Nevertheless, a number of hypotheses (highly relevant for the study of acquisition of an L2 at an early age) about the linguistic and intellectual development of the child can be drawn from the evidence collected by both neurophysiology and developmental psycholinguistics.

Experimental and empirical evidence from different programmes conducted in the L2 country, used in designing programmes for formal classroom teaching in the learners' L1 country, can be vastly misleading, as so many environmental and operational factors are as a rule entirely different – time of exposure to L2 and the sociocultural setting in which learning takes place being the most obvious. But once differences are identified, evidence from such programmes can be utilised in classroom situations, especially when it offers insights into the acquisition of an L2, which seems to have – from the little we know about it at present – certain universal features.

Experimental and empirical evidence from classroom teaching of an L2 in the learners' own country should not be generalised before the conditions in different programmes have been identified and verified, the variables being so different. Differing motivation and attitudes of learners towards a particular L2 can account, for example, for differences in the results obtained.

The only logical conclusion that can be inferred from what has been said is that, valuable as it is, evidence stemming from any sources must be treated with caution and regarded as raw material needing to be further processed and investigated rather than used as a premise on which to build theories about L2 acquisition at an early age. And if it ever comes to theories, it will probably be possible to prove them only in specific social, linguistic and cultural setting in which the research was conducted.

In 1973 a project began in Zagreb with the aim of providing evidence concerning the process of learning English at an early age in the formal school environment.

In the first stage, completed in school year 1973-74, research was conducted to find out to what degree (if any) children learn English with more ease before puberty than learners who have passed Lenneberg's "critical period" (1967). Sixty beginners aged nine and 60 beginners aged 17-19 were supplied with the same language material, taught by the same method and approximately the same techniques of work, for the same period of time. Care was taken that both materials and techniques used should suit learners of both age groups - pedagogically an almost impossible task.

The results proved that there were differences between the pre- and post-puberty groups. The post-puberty group had certain advantages, such as more insight into the functioning of language, the experience of studying their mother tongue and some other language, intellectual maturity, and so they were faster learners of structures and

vocabulary. The pre-puberty group were far superior in mastering the phonetic system. On the level of pronunciation the most striking differences were noticed between two groups: the older group as a rule used mother tongue approximations of English phonemes. The deviations from the norm were such that they sometimes blurred the meaning of utterances. The younger group reached a considerably higher standard of pronunciation, using the authentic English phonemes and intonation patterns in most cases.

The findings of the investigation were consistent with Lenneberg's statement about "language learning blocks", which become frequent after puberty (Lenneberg, 1967).

The result of the investigation led us to conclude that learners should start foreign languages well before puberty. This would provide them with sufficient time to attain a good command of the phonetic system with a limited corpus of structures and vocabulary, and provide them with a feeling of security and self-confidence as regards the foreign language. Once they pass the age of the "maturation of the brain" they will be able to proceed to more subtle and abstract uses of the foreign language (Vilke, 1976a).

The second stage of the Project started in 1975, the aim of the investigation being to find out at what age between six and nine it would be best to start a foreign language at school, and what factors play a role in the learning process at this age.

Seventy children aged six to nine were observed during a year-long English course at a language school in Zagreb. The results provided the tentative answer that eight to nine would be the optimum age at which to start English for most children, and that six to seven would suit those of above average intelligence. But these results were valid only in the particular sociocultural environment in Zagreb and should not be generalised without further research. The children in question came from middle-class families who had sent their children on an English course for a variety of reasons, one of them being realisation of the need to be able to communicate in a foreign language (especially English), and another "to keep up with the Joneses", whose children also studied English.

As at this stage the project was conducted in a foreign-language school where the courses were not part of the compulsory educational system provided by the government for the entire population, it was evident that the motivation to study English (which could not have automatically been expected in this age group) came from parents. The parents' attitude was positive, and this was helpful in the initial stages. During the course of study, however, the children developed their own attitudes towards English which very largely depended on their personal attitude towards the teacher. It was observed that an easy relationship, and a positive emotional link with the teacher, accounted for the greater part of the success of individual children.

Children progressed through the language corpus making their own discoveries of its system (for example "It must be *cars* for three"). They were guided through it by the teaching materials designed to provide an appropriate context for the five functors first found by Dulay and Burt (1973) to be internalised by groups of Spanish and Japanese children acquiring English in the U.S.A.

Unfortunately, the "natural order hypothesis" worked only where there was no negative transfer from L1. Both interference and developmental errors were observed, which was not in keeping with one of Dulay and Burt's statistics in which they found only 3% interference errors (Vilke, 1976b). So the empirical evidence supported the view that acquiring a second language and learning a foreign language are different processes, and it may be dangerous to confuse the two.

The third stage of the project started in 1977. English was introduced for children in the second grade (eight years old) in five primary schools in Zagreb, on an experimental basis.

The schools chosen for the experiment were situated in suburban areas in which there was little tradition of communication in any foreign language. On the other hand, the situation in these schools would resemble fairly accurately the situation in any suburban area or village in the country, and therefore should be valuable as a pilot experiment prior to the introduction of foreign languages into the second grade on a large scale.

Motivation

Before we started any teaching we tried to obtain certain clues about the attitude of our students to things English. Every child was interviewed by a member of the project, but not his future teacher.

Children were asked 13 questions – nine of them connected with the child's idea of English and the English, and four in connection with their parents' and friends' attitudes to English. Gardner and Lambert (1972) have in the course of their studies proved that "parents who are instrumentally oriented appear to pass their orientation on to their children" (p. 128). We could not expect to have parents motivated with respect to their children studying English, but we feared a negative attitude on their part which might cause very serious damage to the entire undertaking.

Analysis of the interviews showed the following attitudinal characteristics of our potential learners:

1. They were looking forward to the English classes.
2. They expected routine school work.
3. A minority of children realised that learning English could be useful. As a rule children displayed instrumental orientation towards the language.

4. They did not show much desire to visit English-speaking countries.
5. The subjects gave a relevant opinion of English spoken in Croatia.
6. In the children's families there was no tradition of cultural influences coming from English-speaking countries. Parents were fairly indifferent to their children studying English: they did not encourage it, but neither did they oppose it.

All this led us to conclude that the task ahead was a very responsible one. The raw material we had to mould was in the hands of teachers. If they managed to motivate children to study English at that early age, it might have a life-long beneficial effect not only on their ability to use English but also upon their attitude to foreign languages and other nations in general. One school year should suffice to find out if the learners had become used to the new subject and developed their own attitudes towards it.

Each group of 12-15 students had two periods of English per week on a regular basis. Another interview on motivation was conducted at the end of May 1978. The objective was to find out whether attitudes towards English classes had changed and, if so, in what direction. This time they were given nine questions, from which a picture of their likes and dislikes could be formed. It was considered important to hear their explanation of what they liked, and what they found difficult in English lessons. The parents' attitude was tested again to find out whether it had changed in the course of the year's study.

Analysis of the second interview answers indicated that a year-long learning of English had changed the children' attitude of moderate curiosity to a desire to proceed with learning English.

1. Approximately 70% of the children liked English classes because the content was adjusted to their interests and because they felt free and encouraged by the teacher. Thirty percent of the children enjoyed them because they felt they were getting somewhere in their attempt to learn how to communicate in English.
2. The attitude of the parents changed from one of general disinterest to encouragement of children to go on.

One general conclusion drawn from both interviews was that even in environments where there was no positive orientation towards a foreign language, children could be motivated to study it if they were approached in the right way, and their motivation could influence their parents' attitudes towards it. This, in turn, could have a beneficial effect on the international orientation of the whole community. In our particular case the process was somewhat different from that observed by Gardner and Lambert in which "parents with positive attitudes towards the other language community more actively encouraged their children to learn that language" (Gardner

& Lambert, 1972:6), as here it was the motivation of the children that caused a change of attitude in the parents.

Van Parreren (1976) argues that an early start in teaching foreign languages may create motivational problems: learners would have to spend such long time in learning that they would lose enthusiasm for the language. A later start and a more concentrated effort could avoid problems of long range motivation. However, this is not a convincing argument. The basic idea of introducing English into school curricula on an experimental basis at an early age was to motivate learners to make use of the language. It seems only natural that the more familiar they become with it and the better they can manipulate it, the more willing they are likely to be to use it.

Motivation to learn English, after a year of study, developed significantly. Ninety-nine percent of the children at the end of the first year of learning expressed a strong desire to continue.

We hope that this has had a strong effect on moulding their life-long attitude towards English as a foreign language and foreign languages in general, preventing the development of ethnocentric tendencies later in life. (Ethnocentrism is defined as stereotyped negative feelings toward foreign countries and peoples).

Our young learners have become acquainted with the concept of English in a way that corresponds to their ideas of "interesting" and "amusing". Most associations with it have been pleasant: no fear of punishment (bad marks, ridicule, etc.) – so often a permanent companion of school activities – has been present, and even influence of their orientation has been observed in the changed attitude of the parents. In this respect, the project can be said to have been a success.

No "balance effect" was observed in our learners. The balance effect is a hypothesis that the more time one spends on L2, the less well one learns L1, with consequent detrimental effects on the native language, on education and on the intellectual development of the child (Jakobovitz, 1971:52).

Learners' intelligence was tested by verbal and non-verbal intelligence tests in the experimental as well as the control groups. It was observed that success in learning English positively correlated with the learners' intelligence. At the end of the first year of teaching the teachers were asked to evaluate impressionistically the children's achievement by marks from 1 to 5. Correlation between intelligence and success in learning was measured by the rank correlation method, and it varied for different classes between 0.58 and 0.67, which proved to be significant. This relatively high correlation is probably due to the fact that learning was designed as a cognitive rather than a habit-forming process. In Jakobovitz's well-known table showing the contribution of factors decisive for success in learning, intelligence accounts for 20% of the variance, which is less than in our case where the children whose intelligence was lower than average achieved very poor results (Jakobovitz, 1971:98). But this is probably

due to the fact that Jakobovitz had in mind a learning process based on habit-forming, which requires a smaller input of intelligence on the part of the learners.

Sources of difficulties

Performance difficulties in learning a foreign language can be expected on the level of pronunciation, command of structures and use of vocabulary, if we take in consideration a narrow linguistic (and not a wider, sociolinguistic) aspect of performance. This is the aspect that will be discussed here, as the subjects of our investigations were for the time being limited to classroom performance and the linguistic content of the course. (The content was communicatively based but most learners had no chance to test its effectiveness in real life in the immediate future.)

In our Motivation Interview, only 9% of the children claimed that they had difficulties with pronunciation. A guess could be ventured that the percentage of adult beginners who have difficulties with pronunciation would be much higher.

Observation of children's performance proved once again that they can master the phonetic system of the foreign language provided they have good models to imitate. Accordingly, complete accuracy in pronunciation, rhythm and intonation patterns should be insisted upon with no fear of overloading the learners, who should make most of the advantages their age offers. It should be remembered that one of the reasons for introducing a foreign language at this early age is to familiarise learners with a pronunciation system different from their own, at an age when they do not feel threatened by it.

Contrary to the case observed in practising the elements of English pronunciation, it was observed that some words were learned with ease, whereas other words present difficulties. In the second interview on motivation, 32% of the children complained about difficult words.

In an experiment specially devised to test this phenomenon we opposed two pairs of words, the first pair being *bottle-kettle*, and the second *television-fireplace*. Learners from three of our five experimental schools were included in the experiment – 80 children altogether. The vocabulary items were practised over the same period of time, and more or less identical techniques and aids were used. Neither children nor teachers were informed of the content of the experiment beforehand, so they could not have had any additional practice. The subjects were shown a bottle and a kettle and asked what the English words were for the objects. Fifty-six examinees were questioned on the *kettle-bottle* pair: one class did not have sufficient practice beforehand, so their answers were not accepted. Thirty children remembered the word *bottle* and only seven remembered *kettle*. It was repeated with the words *television* and *fireplace*. Out of 80 children, 74 could use the word *television*, and only 22 *fireplace*. *Kettle* and

bottle were selected because on the phonological level they are similar; in both, the same consonant cluster /t1/ occurs, and neither consist of phonemes that do not appear in our own phonological system. *Fireplace* and *television* were selected as both words are compounds: neither presents any special phonological difficulty and their length is approximately the same. However, teachers reported difficulties in practising the words *fireplace* and *kettle*. What is the source of difficulty? We hypothesised that it was due to the fact that neither fireplace nor kettle present concepts familiar to the children. (In this country, homes are rarely heated by means of fireplaces, and a kettle is not a common object in most households as we are a nation of coffee-drinkers.) The teachers found the same sort of difficulty in words like *mantelpiece, chest of drawers* and many others that would be perfectly simple for a child coming from a British cultural background.

This finding was, we thought, helpful in two ways: first it contributed a little to our understanding of the way children learn a foreign language: they seem to transfer the concepts they have acquired in their L1 into their L2, L2 being a foreign and not a second language. In this particular case they re-named spontaneous concepts with foreign names if they were identical, and had to develop non-spontaneous concepts (which are, according to Piaget, influenced by adults) if the concepts were non-existent or different in their L1 culture, this being a more complex process. One could call it a negative transfer from L1 on the conceptual level.

Several items were designed to probe children's ability to comprehend and produce structural categories. They were tested on the production of plural forms, the comprehension of spatial relations expressed by the preposition *on*, and on pronominalisation.

In front of them there was one apple, and a little further away three apples placed next to each other. They were asked to name one apple first (to recall the word) and three apples after that. Three variants of the answer were accepted as correct: *apples, three apples, these are three apples*. Only 27 out of 80 children offered a correct answer, but 95% (76 out of 80) of children used one signal of plural (*three apple, these are apple*) in their answer. It seems that children in their process of learning a foreign language understand the concept of plurality, they feel it must be marked, and they mark it, but leave out whatever (to their mind) is redundant.

A practical hint for teachers would be that they should not insist on all the plural markers when teaching this age group, and that they should be content with some signal for plurality if the child wishes to convey his own thoughts and ideas. Intensive practice of the correct forms will come at a later stage, when the child's mind works more systematically.

They had to perform two commands to show their comprehension of *on*. After the bottle and the kettle had been identified, the children were told: *put the bottle on the*

floor, put the kettle on the chair. Both commands were performed correctly by 94% of the subjects, which obviously shows that they understood the relations expressed by *on*.

Children are reluctant to use the pronouns *he* and *she* and they much prefer using nouns. The task of the test was to either confirm or reject the observed characteristic of children's speech as a regularly occurring pattern. In the test they were presented with the picture of a boy with a red ball and the picture of a girl with a blue flower. The examiner asked "Who has got the red ball – he or she?" and "Who has got the blue flower – he or she?". Eighteen children used *he* or *she* in their answers, 32 answered *boy* or *girl*, and 6 children confused the pronouns. Only 56 answers were accepted, as in one class the teacher who was present was trying to help and so influenced the children's answers. These answers could not be regarded as spontaneous, and they were not accepted.

The conclusion of the test, prompted by the observations during the lessons, is that most children understand what *he* and *she* stand for, but prefer using nouns, which probably look less abstract. This is in keeping with Carol Chomsky's investigation in which she found the process of pronominalisation in English as L1 still in the state of development in 6-7-year-old children (Chomsky, 1969). As children learning a foreign language cannot be expected to process successfully those features of language not fully mastered by their peers in their mother tongue, it would be advisable to postpone pronouns until a little later. In this way the frustrations of both teachers and learners would be avoided.

In the test several features of children's speech were observed.

1. The continual misuse of articles, which they used at random: sometimes as part of the noun, much more often not using them at all, or using them incorrectly – e.g., indefinite article with the plural – *three an apple*. This is probably due to heavy interference from the mother tongue, in which the articles do not exist. The children showed a complete inability to establish a frame of reference for articles, which Dušková (1969) considers to be the gravest form of interference. This characteristic of children's speech has been discussed in some other articles (Vilke, 1976b).
2. The existence of "prefabricated patterns", which Hakuta (1974) found in acquiring English as L2, was found in our case, too. He defined them as one of the possible strategies employed by learners when they wish to express thoughts in the target language but do not yet know the forms. In our corpus we found *Mary sit down* (after the command *Sit down*), *it's (I can see it's a cat)*, *I've got (This is I've got a flower)*. They seem to be a sign that the student tries hard to express his ideas in the foreign language.

Observations and the results of tests administered in the course of the project seem to indicate that there were several characteristics of children's performance in English as a foreign language that constantly recur in the course of the learning process:

1. They can master the phonological system of English with the greatest ease.
2. Vocabulary items for which they have not developed concepts in their own culture present difficulty.
3. They can understand basic relationships in a sentence, especially spatial relationships expressed by prepositions, and the concept of plurality, etc.
4. Difficulties in learning structural elements stem from two main sources:
   a) interference from the mother tongue (this can be seen in the use of articles):
   b) immaturity, which makes certain concepts in both the primary and secondary language hard to grasp.
5. Interference from the mother tongue manifests itself at both the linguistic and the conceptual level.

The successive years of the project were not as productive as we expected them to be. We did not get much support from the educational authorities. In some schools the teachers were replaced, in some schools new pupils joined the classes. However, the early learners completed their second and third grade highly motivated, feeling that they had done a good job. The project suffered the first serious blow when the educational authorities refused to make any allowances for the results achieved in the course of two years, and all the pupils in their fourth grade were obliged to continue their English course according to the curriculum and the materials prescribed for beginners starting in the fourth grade. Both the learners and teachers then lost their enthusiasm for work. When at the end of that school year the early starters (second grade) and the regular starters (fourth grade) were submitted to tests, the results showed no significant differences in favour of the early starters. Needless to say, the tests were designed in the routine way to score the number of correctly acquired vocabulary and structure items. It was an additional reason for the educational authorities to abandon the project completely. However, in some schools it continued on a semiprivate basis due to enthusiasm of teachers and a strong desire of parents for their children to start early. A sort of public opinion was formed in the course of the years that those primary children who start early become very promising English students in their teens: their motivation is high, their listening comprehension and pronunciation generally very good, and there is "something" in their performance that, regardless of the number of the correct vocabulary and structure items scored on the tests, enables them to become communicatively competent.

The project provided us with more insight into the different aspects of children's learning of English. We presented some of the findings, because the present project

is in a way a continuation of what has been done before. In 1991 we had a fairly clear concept of how to organize the new project.

The present project has been in progress for about one academic year and a half. It is too early to assess its results. From what has been observed we can say that children progress in their foreign language amazingly well, that they seem to enjoy their classes and that the organizational scheme of one daily period in a group of 12 to 15 pupils works very well. More can be read in the reports of the participants of the project and seen from the video-films made to illustrate the work.

Plans for the future

It has been planned that every new academic year additional schools introduce a foreign language in the first grade. (The research procedures will cover only the first two generations of learners). The scheme of small groups and five periods per week will be held hopefully (finances permitting) up to the fourth grade, when all the pupils will have three periods of a foreign language per week. The early starters will be provided with the different language material that will ensure the continuation of the process. Their present successful teachers will have to take the role of advisers to those who start teaching the first graders. The ultimate aim of the project is to provide data and materials to include a foreign language into the first grade curriculum for the entire population. However, a lot of problems must be solved before it is done. One of the most serious ones is the production of teachers properly suited for the job. Presently the task is in the hands of secondary language teachers graduated from the foreign language departments of the universities and who specialised in early foreign language teaching. As long as their number amounts to 10 teachers per language, it can be done. But if early teaching becomes a part of the first grade curriculum for every primary school in the country, it can not be done for a variety of reasons, financial ones being the first obstacle. In this case primary teachers trained to teach the foreign language from the first to the fourth grade would be the only solution. It would have a number of advantages:

1. There would be practically no technical problems regarding the timetable.
2. Primary teachers are by definition educated in developmental psychology and other disciplines related to the growing and developing child.
3. They are well acquainted with each individual child in the class, his/her needs and problems.
4. They can easily teach the parts of other school subjects through the medium of the foreign language if they are properly trained for the task.

It is a lucky coincidence that in Croatia teacher education has been extended from two to four years by a recently passed law. Steps are being taken to include the study

of the foreign language the students learned throughout their primary and secondary education as a part of their curriculum in the course of their four-year study. A specially devised language curriculum aimed at qualifying students for the task of a foreign language teacher teaching learners in grades 1-4 could help solve the problem. In the fifth grade the job would be taken over by the secondary teachers according to the existing practice.

The entire undertaking would not cost more than the salaries of the language teachers at the teacher training colleges. The gain, however, would be substantial. Maximum care should be taken that the teachers are properly trained to fulfil the needs of their profession. For example, the early starters' prospective teachers should have very intensive courses of pronunciation practice as they will in many cases present the only models for their learners to imitate. One of the requirements is that the teacher should attain near-native pronunciation of the foreign language, which is not easy. The language training of the primary teachers should be carried our professionally and with due care and precision, and the trainees should be made aware of the responsibility of the job.

An early start to foreign languages could mean in the long run bilingualism for the entire population. Many countries which, unlike Croatia, were fortunate enough to have freedom and peace have almost achieved this end. One feels it almost a patriotic duty to contribute to this goal and help the generations that will make citizens of a better Europe in the 21st century to understand one another better.

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Section 2: FOCUSING ON THE YOUNG EFL LEARNER

Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović

INVESTIGATION OF ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION IN EARLY FOREING LANGUAGE LEARNING

The idea that affective variables might play a role in foreign language learning (FLL) is not new. The evidence complied over the last twenty years or so may be said to include conflicting results (Lambert & Gardner, 1972; Lukmani, 1977), but most authors would agree that affective variables influence FLL and that this influence should be taken into account and studied carefully.

A review of the research literature on early FLL indicates that attitudes and motivation stand out as factors which may help solve the controversy about the optimal age for starting FLL in school.

The NFER study on the teaching of French in primary schools in England and Wales (Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen & Hargreaves, 1974) pointed out that early starters declared more favourable attitudes towards speaking French than those who began at the usual age of eleven. The early beginners' keenness to speak French as well as their greater confidence in using the language showed the long-lasting benefits of an early start.

A study of the effects of an early start in French in Scotland (Nisbet & Welsh, 1972) stressed that an early start in FLL can contribute to the development of learners' attitudes towards learning the language and can increase their interest and understanding.

Several other studies on early FLL (e.g., Holmstrad, 1982) emphasized that early starters develop positive attitudes towards other cultures and nations. Vilke (1979) pointed out that the early starter acquires a wider cultural outlook and develops greater tolerance towards other people, thus leading to international understanding.

Studies on early FLL in Croatia (Petrović, 1982; Vilke, 1976) also found that an early start is beneficial to the development of positive attitudes towards learning the FL and to creating a strong and lasting motivation in learners that would make success in FLL possible.

The Zagreb Project 1991

The assumption underlying the Project is that attitudes and motivation play a role in FLL. This assumption will be studied from several aspects.

The young learners' attitudes and motivation will be examined in order to study their development throughout the process of learning the FL over the period of three years. Investigation will focus on the direction of this development and, possibly, the factors which may be responsible for it.

The attitudes of learners' parents and teachers will also be examined since we assume that, especially in the initial stages of learning, they may exert a strong influence on the young learners' attitudes and motivation. Attitudes of both the general subjects teacher and the FL teacher will be included in the study.

Four FLs (English, French, German and Italian) are included in the study and the findings for each will be compared to the others.

This chapter will focus on the attitudes and motivation investigations carried out during the initial year of the Project (1991/1992 school year).

Instruments

An interview was used to study the young learners' attitudes and a written questionnaire was developed for the parents.

The interview used with the young learners comprised 22 questions. The following attitude objects were included: the FL, native speakers of the FL, the purpose of learning the FL, the optimal age to start FLL, FL lessons in school, the learner's attainment in the FL. The learners were also asked how much of the FL they had known before starting school and which members of their family spoke FLs.

The questionnaire constructed to assess the parents' attitudes was semi-structured. The items focused on the reasons for enrolling the child in the experimental programme, the optimal age to start FLL, the child's attitudes towards FLL, the monitoring of the child's day-to-day studying, the FL as such, FLL in general and native speakers of the FL the child was learning. The parents were also questioned on the family members' knowledge of FLs.

The items assessing the attitudes towards the FL and FLL were taken from a scale developed by Mihaljević (1991), while the rest of the inventory was constructed specifically for the purpose of the Project. The attitudes towards native speakers of the four FLs included were assessed by a specifically constructed Thurstone scale.

Sample

The sample (N=441) included 100 first graders (51 male, 49 female) learning English, 110 (60 male, 50 female) learning French, 126 (56 male, 70 female) learning German and 105 (50 male, 55 female) fourth graders learning Italian. All the learners learned the FL in primary schools in Zagreb.

The learners of Italian were included in spite of the fact that they were older – they are, in this context, considered to be early starters in the sense that there had been no tradition of starting learning this FL as early as the fourth grade.

A total of 465 parents filled in the parents' questionnaire.

Results and discussion

The descriptive statistical results to be presented in this section are grouped according to the object of the attitude investigated. Data for all the four languages are included.

LEARNER INTERVIEW

Item 1:

The purpose of this item was to find out what number of learners would choose the FL as the favourite school subject. The table below shows the four most frequently mentioned favourite subjects by learners of each FL.

Which is your favourite subject in school?

E:	Maths (34.8 %) Croatian (3.15 %) Drawing (14.1 %) English (12.0%)
G:	Maths (32.5 %) Croatian (21.1 %) Draw./PT (13.8 %) German (13.0%)
F:	Maths (36.5 %) French (26.9 %) Croatian (17.3 %) Drawing (9.6%)
I:	Maths (32.7 %) Italian (20.2 %) Science (13.5 %) Drawing (9.6%)

As can be seen, none of the four groups had the FL as the most frequent favourite subject. With the French and Italian learners it was the second favourite subject, and it came fourth with the English and German beginners. A possible explanation may be that, as Vilke (1976) pointed out in an earlier study on young learners, the majority of learners at this early age view FL classes as pleasantly spent time in school, not as classes in which they are taught a school subject.

Items 2 & 3:

The learners were questioned on whether they liked their FL classes.

Do you like your FL classes?

	E	G	F	I
YES	100%	98.4%	97.2%	98.1%

Do you enjoy your FL classes?

	E	G	F	I
YES	100%	98.4%	96.3%	100%

When asked directly, the vast majority of the learners expressed very positive attitudes towards the FL as a school subject.

Item 4:

This item was aimed at finding out how the young learners perceived what went on in their FL classes. The majority of the answers lent themselves to a classification into three groups. The first group comprises activities that imply teaching/learning elements (e.g., learning new words, learning how to count in the FL). The second one includes activities that imply elements of game (e.g., playing games, singing). The third group comprises answers by those learners who mentioned both types of activities. The ultimate purpose of this item was to see whether those young learners who are conscious from the beginning that they are being taught a FL will be more or less successful than those who are not aware of any teaching going on.

What do you do in your FL classes?

	teaching	playing	both
E	9.0%	23.0%	68.0%
G	19.0%	13.5%	67.5%
F	11.8%	24.5%	63.6%
I	48.6%	0.0%	51.4%

These results show that most learners were aware of some teaching going on. It is interesting to note that none of the learners of Italian mentioned game activities alone: they were three years older and, perhaps, this difference in perceiving what goes on in class may be attributed to the age factor. The different results across languages are difficult to interpret because, although the overall approach was similar, the FL teachers in this project were allowed relative freedom in their teaching methodology.

Items 5 & 6:

The learners were asked about the things they liked most and least in their FL classes. Again, the answers obtained could be classified into three groups as in Item 4.

What do you like most in your FL classes?

	teaching	playing	both
E	14.1%	81.8%	3.0%
G	28.2%	62.9%	6.5%
F	10.1%	79.8%	9.2%
I	61.5%	23.1%	14.4%

What do you dislike most in your FL classes?

	teaching	playing	both	other
E	41.9%	38.7%	0.0%	12.9%
G	43.8%	26.6%	0.0%	29.7%
F	33.9%	44.6%	1.8%	19.6%
I	54.5%	27.3%	0.0%	18.2%

As expected, most of our 7-year-olds liked most the activities with game elements. The results for the 10-year-old learners of Italian may show that emotional and cognitive maturity influences our likes and dislikes of what goes on in the classroom. It is difficult to think of a plausible explanation for the French learners disliking games in such a high percentage. Maybe the follow-up investigations will enlighten us on the possible causes.

Items 7 &12:

The young beginners were questioned on how they felt about being in the experimental class.

Would you like to continue learning the FL next year too?

	E	G	F	I
YES	92.0%	94.4%	91.8%	99.0%

Would you be sorry if your parents hadn't enrolled you into this programme?

	E	G	F	I
YES	91.7%	97.6%	89.1%	98.1%

A vast majority of the learners seemed to like the fact that they were in the experimental class and wanted to continue learning the FL.

Item 8:

This item deals with self-assessment. The learners were asked to evaluate their own knowledge of the FL by assigning themselves a mark on a 1-5 scale (1-insufficient, 5 excellent).

	excellent	very good	good	fair	insufficient
E	72.8%	21.7%	4.3%	1.1%	1.1%
G	77.4%	16.5%	4.3%	0.0%	1.7%
F	73.0%	23.0%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%
I	24.3%	63.2%	12.6%	0.0%	0.0%

Our young beginners seem to evaluate their knowledge of the FL very highly. There are two possible ways to explain these results. It is possible, on the one hand, that what

the learners were supposed to learn during the first few months was easy enough for most learners to master well. On the other hand, learners at this age may be very un-critical about themselves: this may be concluded from the results for Italian learners, who were three years older than the other three groups and who rated themselves over a wider range of marks.

Items 9, 10 & 11:

These items focused on what benefits the learner saw in knowing the FL.

Is it good to know the FL you are learning?

	E	G	F	I
YES	97.0%	97.6%	89.1%	98.1%
NO	1.0%	8.0%	5.4%	0.0%
DON'T KNOW	2.0%	1.6%	5.5%	1.9%

Why is it good to know the FL you are learning?

	E	G	F	I
Communication	34.4%	53.7%	36.3%	33.0%
Travel	42.2%	25.6%	30.0%	30.8%
Good to learn things	10.0%	6.6%	13.0%	9.9%
General knowledge increase	4.4%	8.3%	8.0%	13.2%
Language features	1.1%	4.1%	10.0%	8.8%
Education/job opportunities	7.8%	1.7%	1.3%	4.4%

Why is it good for you to know this FL?

	E	G	F	I
Communication	29.9%	59.2%	49.5%	44.8%
Travel	46.0%	24.2%	34.1%	44.8%
Good to learn things	12.6%	6.7%	4.4%	5.2%
General knowledge increase	2.3%	2.5%	4.4%	1.0%
Language features	1.1%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Education/job opportunities	8.0%	5.8%	7.7%	4.2%

As is evident from these results, the vast majority of the young learners thought it was a good idea to be learning a FL in school. The reasons they offered probably reflect the parent's views as well as the value the society places in knowing FLs. As expected, the answers about personal and general benefits are practically identical as learners at this age probably cannot distinguish between personal and general benefits.

Item 13:

The young learners were asked about the optimal age to start learning a FL.

What do you think is the best time to start learning a FL?

	pre-school	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years	later
E	26.9%	58.1%	2.2%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%
G	19.3%	70.6%	4.2%	1.7%	8.0%	3.4%
F	29.4%	60.6%	4.6%	0.9%	0.9%	3.7%
I	23.8%	28.7%	16.8%	13.9%	14.9%	1.0%

It is not surprising that the majority of the 7-year-old beginners thought that their own age was the best time to start FLL. The Italian beginners offered a greater variety of optimal beginning ages but, interestingly enough, they also believed that the beginning of school was the best time to start FLL.

Items 14 & 15:

The items aimed at finding out whether the young beginners related the FL they were learning to its native speakers and at seeing what kind of idea they had of them.

Three criteria were used in grouping the answers: correctness of the answer, content reference and evaluation.

Who speaks this FL?

	E	G	F	I
Correct	69.5%	68.3%	65.5%	73.1%
Incorrect	13.7%	25.8%	19.1%	26.0%
Don't know	7.4%	0.8%	15.5%	1.0%

It seems that most of our young beginners had some knowledge about the native speakers whose language they were learning. As expected, the highest percentage of correct answers was obtained from the Italian beginners. Still, quite a large number of learners did not know who the native speakers are. It may be that young beginners do not need to connect a FL with a culture of native speakers – they may be attaching to it a different kind of reality.

What are they like?

	E	G	F	I
Character	56.7%	77.8%	50.5%	64.4%
Physical appearance	14.4%	3.4%	3.8%	3.8%
Cultural characteristics	3.3%	4.3%	3.8%	21.2%
Don't know	23.3%	10.3%	40.0%	4.8%

	E	G	F	I
Positive	44.6%	61.9%	44.2%	77.8%
Neutral	53.0%	36.4%	54.8%	1.0%
Negative	2.4%	0.7%	1.0%	2.0%

The results show that most of the beginners thought of the native speakers in terms of character characterizations. Italian beginners also used cultural characterizations: being three years older they probably knew more about Italian culture and this may have determined their attitudes towards the Italians. A rather high percentage of the French beginners had no idea about the French, which may be explained by the fact that in everyday life they were not as often exposed to the French language and culture as were the learners of the other FLs to the respective cultures.

It is interesting to note that the majority of English and French beginners made neutral qualifications about the respective native speakers, while the characterizations of German and Italian native speakers were mostly positive: a possible explanation may be the fact that the investigation was carried out during the raging war in Croatia and that the political situation was being reflected in the learners' attitudes. Generally speaking, our young beginners seemed to start learning the FL with attitudes towards the native speakers that cannot be considered negative.

Items 16, 17 & 18:

These three items focus on the learner's environment, languagewise. The learners were asked about the FLs used by parents, friends and relatives.

Do your parents speak the FL you are learning?

	E	G	F	I
Father only	6.1%	23.0%	16.5%	8.6%
Mother only	16.2%	17.5%	11.9%	9.5%
Both	37.4%	16.7%	5.5%	11.4%
Neither	40.4%	42.9%	66.1%	70.5%

These results reflect the trend in FLL in this country in the last few decades, Italian being the least frequently and English the most frequently taught FL in school.

Do your parents speak any other FL?

	E	G	F	I
Father only	17.4%	12.2%	11.1%	14.3%
Mother only	18.5%	20.3%	17.6%	11.4%
Both	28.3%	31.7%	38.9%	67.6%
Neither	35.9%	35.8%	32.4%	6.7%

In a way, these results also reflect the FLL policies in this country. However, it is also possible, as can be seen from the Parents' Questionnaire results, that 7-year-olds do not know whether or which FLs their parents speak. This may also be concluded from the very low percentage of Italian learners' answers – being 10 years old they may be more aware of what FLs their parents speak.

Do any of your relatives or friends speak the FL you are learning?

	E	G	F	I
None	38.0%	26.6%	53.6%	32.0%
Relative	24.0%	38.7%	28.2%	19.4%
Friend	22.0%	17.7%	11.8%	29.1%
Both	16.0%	16.9%	6.4%	19.4%

Apart from the French beginners, it seems that most of the learners taking part in the Project had someone in the close environment that spoke the FL they were learning in school.

Items 19, 20 & 21:

The young learners were asked about whether they had known the FL before they started school. They were also questioned on what they had known of the language as well as where they had learned it.

Did you know this FL before you started school?

	E	G	F	I
YES	58.0%	31.7%	17.4%	28.6%

More than half of the English beginners knew some English before starting school. Compared to others, the French beginners least frequently entered the learning process with some kind of pre-knowledge of French.

What did you know in this FL?

	E	G	F	I
Words	71.7%	84.8%	68.0%	100.0%
Sentences	28.3%	15.2%	32.0%	0.0%

In all the four groups the majority of learners had learned words. The knowledge of a third of French "false" beginners extended to the sentence level.

Where did you learn it?

	E	G	F	I
Kindergarten	32.8%	4.3%	33.3%	3.6%
Parents	26.2%	37.0%	29.2%	28.6%
Siblings	16.4%	4.3%	0.0%	10.7%
FL course	9.8%	19.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Grandparents	1.6%	10.9%	4.2%	17.9%
Relatives & friends	4.9%	15.2%	25.0%	14.3%

The parents seemed to be an important source of pre-knowledge for all of the four groups of the learners. English and French seemed to be popular with pre-school learners in kindergartens.

Item 22:

The item deals with the learner's perception of the parents' attitude towards their learning of the FL.

What do your parents think about you learning this FL?

	E	G	F	I
Like it	89.9%	87.3%	83.6%	92.4%
Don't care	2.0%	4.8%	5.5%	1.0%
Don't like it	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Don't know	6.1%	7.9%	0.0%	6.7%

A vast majority of our young beginners reported that their parents were happy about their FLL. In a very small number of cases the English beginners reported that their parents would prefer them to be learning another language.

PARENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Item 1:

This item aimed at finding out the reasons for the parents' enrolling the child into the class with the experimental programme in FLL. With the first generation of young beginners, the parents could choose whether to enroll the child into such a class or not, which was not always the case with the following generation of beginners.

Why did you want your child to attend this class?

	E	G	F	I
The child's wish	7.1%	3.4%	5.3%	42.9%
The child's aptitude	4.1%	9.9%	6.7%	4.4%
Advantages of the programme	41.8%	26.1%	30.7%	1.1%
Knowledge of a FL	30.6%	37.8%	40.0%	19.8%
Characteristics of *the* FL	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%
General knowledge	9.2%	12.6%	16.0%	22.0%
No special reason	7.1%	9.9%	1.3%	2.2%

The majority of the parents, except for the parents of the Italian beginners, thought that it was a great advantage to be able to start learning a FL at an early age, that it was easier to learn a FL if you started this early, that it was a good opportunity to continue learning the language the child already learned in the kindergarten and that it was a good chance for their child to learn something as useful as the FL in question. The parents of the Italian beginners, however, seemed mostly to have acted on the child's wish to start learning Italian in the fourth form, and believed that the knowledge of Italian would contribute to the child's general knowledge.

Item 2:

The parents' views on the optimal age start to learning a FL was investigated too.

What do you think is the best age to start FLL?

	pre-school	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years	later
E	65.0%	34.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%
G	55.1%	37.3%	5.1%	1.7%	0.8%	0.0%
F	62.8%	37.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I	48.5%	18.8%	12.9%	10.9%	8.9%	0.0%

The majority of the parents seemed to believe in a very early start. It is interesting to note that none of the parents opted for a later age than 10. It seems to be a common belief that the earlier one starts the easier and better one learns a FL.

Items 3 & 4:

The parents were also questioned on the knowledge of the FLs in the child's close environment.

Who in the family speaks the FL your child is learning?

	E	G	F	I
Father only	9.8%	13.7%	11.3%	7.5%
Mother only	15.7%	14.3%	11.3%	6.5%
Siblings	2.9%	1.7%	3.8%	3.2%
Both parents	25.5%	16.2%	0.0%	4.3%
Other members	2.0%	7.7%	8.8%	5.4%
Several members	27.5%	18.8%	0.0%	6.5%
Nobody	16.7%	27.4%	53.8%	66.7%

The percentage of families in which nobody spoke the FL the child was learning in school reflects, again, the FLL policies in the country: the highest percentage in the Italian column, the lowest in the English column. It is also noteworthy that the largest percentage of families in which several members spoke the FL in question was in the English column.

Items 5 & 6:

These two items focused on the active role the parents may play in the child's learning of the FL.

Do you monitor your child's learning of the FL?

	E	G	F	I
YES	95.2%	98.3%	82.7%	89.9%

How?

	E	G	F	I
Check the child's knowledge	24.7%	19.8%	16.4%	40.4%
Talk to the child	28.9%	31.1%	41.0%	13.6%
Learn or revise with the child	20.6%	29.2%	19.7%	35.8%
Play in the FL	2.1%	4.7%	3.3%	0.0%
Talk to the teacher	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%
Combinations	22.7%	15.1%	18.0%	9.9%

The majority of the parents did take an active role in their child's FLL. Most parents seemed to resort to checking the child's knowledge of the material taught in class, learning the FL with the child or simply talking to the child about what went on in the FL lessons. It is instructing to note that almost none of the parents thought it necessary to get direct information about the child's progress from the FL teacher. It is

possible that the parents found it too early, at this stage, to expect any important opinion on the part of the teacher to be formed about the child's progress. The follow-up investigations might be enlightening on this point.

Item 7:

The parents were also questioned about their perception of the child's attitudes towards learning the FL in school.

How would you estimate your child's attitudes towards learning the FL?

	E	G	F	I
Enthusiastic	91.3%	89.7%	85.4%	92.1%
Indifferent	7.7%	8.5%	14.6%	7.9%
Dissatisfied	1.0%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%

The majority of the parents saw their child as enthusiastic about learning the FL in school. This corresponds to the learners' answers in the interview about liking to be in the class with the experimental programme (Interview Items 2 & 3.).

Enthusiasm about learning the FL at the very beginning is certainly a good basis to build on in the learning process that is going to last up to at least the end of the learner's schooling. It would be of great interest to follow the intensity of the learner's enthusiasm throughout the entire process of formal learning.

Item 8:

The parents' views on the best way to learn a FL were questioned in this item.

What is the best way to learn a FL?

	E	G	F	I
Living in the foreign country	57.7%	53.8%	65.9%	67.6%
At school	21.2%	16.8%	9.8%	18.6%
In a FL course	1.9%	2.5%	1.2%	2.0%
Private lessons	0.0%	1.7%	2.4%	2.9%
Combinations	19.2%	25.2%	20.7%	8.8%

More than half of the parents believed that the best way to learn a FL is to go and live in the foreign country. The percentages were high for French and Italian – these languages were not as present in mass media in this country as English and German. It seems that few parents believed in mastering the FL through formal teaching. These views would be interesting to follow up as the beginners progress in learning.

Item 9:

It was considered relevant to question the parents' attribution of success or failure in FLL to the teacher.

To what extent does success in FLL depend on the teacher?

	not at all	a little	fairly	a lot	totally
E	0.0%	0.0%	10.6%	56.7%	32.7%
G	0.8%	0.8%	12.6%	60.5%	25.2%
F	0.0%	0.0%	8.5%	72.0%	19.5%
I	1.0%	0.0%	8.9%	72.3%	17.8%

The majority of the parents believed that success in FLL depends to a large extent on the teacher. It is interesting to note that about a third of the parents of the English beginners opted for the total responsibility of the teacher.

Item 10:

The item deals with the good language learner characteristics.

Rank the following characteristics of the good language learner.

(The table shows the average rank of the five characteristics.)

E	G	F	I
Aptitude	Aptitude	Motivation	Aptitude
Motivation	Motivation	Aptitude	Motivation
Diligence	Diligence	Diligence	Diligence
Intelligence	Intelligence	Intelligence	Intelligence
Perseverance	Perseverance	Perseverance	Perseverance

The majority of the parents seemed to connect success in FLL with aptitude and motivation. It is noteworthy that, except for the parents of the French beginners, most parents attributed success to aptitude, which is, according to common belief, a characteristic that is not under the control of the learner. Aptitude is also considered to be a stable characteristic. Since the majority of the parents connected success with the teacher as well, it may be possible to conclude that the teacher could influence the learner's motivation and was in this way responsible for success in FLL.

Item 11:

The parents were questioned on the importance of the four basic FL skills.

Rank the skills according to their importance.

E	G	F	I
Listening	Listening	Listening	Speaking
Speaking	Speaking	Speaking	Listening
Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing

The majority of the parents viewed the oral skills as the most important. This is in accordance with the common belief that knowing a language means being able to speak it. The oral aspect is also considered a constituent element of the modern approach to FLL.

Part B

The results for the 21 Likert-scale items of agreement will be presented in groups according to the object of the attitude measured. The tables contain the means for the scales, which ranged from 1 (total agreement) to 5 (total disagreement).

Items 18, 19, 20 & 21:
The items focus on the attitude towards the FL in question.
(18) It is important to know this FL.
(19) This FL is beautiful.
(20) This FL is difficult.
(21) This FL is interesting.

Item	E	G	F	I
(18)	5	4	4	4
(19)	5	4	5	5
(20)	2	4	4	2
(21)	5	4	5	5

It seems that our beginners' parents considered the FL their child was learning fairly important, beautiful and interesting. While English and Italian were also considered fairly easy, German and French were viewed as rather difficult by the parents.

The parents' attitudes towards the FL are important from two points of view. On the one hand, they may influence the learner's attitudes. On the other hand, they may determine the extent to which parents are going to play the active role in the child's learning. If, say, the parents believe that the FL the child is learning is difficult, they are likely to help the child more with learning it or, at least, urge the child to put in more effort into learning it.

Items 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16 & 17:
These items focus on FLL aptitude and its possible connections with gender, talent and intelligence.
(1) Children learn a FL easier than adults.
(2) A talent for FLL exists.
(3) People good at maths are also good at FLs.
(8) Girls can learn a FL better than boys.

(11) People who speak more than one FL are very intelligent.
(12) Anybody can learn a FL.
(15) People in this country are very talented for learning FLs.
(16) Only a talented person can learn a FL.
(17) Motivation for learning is more important than talent.

Item	E	G	F	I
(1)	5	5	5	5
(2)	5	4	4	4
(3)	4	1	1	2
(8)	4	1	1	1
(11)	3	3	2	3
(12)	4	4	4	4
(15)	3	3	3	3
(16)	2	2	1	2
(17)	4	4	4	4

The results show that, although the parents believed there existed such a thing as talent for FLL, it was less important than motivation for learning and, thus, most people can learn a FL. It is also interesting to note that, while the parents considered children to be better learners of FLs than adults, they seemed to disagree with the other commonly held belief that girls are better FL learners than boys. Several studies carried out in this country (e.g., Mihaljević, 1991) and elsewhere (e.g., Ostojić, 1980) indicated existing correlations between gender and FL achievement: in these studies girls consistently had higher grades than boys.

While the parents seemed not to have strong feelings about their compatriots being particularly talented for FLL or about possibilities of increasing general intelligence through FLL, they seemed to disagree that there could be any connection between being good at mathematics and FLs. Although this is still to a large extent an unexplored area, the research done so far (e.g., Mihaljević, 1991) actually points to correlations between achievement in maths and FLs. A possible assumption may be that similar cognitive processes take place in these two types of learning: in maths the learner handles abstractions in the forms of formulae and in FLL the learner has to deal with abstract rules of grammar.

Items 6, 7, 9 & 14:
The items investigate the attitudes towards the nature of FLL.
(6)   The most important thing in FLL is to learn the words.
(7)   Practice is the most important thing in FLL.

(9)   The most difficult thing in FLL is mastering its grammar.
(10) Errors ignored at first are hard to correct later.
(14) It is easier to read in the FL than to understand speech.

Item	E	G	F	I
(6)	3	4	3	2
(7)	5	5	5	5
(9)	3	3	3	4
(14)	3	3	3	3
(10)	4	4	4	4

The parents seemed to be unanimous in believing that practice is the most important thing in FLL. In their view, knowing words seemed more important in learning German than in learning the other three FLs. Italian grammar was viewed as more difficult than the grammar of the other three languages. It is interesting to note that the parents did not seem to feel strongly about the importance of the receptive FL skills (reading and listening comprehension).

Items 4, 5 & 13:

The above items deal with FL teaching and concern the parents' attitudes towards FLL in the formal school setting.

(4)   It is possible to master a FL in school.
(5)   Five hours per week is enough to learn a FL.
(13) It is impossible to master a FL without good textbooks.

Item	E	G	F	I
(4)	4	4	4	4
(5)	5	4	4	2
(13)	3	3	3	4

The results show that the parents seemed to be fairly optimistic about mastering a FL in school, provided enough time was spent learning it. It also seems that the parents of our young beginners did not believe that good textbooks were a necessary prerequisite for success in FLL.

Part C

The results to be presented here refer to Thurstone scales developed specifically for the purposes of the Project. The scales were used to measure the parents' attitudes towards the native speakers of the FL their child was learning.

The English beginners' parents were asked to deal with two separate scales: one describing the British and the other describing the Americans, since we felt that both could be considered native speakers of English by the parents.

The British....		(%)	Rank
	have a rich tradition.	70.1%	9
	are conservative.	43.0%	4
	are cold.	35.5%	3
	have a highly developed culture.	29.0%	10
	are very polite.	28.0%	8
	have a sense of humour.	23.1%	7
	like hunting.	14.0%	6
	talk about the weather.	12.1%	5
	have no respect for other nations.	8.4%	2
	are thrifty.	8.4%	2
	have violent youth.	5.6%	1
(M=7.096)			

The Americans....		(%)	Rank
	have a hectic way of life.	63.9%	5
	are good businessmen.	56.5%	9
	are open & communicative.	34.3%	10
	think too much about money.	31.5%	4
	are the most democratic nation.	25.0%	11
	always want to lead.	14.8%	3
	are very alienated.	14.8%	2
	love hamburgers.	13.9%	6
	are poorly educated.	11.1%	1
	are the best sportsmen.	6.6%	8
	are very hospitable.	3.7%	7
(M=6.586)			

The Germans....		(%)	Rank
	are very industrious.	83.8%	9
	are pedantic.	77.8%	8
	are good organizers.	73.5%	7
	are thrifty.	16.2%	2
	made a major contribution to classical music.	12.0%	10
	are fair-haired.	9.4%	6
	are unsociable.	5.1%	3
	are the most capable nation.	5.1%	11
	have no sense of humour.	3.4%	4
	are not good-looking.	3.4%	5
	are pro-fascist.	9.0	1
(M=7.61)			

The French....		(%)	Rank
	have an excellent cuisine.	71.8%	9
	are famous in science & art.	65.4%	11
	are reluctant to learn FLs.	52.6%	4
	are good diplomats.	29.5%	10
	can't stand foreigners.	16.7%	1
	are temperamental.	16.7%	8
	are bohems.	14.1%	6
	are very talkative.	11.5%	5
	are conceited.	6.4%	2
	like to flatter.	3.8%	3
	are good lovers.	2.6%	7
(M=7.58)			

The Italians....		(%)	Rank
	excel in culture & art.	79.4%	11
	are temperamental.	65.7%	7
	have a strong sense of fashion.	44.1%	9
	talk too much.	41.2%	5
	are very friendly.	17.6%	10
	have a famous cuisine.	37.3%	8
	are very patriarchal.	7.8%	3
	easily fall in love.	5.9%	6
	are cowards.	2.0%	1
	are notorious for crime.	1.0%	
	are very religious.	1.0%	4
(M=8.18)			

On the whole, it can be noted that the parents held fairly positive attitudes towards the native speakers of the languages their children were learning in school. The most positive attitudes were held about the Italians, the least positive about the Americans. Having in mind the time the investigation took place, this is in accordance with the general feeling the people in this country had about the nation in question. The follow-up investigations on the same attitude objects will show whether this explanation is viable.

Conclusion

The investigations described in this chapter offer a picture of the learners' and their parents' attitudes towards some of the relevant factors in early FLL.

As far as the young beginners are concerned, the results indicate, on the whole, a fairly promising basis for early FLL. Most beginners seemed to like learning the FL, enjoyed the FL lessons and wished to continue learning the FL. It seems that at age of 7, FL learners do not always connect the FL to its native speakers or culture. When they do, they mostly think of the native speakers in question in terms of character characterizations. Their attitudes towards the native speakers seem to be a reflection of the current socio-political situation in the society as a whole and correlate with the parents' views. These were found to be neutral or positive in this study.

The extent to which young beginners may be acquainted with the FL culture seems to be also dependent on the exposure they get to the FL and culture, through mass

media and the like. Most beginners in our study believed that their own age was the best time to start FLL. Most of them also seemed to be aware of at least some teaching going on in the FL classes. The fact that some of young learners disliked activities with game elements may be very instructive for both the teachers and researchers.

The young beginners seemed to think very highly of their FL achievement. They also think it was good to know the FL they were learning. The motives for FLL they offered probably reflected their parents' views.

As far as the learners' parents are concerned, the situation seems to be equally promising. The parents were happy to have their child learn a FL from the first form because they saw many advantages in early FLL. Most parents believed that children were better FL learners than adults. Although most of the parents thought that the best way to learn a FL was to go to the foreign country, they seemed fairly optimistic about the possibilities of mastering a FL in school, provided enough time was devoted to FLL. The parents attributed success in FLL largely to the teacher.

Most parents held very positive attitudes towards the FL their child was learning. As far as the native speakers are concerned, the parents' attitudes may be characterized as fairly positive. These two types of attitudes refer to the so-called passive role of the parent, which was shown to be highly important in various studies (e.g., Gardner, 1985). The parents we investigated seemed to be taking an active role in the child's FLL as well.

The follow-up studies of attitudes and motivation will focus on the changes that may occur in both the learners' and their parents' attitudes towards FLL and on the implications these changes may have on the other factors relevant to FLL. At the same time, comparisons of these initial results to the results obtained from subsequent generations of young beginners will be made. It is hoped that these studies will eventually offer some evidence for a clarification of the role of attitudes and motivation in FLL at an early age.

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Maja Rijavec

FITTING THE SYLLABUS AND METHOD TO THE YOUNG LEARNER

Introducing foreign-language instruction to young primary school children requires developing specific learning programmes and teaching methods appropriate to learners aged 7-8.

This chapter deals with the relevant psycho-social characteristics of this age group, and gives suggestions on how to adjust classroom teaching to the needs, interests and general maturational level of 7- to 8-year-olds. It is based on observations from teaching practice. Stressing the importance of building teaching strategies upon an insight into the world of young learners, the article presents a learner-centred approach.

Initial motivation

First graders have *positive starting attitudes* towards foreign-language learning and can be successful, within individual limits, provided that the learning process does not become a frustrating experience. They are usually uninhibited and only rarely self-conscious. They take to using a foreign language more naturally than children with a few years of schooling experience. Apart from the aptitude for imitation, this may be the reason why they pronounce new sounds with greater confidence. Young primary school children are very curious, easily prompted, open to influences and eager to enrich their awareness of the world. It is the teacher's task to foster these initial factors of motivation. Although young children are self-oriented and preoccupied with their immediate environment, their interests can easily be extended to include unusual and imaginative topics. A humoristic approach can always help to arouse interest and reduce boredom.

Specific difficulties

However, when teaching children of this age we also have to cope with specific difficulties caused by *lack of learning experience, lack of concepts* and *absence of working habits*. Things which go without saying with older children may present problems, for example some children tend to skip pages in their notebooks or open them from left to right. Lack of concepts may sometimes puzzle a child while accomplishing a task, or produce a break in communication similar to that Faulkner describes in *Light in August*: "The child didn't answer. He had never seen a home, so there was nothing for him to say about it. And he was not old enough to talk and say nothing at the same time."

For these reasons we should not suppose that input equals intake. Children sometimes can not follow the teacher even in their mother tongue.

Children's *sense of reality differs* a great deal from that of adults. On the one hand, the world of make-believe, imaginative situations and characters, or play-activities can be much more real to a 7-year-old than the actual everyday world. On the other hand, children can unmistakably sense a contrived situation, a meaningless task or a false attitude, and find ways to refuse collaboration.

Children of this age also have a *different sense of relevance.* We cannot assume that what seems relevant to us will also make sense to them. Having fun and satisfying immediate curiosity are the things that matter with first- and second-graders. Specific language-learning goals (e.g., reading and writing for the sake of practice) are quite meaningless to them. Therefore we should always try to link instruction to entertainment and devise fun activities with non-linguistic objectives. Children can have no long range purposes. They want to see immediate results of their activities, either in the form of an obvious outcome (a lost key is found) or in the form of reward for a successfully accomplished task (words of approval or encouragement).

In spite of their love of movement, children of this age have *poor sense of spatial relations*. They have difficulties in orientation and have poor feeling for distance. The layout of pages in their notebooks exhibits lack of feeling for space and distribution of elements. When writing, some children show no ability to predict how much space a word can take. No wonder that they also have difficulties with grasping the meaning of prepositions and other terms of spatial relations. So, we had better not attempt to teach those terms systematically.

Children's needs

One of the most important needs that has to be taken into consideration while working with young learners is their *need for emotional security*. Their learning potentials can be fully exploited only in a positive affective atmosphere. Emotions are the starting point of learning. It is common knowledge that children learn best what they like best; and they like what gives them pleasure or fosters their self-esteem. Negative emotions do not help learning. Children are not self-critical and consequently easily get hurt. It follows that we should try to secure success, or at least an illusion of success, for each child in order to help him/her form a positive self-image. Since the affective factor plays such a crucial role in the teaching/learning process, it is of vital importance that we create a tension-free, supportive learning environment of good will, mutual respect and confidence, which can work as a powerful source of information.

Underlying classroom activities there is always all sorts of social interaction among children, which consumes their time and energies, and can sometimes paralyse their

learning abilities. This *need for self-realization within the peer-group* cannot be over-looked since it has far-reaching implications for the teaching process. Children seek security in belonging to a group and their self-confidence depends on whether they are recognized by the peer group or not. In search of recognition they imitate their peers, but also find fault with them or mock the less successful ones. Young children demand constant individual attention on the part of the teacher, which in groups of 12-17, or even larger, cannot be secured for all of them. So they try to draw the teacher's attention by putting in remarks in a loud voice, or being "naughty". Therefore teaching tasks should be designed so that each child has an opportunity to be in some way successful. For example, tasks with a number of equally acceptable solutions or easily attainable aims. Open questions based on an information gap have more positive educational implications than those which require one definitive answer. We should also be aware of the possible emotional and social consequences of competition games, formal evaluation, our remarks of encouragement or criticism. Moreover, children can find explicit teaching humiliating and try to avoid it by not paying attention to what is going on in the classroom. Introducing language items casually through pleasurable activities can be more effective. Similarly, overt correction does not help children to gain confidence.

Children *need to be physically active*, and sitting still is a real torture for most of them. Instead of suppressing the considerable energy the children have for, we can channel it to purposeful activities. Applying the activity-based methodology we can bring action into everything. It means a lot to a 7-year-old to come to the front of the classroom just to remove something on the board or take something out of a box. Physical involvement makes children happy because they can move and change position, but also because they are for a moment the protagonists of a classroom activity. Tasks which require change of place range from P.E. lessons and play-acting to miming, action songs and simulation games such as: cooking, shopping or having meals. For the same reason all kinds of dramatic activities provide one of the most successful devices in foreign-language teaching. There is another reason why it is advisable to introduce bodily movement into language classes: connecting the act of speech with gestures helps memorization.

How children learn

The cognitive development of the 7-8 age-group is at the *stage of concrete operations*. It is characterized by absence of logical connections on an abstract level. For this reason no attempts at analysing can give results with children of average abilities. In spite of approximately the same chronological age, there are striking differences in mental

age; some children are below and some are above the standard. *Young children learn by acquiring language patterns spontaneously,* moving slowly from one concrete example to another, making inductive generalizations on a preconscious level. In terms of methodology this suggests that children should learn by doing. They should be actively involved in handling tasks that will make them figure out how language works through making and testing hypotheses. This teaching strategy requires a long input phase, the so-called "rule incubation period", in which they can accumulate language experience before language production. During the practice phase it is important to relate language items to purposeful activities which may create functional needs for the use of language. It follows that young children learn slowly, need extensive input, varied practice and frequent recycling of language items. The whole process is time-consuming and we can do little to accelerate it.

In spite of the absence of abstract logical thinking, we must not underestimate the creative abilities of children. They can show remarkable creativity in handling challenging tasks which provoke creative responses (imagining, guessing, lying). I have noticed that this kind of creativity vanishes after a year or so, probably due to the general trends in teaching practice which tend to impose rules of thinking.

Young learners can be easily distracted. Their *attention span is short*, and they get bored or fed up with an activity after a few minutes. Their interest can be easily aroused, but does not last long. First-graders can engage in drawing and similar activities for about 15 minutes, and in other kinds of activities for only 4-5 minutes. Activities which require mental effort can last even shorter. The methodological implication would be that we have to vary the pace and character of instructional techniques and change them at first signs of fatigue or boredom. Activities which involve rhythm, like break chants, can best serve the purpose of changing pace. Another effective device is to surprise the children by changing the subject abruptly and directing their attention to a new area of interest. Preparatory phases to classroom activities (arranging seats, preparing requisites, dressing up and distributing roles) can be amusing and, at the same time, linguistically as useful as activities themselves, because the element of expectation focuses the pupils' attention.

Syllabus design

The above points should be considered in light of syllabus design. The *choice of context* is also of extreme importance for successful teaching. We must avoid trivialities, naïve commonplace situations and emotionally flat topics. They bring boredom into classroom and also have far-reaching negative consequences. When choosing the content we must either relate it to the children themselves and draw upon their knowledge of

the world, or devise imaginative, funny or even absurd situations. If we start pretending to see something in an empty box, the children will gladly join in, showing much more interest than when there actually is something in it.

In order to integrate language objectives with content study it is a good idea to include a selection of *topics from the other subjects* of the curriculum. This can provide a meaningful setting for language study *shifting linguistic aims to practical ones*, as well as opportunities for conceptual development. But the most desirable context in classroom teaching is what the actual situation offers. We must always make use of what comes up and introduce related language.

Young children *experience the world round them in a holistic way,* in contrast with the analytic approach of adults. While preparing puppets and scenery for a puppet-show based on Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs, I asked my second-grade pupils to classify the following words into two categories: castle, mirror, Snow-White, dwarfs, queen, wood, prince, apple, hunter and cottage. My intention was to engage one group in designing scenery and the other in designing characters. To my surprise the children put the queen, the mirror and the castle into one group, the dwarfs, the wood, the cottage and Snow-White into the other group, but had difficulties with the hunter, the prince and the apple as to where they belonged. In line with this we can understand why children can easily remember clusters of contextually related words, which should be kept in mind when designing the syllabus.

Conclusion

Since it is impossible to change young learners and make them fit into the programmes and teaching methods devised for older children, judicious alterations should be made in methodological approaches as well as in details of teaching procedures in order to adapt them to 7- or 8-year-olds. By respecting children's characteristics and meeting their needs we can enhance motivation for foreign-language learning and ensure successful teaching.

Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović

DO YOUNG LEARNERS KNOW HOW TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

There has not been much research to date on language learning strategies used by young learners. One reason is probably the fact that older language learners are considered better able to report on learning strategies than younger learners. Most of the methods (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, think-aloud protocols) used to investigate strategies are meant to be used with subjects at a cognitive level above that of young children.

The studies that have been carried out with young language learners mostly include second language learners, that is, children who are learning a non-native language in the country where that particular language is spoken as the native language.

Thus, Wong-Fillmore (1976, 1979) reports on her nine-month study of Mexican children (aged between 5;7 to 7;3 years) learning English in a Californian school. In her study she made use of the ethnographic and observational methods. Having recorded five such children's interactions with native American children during play-time, she found considerable variation in the proficiency they reached by the end of the nine months. In an attempt to account for the differences, Wong-Fillmore analysed the strategies the children used in their language learning. Her analysis showed that in their interactions the children used *three social strategies* (1- Join a group and act as if you understand what's going on, even if you don't; 2 – Give the impression, with a few well-chosen words, that you speak the language; 3- Count on your friends for help) and *five cognitive strategies* (1 - Assume what people are saying is relevant to the situation at hand; 2 – Get some expressions you understand, and start talking; 3 – Look for recurring parts in the formulas you know; 4 – Make the most of what you've got; 5 – Work on the big things first, save the details for later). Wong-Fillmore considers the social strategies to be more important since the children were not aiming at mastering the English language but were interested in establishing social relationships with their native American playmates.

Nikolov (1999) reports on the cognitive strategies used by Hungarian young learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). She claims that repetition is a cognitive strategy that changes with age: in her experience, children stop relying on this strategy around the age of 9 or 10. The mother-tongue strategy that she noticed her young learners used extensively in an attempt to master English spelling was found to be very helpful. Commenting is a cognitive strategy that Nikolov defines as a combination of guessing intelligently on the basis of clues and translating. She believes that this particular strategy is extremely important in child foreign language learning because

"a) children guess meanings by relying on their background knowledge of the world, and their mother tongue; b) it provides all children in the classroom with comprehensible input; c) it allows the teacher to build scaffolding on feedback; d) gives children the feeling of success; e) it provides learners with a useful communication strategy of guessing intelligently from linguistic and other clues" (Nikolov 1999:230). As with repetition, the use of this strategy changes with age: as the children's proficiency level increases, they rely on it less.

Using a questionnaire comprising some Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990) items as well as a number of items designed by O'Malley and Chamot (1995), Julkunen (1999) studied the learning strategies of 12-year-old Finnish learners of English, Swedish, German, French and Russian as the second foreign language. His findings showed the subjects reporting a more frequent use of meta-cognitive and social strategies than of cognitive strategies. They also used different cognitive strategies with different languages. In contrast to the male subjects, the female subjects were found to be using more metacognitive strategies that aimed at self-management and self-monitoring. Another interesting finding of this Finnish study is that learners of English as the second foreign language reported a more frequent use of almost all strategies than the learners of any of the other foreign languages included. Julkunen attributes this to their having started with a 'difficult language' (Finnish learners consider German, French, Russian and Swedish more difficult than English).

Szulc-Kurpaska (1999) analysed the strategies used by 10-year-old Polish EFL learners while retelling the Little Red Riding Hood story. She found that her subjects made use of formulaic chunks, incorporation, language switch, simplification by omission and overgeneralization. Contrary to popular belief and findings in some other studies, the male subjects generally performed better on the storytelling task than female subjects.

In Croatia researchers are only beginning to study language learning strategies used by young learners. The study to be described focused on young EFL learners' awareness of learning strategies.

Aim

The aim of this study was to establish which strategies in vocabulary learning the young subjects were aware of. We were also interested in seeing whether there would be any variation in the reported strategies as a function of age, sex and achievement level.

Sample

A sample of 23 Croatian young EFL learners took part in the study. Their age ranged from six to nine years. The youngest subject was attending a nursery school, the oldest grade 3 of primary school. The age profile of the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Age profile of the sample

Age	6	7	8	9
No. of subjects	1	6	11	5

There were four boys and 19 girls in the sample. In terms of the course levels they were attending, 11 subjects belonged to Level 1, seven were attending Level 2 and five were from the Level 3 group. Fourteen subjects were considered by their teacher to be good learners and nine were assessed as poor learners.

Instrument and procedure

Since the subjects were young children, data was elicited by means of the projection method. They were questioned on how they would teach their doll or Dalmatian dog the following English words: *apple, kite, yellow, present, goat, cupboard, bird, island, dangerous* and the difference in the pronunciation of *fifteen* and *fifty*. One learner offered an unsolicited explanation for teaching the word *X-ray*. Not all the subjects were asked about all of the words (see Table 2 for details). Some subjects were also asked about how they learned English words themselves. The subjects were interviewed individually; most were interviewed in a separate room, but some interviews were carried out in class while the other learners were engaged in the regular learning tasks. This was due to the objective circumstances in which the teaching of English was carried out. Some children were also asked more questions than others in order for them to produce sufficient data on strategies.

All the interviews, carried out in Croatian – the subjects' mother tongue, were recorded and later transcribed.

Table 2: The number of subjects and strategies reported

	No. of subjects	No. of strategies	Average no. of strategies per subject
Apple	23	49	2.1
Kite	23	37	1.6
Yellow	23	43	1.8
Present	6	10	1.6
Goat	4	6	1.5
Cupboard	4	7	1.7
Bird	2	7	3.5
Island	4	3	0.7
Dangerous	1	3	3
Fifteen/fifty	5	6	1.2
X-ray	1	1	1
Own learning	15	31	2.1

Results and discussion

The size and composition of the sample in this study limit the extent to which the results could be generalised. However, the findings of this investigation can be taken as indications of possible trends in language learning strategy use by young learners.

The transcribed interviews offer a wealth of data on young learners' views of how to learn English vocabulary.

It is interesting to note the differences between the ways the young subjects suggested for teaching their favourite characters (a doll, a Dalmatian dog) and the strategies they reported they used in their own learning. It is probably logical to guess that their suggestions reflect the ways they would like to be taught.

> Ivona – 7 years, female, good learner
> Interviewer: (…) What else would you tell her (=the doll) to do, what else could help her to learn that word (=apple)?
> Ivona: *She should take an apple and stare at it till she remembers the word.*
> (…)
> Interviewer: What did you do to remember a new word?
> Ivona: … *Drew.*
> Interviewer: Did drawing help you to remember the new word?
> Ivona: Yes.

Some subjects suggested the same approach to teaching others as they reported using in their own learning, indicating perhaps that they liked the way they were being taught or that they thought it was the only way to learn.

Ivana – 6 years, female, good learner

Interviewer: What could help her to remember that word?

Ivana: Er... she should *read*... and should *learn how to write* and... er...

(...)

Interviewer: And what helped you to remember how to say 'zmaj' [kite] in English?

Ivana: I studied.

Interviewer: How?

Ivana: *I was reading*.

Interviewer: And what else?

Ivana: And... er... *learned how to write*... er...

Many young learners seemed to believe in vocabulary acquisition by some sort of interaction with or manipulation of the referent. This either meant doing something with the object:

Martina – 8 years, female, good learner

Interviewer: And what would you tell your doll to do to remember that 'zmaj' is 'kite'?

Martina: Well... er... *to buy one and play with it, or to buy a T-shirt with a kite on*...

or implicated its function:

Martina – 8 years, female, good learner

Interviewer: And the word 'present', how would you help the doll to remember this word? What would you tell her to do?

Martina: *When her birthday comes she should... er... remember that 'dar' is 'present' and*...

Sometimes just looking at the object was considered helpful:

Ivona – 7 years, female, good learner

Interviewer: What else could help her to learn that word (=apple)?

Ivona: She should *take an apple and stare at it* till she remembers the word.

In some interviews there is evidence of the young subjects' language awareness. This is particularly obvious with those learners who insisted that the learner should, first of all, learn how to write and spell in English:

Jelena – 8 years, female, good learner

Interviewer: Imagine this Dalmatian dog wants to learn English. What would you tell him to do to remember that 'jabuka' is 'apple'?

(...)

Jelena: (...) Well, I'd teach him *the letters, how they are written and pronounced*, I'd teach him *the Croatian and English alphabets*.

Some young learners suggested that English words should be compared to their Croatian translation equivalents:

Jelena – 8 years, female, good learner

Interviewer: How would you help our Dalmatian dog to remember that 'žuta' is 'yellow' and not, say, 'green'? What would you tell him to do?

Jelena: (...) and then I'd tell him that 'yellow' is 'žuta' because we call it 'the yellow colour'...er...(smiles) don't exactly know why though, *that 'yellow' is 'žuta' because we say 'žuta' and they say 'yellow'.*

This young learner apparently believes in the contrastive approach to foreign language learning.

One successful 8-year-old female subject suggested explicitly that her Dalmatian dog should make use of the positive transfer of the mother tongue:

Katarina – 8 years, female, good learner

Interviewer: (...) What would you tell him to do to remember that 'zmaj' is 'kite'?

Katarina: *Compare it to the word 'kaj'*[interrogatiave pronoun in kajkavian dialect]*, to remember 'kaj', and then to add 't'.*

Some learners insisted on using transcription instead of the ordinary spelling of words:

Stela – 7 years, female, good learner

Interviewer: What would you tell your doll, what should she do to remember that 'jabuka' is 'apple'?

Stela: To.. er.. *to draw an apple... I'd draw her an apple and she should write under the drawing... but not... not the way it is spelt but the way it is pronounced.*

The subjects exhibited an awareness of the language learning process too. This is seen from the metacognitive strategies they were mentioning in the interview. Thus, one young learner believed that mastering some basic skills in L1 should precede foreign language learning:

Tomislav – 8 years, male, good learner

Interviewer: What would you tell the Dalmatian dog to do to remember that 'jabuka' is 'apple'?

Tomislav: He should *learn how to read and write first and only then start learning English...*

Many learners insisted on learning by repetition. This implied reading the word many times, writing it down or saying it many times:

Petra – 9 years, female, poor learner

Interviewer: And what would help her (=the doll) to remember that word (=kite)?

Petra: I'd tell her to *read it many times till she remembers it...*

Željka – 8 years, female, poor learner
Interviewer: What would you tell your doll to do to remember that 'jabuka' is 'apple'?
Željka: ...Er... *to write it in the notebook many times.*

Stjepan – 7 years, male, poor learner
Interviewer: And what would you suggest he (=the Dalmatian) should do to remember that 'poklon' is 'present'?
Stjepan: *To non-stop repeat 'present', 'present' and to learn it by heart.*

Learning by imitation was valued as well:

Stjepan – 7 years, male, poor learner
Interviewer: What would you recommend the Dalmatian to do to remember that 'jabuka' is 'apple'?
Stjepan: To learn English.
Interviewer: And how?
Stjepan: *To repeat after someone who knows English ... someone who knows English should tell him (the word) and he should repeat.*

A 7-year-old learner seemed aware of the fact that it takes time to learn something:

Dorotea – 7 years, female, good learner
Interviewer: What would you tell your doll to do to remember that 'zmaj' is 'kite'?
Dorotea: (...) *to study because she can't remember it all in one day.*

Several subjects referred to how learning should be organised physically.

Marija – 7 years, female, good learner
Interviewer: And if the doll didn't know how to write yet, what would you tell her to do?
Marija: Well... er... she should *sit at a table and repeat the word all the time.*

An 8-year-old boy insisted that his Dalmatian dog should be physically and psychologically ready for learning English.

Tomislav – 8 years, male, good learner
Interviewer: And what would you tell him (=the Dalmatian dog) to do at home, when he is alone?
Tomislav: He should *play a little* and when I get home he would study.
Interviewer: And if he wanted to study by himself, what would you tell him to do?
Interviewer: I'd tell him to *eat first and do all the other things and then go and study.*

The young subjects seemed to be aware of the effect of reinforcement by widening their knowledge about the referent.

> Valentina – 7 years, female, good learner
> Interviewer: What would you tell the Dalmatian to do to remember that 'zmaj' is 'kite' in English?
> Valentina: *To read stuff about kites*.

It is interesting to note that a few learners could not remember how they themselves had learned English words. This may be ascribed to shyness but also to a lack of awareness of the learning process.

It seems that young learners can be quite aware of the teaching process as well. Here they reiterated the teaching strategies they were exposed to in school. One learner had a clear idea about the use of the mother tongue in teaching English:

> Tomislav – 8 years, male, good learner
> Interviewer: What would you tell him to do to remember how to say 'ormar' [wardrobe] in English?
> Tomislav: ... In English... *I'd tell him in English*. If he couldn't understand it, *then I'd say it in Croatian* (...)

> Katarina – 8 years, female, good learner
> Interviewer: And what helped you to remember that 'žuta' is 'yellow'?
> Katarina: We had it in the test... I'd give him (=the Dalmatian dog) *the word in a little test* too ... er... I'd *write the names of some colours*... er... and among them 'yellow'... er... and... er... then... er... *he'd have to circle*... er... that... er... the correct spelling of yellow.

This extract shows how easily what was done to the young learner is carried over to teaching the Dalmatian.

In order to teach the English word *goat* one young subject suggested using a cartoon about a goat:

> Vlatka – 8 years, female, good learner
> Interviewer: (...) What would you tell the Dalmatian to do to remember that word (=goat)?
> Vlatka: (...) and then I'd have him *watch a cartoon where the main character would be a goat*.

Another learner suggested using a song where a particular word would be repeated many times. The young learners seemed to be aware of the necessity to be exposed to a lot of input, or to intensive input, in order to learn the language material.

Awareness of the teaching strategies they were exposed to is especially visible in the children's frequent inclusion of testing as part of the process. The ways they suggested

this should be done probably reflect what they had experienced themselves in class or at home:

> Jelena – 8 years, female, good learner
>
> Interviewer: Well, and what would you tell the Dalmatian to do to remember that word (=present). It's a hard word for him to remember.
>
> Jelena: Present... well... er... (smiles) I'd *draw him a present* as a gift, and then I'd write the word 'present' under it and then I'd tell him. ... I'd... first I'd *ask him how all these letters are said in English and then he would put the word together*. Next time I'd *give him a test*, I wouldn't write the word 'present' but he'd have to *put the word together from... jumbled letters*, for example 'r', 'e', 's' and so on...

During the analysis of the transcribed interviews we did not apply any of the already established categorisations of strategies but opted for a data-driven classification. Thus, the total of 209 strategies identified were grouped into seven different groups of strategies. These are presented in Table 3. The *TPR* group comprises strategies that involve the learner's physical interaction with what the word means: for example, eating an apple, buying a kite, looking at the sun and the like. The *formal* learning strategies refer to the typical classroom learning activities such as writing, reading and writing, drawing and writing, drawing and cutting out, etc. The *academic* group includes the learner's suggestions that the doll/Dalmatian dog should learn the English alphabet first, should study books, go to school regularly and the like. *Memory* strategies refer to repeating words, or reading or copying them many times. *Social* strategies include learning or revising vocabulary with someone, often for testing purposes. *Metacognitive* strategies imply the subject's wish to organise learning (e.g., the Dalmatian dog should eat and rest first and then study, or the doll should sit at the table and reapeat) or to evaluate knowledge by means of tests. *The media* group of strategies refer to learning by watching cartoons and educational programmes focusing on the English language (e.g., *Gogo Loves English*).

As can be seen in Table 2, the largest average number of learning strategies reported per learner concerned the words: *bird*, *dangerous* and *apple*, while the least average number of strategies per learner refers to *X-ray* and *island*.

The most frequently reported group of strategies our young subjects reported were the formal strategies. For 10 out of 12 learning targets, formal language learning strategies were the single most frequent group or the most frequent one together with TPR strategies. A possible tentative conclusion here may be that young learners pick up the strategies they are exposed to or taught to use. This, then, could lead us to assume that even quite young learners can profit from strategies-based-instruction (SBI) (Cohen, 1998).

Social strategies were the least frequent strategies reported for the largest number of learning targets. This is in accordance with the trends found in strategy use by Croatian learners of EFL in general (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2000).

	TPR	Formal	Aca-demic	Memory	Social	Metacog-nitive	Media
Apple	20.41 %	26.53 %	18.37 %	22.45 %	4.08 %	4.08 %	4.08 %
Kite	16.22 %	29.73 %	16.22 %	24.32 %	2.70 %	2.20 %	8.11 %
Yellow	27.91 %	27.19 %	9.30 %	20.93 %	2.32 %	9.30 %	2.32 %
Present	30.00 %	40.00 %	10.00 %	10.00 %	0.00 %	10.00 %	0.00 %
Goat	33.33 %	33.33 %	16.67 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	16.67 %
Cupboard	14.29 %	57.14 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00%	28.57 %	0.00 %
Bird	28.57 %	28.57 %	28.57 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	14.29 %
Island	33.33 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	66.67 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
Dangerous	0.00 %	33.33 %	33.33 %	33.33 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
Fifteen/fifty	0.00 %	66.67 %	0.00 %	33.33 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
X-ray	0.00 %	0.00 %	100 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
Own learning	3.22 %	32.26 %	0.00 %	22.58 %	22.58 %	3.22 %	16.13 %

Although the number of male and female subjects was highly uneven, we counted up the number of strategies used by each sex in order to see a possible tendency in strategy use that might be checked in later studies. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Strategies reported by male and female subjects

	Male	Female
No. of strategies	39	170
Average per learner	9.8	8.9

As can be seen, there does not seem to be too great a difference in the average number of learning strategies reported by male and female subjects. Contrary to other studies in the field, there seems to be a tendency for male learners to report more strategies.

Age as a possible factor influencing strategy use was looked into as well (Table 5). The use of TPR strategies seemed to decrease with age. Formal learning strategies showed a tendency to increase with age, except for the eight-year-old group, where it was lower and where memory strategies seemed to be very frequently reported. It is interesting that social strategies, not reported by the 6-year-old subject at all, decreased with age as well. Since these strategies involved studying with members of the family, maybe this shows that the child's knowledge of English slowly surpassed that of the

family members, or that such collaboration was not necessary any more because the young learner could manage on his/her own.

Table 5: Reported strategy use breakdown by age

	TPR	Formal	Academic	Memory	Social	Meta-cognitive	Media
6 years	57.14 %	14.28 %	0.00 %	14.28 %	0.00 %	14.28 %	2.22 %
7 years	22.58 %	37.10 %	12.90 %	9.68 %	6.45 %	3.22 %	3.22 %
8 years	17.44 %	20.93 %	12.79 %	23.25 %	5.81 %	6. 98 %	10.46 %
9 years	15.55 %	33.33 %	6.66 %	4.44 %	4.44 %	4.44 %	2.22 %

Table 6: Reported strategy use breakdown by achievement

	TPR	Formal	Academic	Memory	Social	Meta-cognitive	Media
Good learner	20.15 %	26.86 %	11.19 %	17.91 %	5.22 %	8.95 %	5.97 %
Poor learner	11.27 %	38.03 %	14.08 %	23.94 %	5.63 %	4.22 %	1.41 %

It is interesting to note (Table 6) that the poor language learners reported using fewer TPR strategies and more formal strategies than the good language learners. The poor language learners reported using memory strategies more often than the good language learners. The good language learners seemed to employ metacognitive strategies more often than the poor language learners. The same is true of the media group of strategies.

As already stressed, the findings of the quantitative analysis of the study are meant to point to possible trends that might be explored in future research that would involve a much larger sample.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest the existence of language learning strategy awareness in young learners. In order to find out about the learning strategies they are aware of, one has to use the appropriate research method to elicit the data. One of the methods that can be effective is the projection method. The strategies that young FL learners use are mostly a reflection of what they themselves have been exposed to. The good aspect of this conclusion is that young learners can be taught how to employ those learning strategies that might lead to successful FL learning. An investigation of young learners' language learning strategies may reflect young learners' language awareness as well as their awareness of the learning and teaching processes.

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Section 3: FOCUSING ON THE YOUNG LEARNER CLASSROOM

Mija Jagatić

ARE AVAILABLE TEACHING TIME AND THE NUMBER OF PUPILS IMPORTANT FACTORS?

This chapter deals with teaching English as a foreign language in a primary school in Zagreb, Croatia, to young learners: 6- or 7-year-old boys and girls, first graders. Two groups of learners were being observed: one group of 15 pupils having 45-minute English classes five days a week within the Project, and the other, a group of 30 pupils, having 45-minute English classes two days a week. The chapter endeavours to show how the age factor, available teaching time and number of pupils in a group modify techniques of instruction.

The first part of the paper sets forth some observations from practical teaching concerning learner personality and teaching conditions. In the second part teaching techniques will be considered in terms of how personality and teaching conditions modify the choice of teaching techniques.

Personality of a pupil

For most developmental psychologists the age of six or seven denotes a boundary-line between the age of preschool and school children. In practice, this boundary-line means that some children still retain the characteristic behaviour of a preschool child and some already show characteristics of personality typical for school children.

The theoretical assumption that children of that age perform various activities faster and more accurately than before does not always hold true. The slow and clumsy movements the children make when doing very simple tasks such as putting things in and out of a schoolbag; dressing and undressing; following the instructions of the teacher can still be observed quite frequently. For some pupils the teacher is still a surrogate mother, who helps button and unbutton coats, zip jackets, tie shoelaces, comb hair, take out pencil-boxes or notebooks – the first grader still does not know which notebook is which. These pupils are slow when faced with simple commands like: stand in line, turn to somebody, join hands, sit on the chair. For more complex tasks like pulling a string through a hole, sticking together two pieces of paper with glue most of them need help from the teacher.

Children are still not used to sitting on a chair for 45 minutes, most of them have an urgent need to move around during the class period. Such behaviour requires a

special approach when teaching in the classroom. Children should have a chance to stretch, change places, exercise or walk around several times during the class period. They are very enthusiastic when they imitate animals moving around the woods, cars in the streets, fish in the sea, birds in the sky, trees in the wind or the like, actions included in the topic of a lesson. Children enjoy themselves if the teacher tells a story accompanied by movements and miming and lets them do the like; if teaching occurs in different places in the classroom during the class period; if children act and dramatize; if they often go to the blackboard to perform a task; if they walk toward each other to communicate.

First graders are still learning how to control their emotions. Some of them are already calm and collected while some still react spontaneously, jump and hug the teacher to express their attachment, fight pupils who "hurt" them, loudly express their pleasure or dissatisfaction as soon as they experience something during the class period. A pupil can interrupt the teacher with a minor remark which will, however, lead to a total loss of interest in what the teacher is saying or even stop the course of work in the classroom.

At this age some children often experience fear, real or imaginary. The child then becomes shy, speaks in a very low voice, refuses to talk or take part in class activities. He needs to feel protected by somebody. The brave ones will ask the teacher for help – whisper into the teacher's ear that he got new shoes from his mother, or that he wants to go out of the class. But some will refuse to come to the blackboard or answer a question by just nodding their head or simply showing no sign of comprehension. If the teacher, who usually stands in front of some thirty pupils, decides to approach the shy one, then all the other pupils' attention will, by following the teacher, be turned toward the frightened child who is, thus, exposed to an unpleasant situation rather than protected. The fear of public appearance in front of other children and the teacher often prevents involvement in class activities. How to help children to take part, to talk? If the teacher applies a CLL technique – the teacher "whispers" a translated sentence to the pupil who repeats it after her – the teacher is no more a critic, a viewer, an audience; she becomes an assistant and a help, like a prompter in the theatre. The child feels that what he utters must be good because it was told him by the teacher. If theatre props (i.e., magic wand, hat, bag, doll, etc.) are used, children seem to forget about their fear – they are completely engaged in the object which attracts them and protects them; the object they hold seems to diminish their fear (a hat hides them, a doll takes care of them). And the rest of the class is not paying attention to the child, but rather to the props he is using. If you put an old rag over Cinderella's shoulders and a magic wand in a fairy's hands, squat behind their backs and whisper a short text (I haven't got a dress. – Here's your dress.), you have a show going on in front of the class, a show which everybody wants to take part in because the actors get attractive things (rags, magic wand) and they are not expected to know anything.

If a nice doll or a puppy or a rabbit talks to a pupil instead of the teacher, the pupil tends to forget where he is and who is really speaking and the fear seems to disappear.

A child who, before going to school, felt protected in the family or nursery now has to face a situation where most, if not all, of the children are strangers to him. He has to fight for his place in a group. He starts to compare himself with others, he wants his teacher to say he is the best; he will not get praise from other pupils – children are not likely to say somebody is better than themselves, they are still very egocentric. It is useful, then, to plan activities where children perform tasks together, in a group. When doing group work they often complain about the work of others, they often want to change both what they are doing and who they are doing it with, they criticize others if the group was "unsuccessful", sometimes they even have arguments. Children need to be trained for group work very patiently and for a long time. In the beginning it is often a matter of acquiring a new technique of work rather than acquiring the subject-matter.

To ask another child to answer a question is often a problem for a first grader because he seems to forget, or perhaps does not understand, that what is important is performing the task – asking a question – and not who will perform task – giving the answer. A child who has to choose another to answer a question often thinks longer about the person than about the task itself: the task itself does not seem to be important at all. To find a person in the class is again new and often very difficult for a six-year-old, although it is not closely connected with language skills. If, however, the teacher asks a child to find a friend in the class, then his pondering and hesitation involve language learning – he is working on the concept, the notion of the word "friend".

A six-year-old does not think in a way a grown-up person does (Piaget, Vigotski). While thinking he uses notions referring to perceptible reality. He is attracted by objects and situations he sees around himself. These can be toys, real objects, pictures. He wants to take the object in his hands, touch it, hug it, feel it close to him. Children make conclusions on the basis of objects they have in their hands or what they see in front of them. I have also noticed that some children can hardly concentrate on more than one feature of the shown object. When the pupil has to choose a long blue block among blocks of different sizes and colours, he will often choose only the blue one or only the long one. Very few pupils can notice both features. Noise can often be heard in the classroom, especially when drawing. This is loud, self-centred speech which accompanies the child's actions; it is not directed towards other pupils. Child self-centredness is also shown in the lack of need for interpersonal communication, thus communication becomes another skill to be taught and practiced as a new technique of work in class.

Educational framework

The circumstances in which English is being taught in the two groups are different. The experimental group of 15 pupils has English classes five days a week. The group of 30 pupils has English classes twice a week. The experimental group has, thus, the opportunity to acquire English as a foreign language in situations close to those in which children acquire English as a second language, whereas the group of 30 has less teaching-time available and the focus is on learning English as a foreign language rather than on English as a second language acquisition. The following comparison will show what differences arise from such different conditions.

Group of 15 pupils	Group of 30 pupils
English classes 5 days a week	English classes 2 days a week
learning topics can be chosen by individual pupils,	learning topics are chosen by the teacher,
children repeat and reproduce spontaneously utterances which they find likeable or interesting,	children repeat utterances which the teacher thinks are interesting or useful for them,
children take part in various activities in the class in a day-to-day sequence after presentation of a new topic,	children sometimes wait two or three weeks until they have the opportunity to take part in one of the activities done in the class during presentation,
there are various kinds of interaction between children and teacher (e.g., private conversation, practical help, the teacher as a playmate, etc.),	predominantly teacher-centred, the teacher conducts the work in the class aiming at the teaching unit, trying to achieve control over a large group of children,
the teacher can be a friend in need; she can find time to talk to individual pupils during class period,	there is a practical and psychological distance between teacher and pupil due to predominant teacher-centred work which engages the teacher's attention completely
children "learn" in various ways from the very beginning of the course (sitting on the floor, standing, roaming around the classroom, going out of the class, etc.),	it is useful to adapt teaching techniques and the structure of the lesson to those used by the children's class teacher in the first school months (six-year-olds find it confusing to behave differently in the same school; various ways of learning have to be taught as well as the language),
all children have a chance to speak and listen during class,	only some children have a chance to speak and listen (the extroverts impose themselves upon the others who sometimes do not even have a chance to listen because of the noise in the classroom),

inattentiveness during one class does not essentially influence the process of language acquisition,	inattentiveness during one class tends to result in failure (the learning process is structured, the pupil proceeds step by step: presentation – practice – repetition – presentation...),
one unplanned, unprepared or educationally unsuccessful class does not lead to failure (there is a possibility of trying out new techniques and ideas which is an alluring and relaxing challenge for the teacher),	one unplanned, unprepared or educationally unsuccessful class may lead to failure,
one missed class in a week has almost no influence on the learning process,	one missed class may result in "10 days on end without English",
assessment of pupil participation and knowledge implies continuous observation of children and their personality.	assessment of pupil participation and knowledge refers to periodical observation of the part the child plays in class through the few utterances he has the opportunity to make.

Teaching implications

Although children in both groups are the same age, the techniques of instruction are not the same due to the educational framework in which the teaching occurrs. There are certain limitations and drawbacks when working with a larger group:

· Handiwork that the teacher chooses to carry out in the class depends on the skills of the six-year-olds, that is, which operations they are able to handle on their own. In a group of 15 the teacher can choose more difficult tasks for the pupils than in a group of 30 because she will have time to give a hand to those who are not skillful enough. It is possible, for example, to make Halloween paper masks only in a group of 15 because making a hole in the paper using a pencil, pulling an elastic band through it and making a knot is quite a task for six-year-olds. They ask for the teacher's help and become rather frustrated if they are not helped immediately. To make a paper Christmas tree sticking several identical parts together is not too difficult a task if the child gets already cut out shapes. To colour the tree and decorations on the cut-outs is easy and enjoyable. All of the children do not finish colouring at the same time, so the teacher has enough time to lend a hand with gluing to those who need help. Thus it is possible to carry out this activity in a group of 30.

· The choice of games is also limited by the number of children in a group. A group of 15 can easily play the London Bridge game (Kohl & Young, 1972) where, in the end, the two teams have a tug of war. But in the group of 30, even if one has two bridges in the class, it may get out of control and some pupils can even be hurt.

· Only a group of 15 can work in different places in the classroom during one class. In a group of 30 the majority of children watch the movements of a few.

If all of them are involved, then the movements they make are rather static – children stand by their desks moving their arms, heads or legs. The teacher has to have strict control over the 30 pupils who are always ready to push, hit or fight a child standing next to them or start an argument about "their own place" or simply roam around or the like. Thus it is not only an exhausting activity for the teacher but for the children too, for they may hurt each other and the teacher has to follow the children's movements closely. The elements of fun, freedom and relaxation are lost – children are shackled by others.

· In a group of 15 where changes of place and pace are the rule the teacher can easily approach a timid child without attracting attention of others. The teacher thus has a chance to throw out a word, pat, hug or even talk to a frightened child.

· The teacher can let a group of 15 choose a mini-group on their own because she will have enough time to intervene in case of misunderstanding or argument. Free choice of a mini-group is hardly possible in a group of 30 in the first months of teaching. The pupils have to be trained to choose a mini-group of their own. It can take up the whole class time and cause turmoil in the classroom.

· When working with a group of 15 each child can easily experience real objects in the class by touch for there will be time for all of them to hold it, if not in one class period, then in the next – it will be in the class a few days in a sequence. When working with a group of 30 the teacher should carefully choose big, easily seen objects and details (e.g., eyes, ears) so that when showing them to the class all the pupils are able to see, even those who are eight meters away from the teacher. However, the object seen in this way stays remote and rather abstract for most of the children. Only some will hold it in their hands, touch it, feel it. And then the argument starts in the class – who has had it, for how long, why only "him" or "her" and not "me" and the like, which diverts attention.

This short review of experience in teaching English to six-year-old first graders in the "Tin Ujević" primary school focuses on three elements of the teaching process – personality of the pupil, teaching conditions and techniques of instruction. The teacher faces and has to cope with these on a daily basis in complex teaching situations. However, theory of language learning deals with each element as a separate entity and the practising teacher may not always find it easy to apply the theory. The questions of psychophysical development in children, school curriculum, the actual conditions in which teaching occurs and choice of teaching techniques that enable successful achievement of the chosen curriculum are questions to be dealt with by a team of qualified experts and educational authorities. A single practising teacher should not be left to cope with practical teaching situations on her own.

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Lidvina Štokić

MUSIC AND VERSES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

Introduction

Music is a very important part of our daily life. We hear it wherever we are – at home or in church, in shops or in children's playgrounds. Our feelings and thoughts are very often expressed through music.

Songs and rhymes for children exist in all cultures of the world. They are used to pass popular knowledge and beliefs from generation to generation. Children listen to them, learn from them and grow up with them. So it is not surprising that they can also be used as a useful resource in teaching English to young learners. They provide a relaxing atmosphere in the language classroom. In that enjoyable way children learn about the sounds and structures of English and expand their vocabulary. At the same time the children's imagination and creativity are stimulated, and their motor coordination is improved, songs and rhymes are also a social activity which is very important to young children making them feel part of a group. It is also important for building up their confidence in the new language.

Songs and rhymes can also enrich presentation and revision of topics in various school subjects, simple mathematics included.

Selecting songs and rhymes

Each song or rhyme should meet certain criteria, so that instructional objectives and educational aims set beforehand can be fully achieved. These criteria are the following:

1. They must be relevant to young learners' experience.
2. They must be interesting to young children.
3. The language used must be suited to the children's level of knowledge; that is, structures should be simple and vocabulary should be relevant.
4. They must be meaningful.
5. Melodies must be easy to sing or not too difficult for young learners.
6. There should not be too many new language items (6 to 7 is enough at one time).
7. Recorded songs and rhymes must be clear for the learners to understand.
8. The same lines or refrains in songs are always welcome as they help memorizing.
9. The teacher should also like the song or rhyme.

The role of the teacher

There are certain demands on the teacher's work in the classroom. Satisfying them she makes children's learning easier and more successful. Here are some of them:

1. The children should understand what they are singing about, so the initial presentation is very important. The teacher can demonstrate a new language item by consciously drawing her learners' attention to it, or she can involve the learners in an activity during which she introduces a new item.
2. To support learners' understanding of a new language item in a song visual aids, actions and realia should be used.
3. The teacher is the best visual support for a song or rhyme as children find it easier to join in when they can watch someone mouthing or singing the words.
4. Using mime and gestures help the children understand new words and recognise old ones without resorting to the mother tongue.
5. The teacher must feel free to modify any parts of the song or rhyme which would puzzle the learner.
6. The teacher should never try to explain language rules to very young learners.
7. Songs and rhymes should be performed a few times before the learners are asked to join in.
8. Teaching songs a line at a time ruins spontaneity and must be avoided.
9. If the teacher or any of her pupils can play an instrument, it can be used in the song sessions.
10. The teacher can create her own cassette recordings with sound effects for rain, thunder, fire, a train, a plane, footsteps, hoofbeats and so on.

Extralinguistic uses of songs and rhymes

When English is taught and learnt as a foreign language, young children do not normally have the opportunity to absorb it in the same way as their mother tongue by listening to those around them. The exposure to the foreign language is also different to that of their mother tongue. As children often learn by repeating the same language content, songs and rhymes have a useful part to play in language teaching. While drills make lessons boring, favourite songs and rhymes bring equal enjoyment to the foreign language classroom whenever they are repeated.

Songs and rhymes foster feelings of security and self-confidence in the new language.

They contribute to the development of the children's sense of rhythm and musicality.

They can reinforce language already learnt.

In the world of the children listening to songs and rhymes is a realistic/authentic activity.

They can provide an enjoyable change of the classroom routine.

At the beginner level singing a song or reciting a rhyme gives the learner the satisfaction of using the language continuously.

The children are encouraged to take their English outside the classroom and so indirectly they are thinking about English.

New words are introduced in context and easier to understand.

The verses are used for introducing the learners to the idea of stressed and unstressed syllables. By putting the stress in the right places, the learners create a natural flow of language and build up fluency.

If songs and rhymes are well taught, they are a great memory aid. They are easily retained and evoked, and because of that are used as a gentle way of reminding the children of certain language items that may not have been used in the class for some time.

Many of them lend themselves to mime, acting, and possess special advantages as practice material, so they provide a valuable addition to any course.

They are ideal for a concert of English songs and rhymes performed by the children before their parents or other classes.

Linguistic uses of songs and rhymes

Songs and rhymes may be used for various purposes in the young learners classrooms. Here are some of them:

1. to practise pronunciation the teacher chooses songs and rhymes that include particular sounds, especially those that do not exist in the children's language;
2. to practise stress and rhythmic patterns, and intonation;
3. to introduce new language;
4. to practise vocabulary and to revise it;
5. to practise grammatical structures;
6. to introduce and practise conversational exchanges;
7. to begin, extend or end a topic;
8. to practise all four language skills
   a) - listening for specific information,
      - jigsaw listening and predicting what is going to happen or guessing what has already happened,
   b) - saying the rhymes,
      - singing the songs,

- telling a story that could surround the song or rhyme,
- role-playing,

c) - reading texts of the songs and rhymes that children learnt orally,
- reading mixed-up individual lines of the song or rhyme and arranging them in the correct order,

d) - writing as in copying texts of the short and simple songs and rhymes,
- gap-filling with the missing words,
- creating and writing new verses.

A special use: simple mathematics

If we want to teach a foreign language in terms of the child's educational needs and interests, it cannot be taught as an isolated subject. Here is how simple mathematics can be taught in English. Songs and rhymes are great helpers again.

Before starting teaching mathematics to young learners, there are two questions that should be answered:

1. Do the children possess the concept of numbers in their mother tongue?
2. What materials and objects can a teacher use to teach that concept in English and help her students' understanding?

The first answer is: A class teacher can give all the necessary information to a foreign language teacher on what her children already know, and when and to what depth they are to learn about numbers, counting, adding and subtracting. The second answer is: It is best to start teaching numbers by using children's own fingers (and toes), because the body is one of the most familiar "objects" for young children. Some other useful small objects for counting and other activities are buttons, wrapped sweets, small stones, marbles, coloured pencils, beads, toy cards. There are also songs and rhymes, alongside various number games, that are very useful for all the afore-mentioned reasons. They make learning more interesting and enjoyable and help the children use the numbers more fluently.

At the end of the first school year the pupils are expected:

1. to count successfully up to 20,
2. to recognize numbers even if they are presented out of their usual order,
3. to solve simple arithmetical problems of addition and subtraction by working on their own,
4. to read the words for numbers,
5. to pronounce numbers correctly.

If these tasks are to be achieved in a meaningful context and in order of increasing difficulty, with the teacher's constant positive attitude and the children's happy faces, songs and rhymes must certainly be used in the young learners classrooms.

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Vida Nikpalj

ELEMENTS OF DRAMA IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

Among the many various methods and techniques drama activities are certainly one of the most suitable in teaching young learners. Children are very good imitators and they take drama activities as a game and playtime so that their motivation and attention is highly raised and everybody wants to join in. Their creativity and imagination can be widely used if we give them the freedom to think, to walk out of reality and the chance to choose when and how they want to join in. It allows each child to put into it something of his own personality and experience.

The teacher who gets two small groups of first graders to teach English as a foreign language in one 45-minute period five times a week is considered to be lucky. At the same time it is a great responsibility for the teacher since good results are expected, and when the teacher is given the complete freedom to choose what and how to teach, it soon becomes a real challenge. There are so many things to do and so many techniques one might wish to use. To solve the problem of what to start with and how to do it we may ask ourselves: "What do 6- and 7-year olds like to do? What are they surrounded with? What are their interests?" The answer is: they like playing, moving about and touching things, they live in families, they have friends, pets, toys... If we keep this in mind we can make English teaching and learning enjoyable both for the teacher and the children. Being first graders they learn other subjects with their class teacher in their mother tongue, in this case Croatian, and the task of the foreign language teacher is to incorporate these subjects into foreign language teaching. The subjects are: arithmetic, drawing, music, physical education and basic science. Thus the English teacher has two tasks: firstly, to teach children how to communicate and express themselves in English and secondly, to give them basic knowledge of the subjects mentioned by using English. Therefore the English teacher must cooperate with the class teacher regularly and even attend her classes. As these children are beginners most of the teaching will be through listening, speaking, doing and making. Reading and writing skills are introduced very slowly and gradually. Among the many various methods and techniques drama activities are certainly one of the most suitable in teaching young learners.

Advantages of drama activities

Everyone has the natural ability and tendency to express himself through gestures, imitation, mimic no matter where he comes from, where he was brought up, where he

lives or what age he is. Children are very good imitators and they take drama activities as a game and playtime so that their motivation and attention is highly raised and everybody wants to join in. This is an opportunity for them to express their feelings and emotions and when these are involved they try to do their best and the results are much better. Their creativity and imagination can be widely used if we give them the freedom to think, to walk out of reality and the chance to choose when and how they want to join in. When they are asked to create a situation, they use all their abilities and feel responsible for the outcome. In drama everybody is involved. It allows each child to participate, to put into it something of his own personality and experience. In creating a story, for instance, they feel free to express themselves to the utmost, knowing that the better the idea is, the more successful it is going to be. On the other hand, in making up a story it cannot be predicted what is going to happen, so everyone has to listen carefully to be able to go on with the story. Children have the feeling that they are doing something and not just what they are told to do. For play acting proper space is needed where they can move about. Being able to move they feel free both physically and emotionally. Play acting allows children to use the language along with their whole body and senses.

What to pay attention to

Age

First graders come to school with different experience, from different social backgrounds and also with age difference. Six months, or even more, often makes a great difference in a child's maturity and readiness for school. Generally speaking, girls are more mature than boys. Some pupils are very sensitive – they need a lot of attention, some are very shy and quiet – they need to build up confidence, some talk too much or tend to walk around. At this age children's attention and concentration is rather short so the teacher should provide different activities and change them several times within one school hour of 45 minutes. However, a main topic can be present in each activity. The teacher should bear in mind all these things and let each child feel relaxed and comfortable by using his ability without being pushed. Let them have their period of listening and silence, a time for "filling" and building up confidence. They will start speaking when they are ready for it.

Classroom arrangement

Drama activities require pupils to move freely. Classrooms are always full of desks but it doesn't take long to move them aside. Let the children help – they are willing to help

especially when they know that they are going to have fun. Rearranged classrooms provide enough space in the middle for all types of drama activities and at the same time children feel free both physically and psychologically. The teacher becomes a part of the teaching process and easily creates a friendly atmosphere.

The teacher

The teacher's role is crucial because it is he who provides challenging activities, helps children and offers them the opportunity for success. The teacher creates the atmosphere and leads the children. Although he is the most important element he must try to become one with the children and do things with them taking into consideration their wishes, their feelings and ideas and allow each child to express itself as much as he can. When a problem arises the teacher should notice it as quickly as possible. It is the teacher who must find the balance between what a pupil is expected to do and what he can do so that the pupil does not feel frustrated by having to do too much or too little. At the same time the teacher must know exactly what he wants to achieve by a certain activity. He must have a clear purpose in mind when introducing an activity and focus on that. He must also believe in the value of the activity and finally he must like doing it himself and be able to transmit a positive attitude to the children. He must be able to change the original idea if it doesn't work as planned. Once he has established the working atmosphere he should withdraw and interfere only when really necessary. The teacher's task is also to encourage shy pupils and constantly build up their confidence without pushing them. Once confidence is built it is much easier to carry on activities of any kind. The teacher should support children by praising them and giving them the chance to use all aids and clues available. Lots of repetition is a very important part of the process because children forget things rather quickly. Listening skill is at this stage the basis for other activities and therefore the teacher should remind children to listen carefully and use all the senses and the previous knowledge to express themselves.

The mother tongue

It is preferable to use the foreign language most of the time but we should always check if the pupils understand the full meaning of what they hear and what they say so that the two languages actually mingle all the time. Greetings, commands, expressing feelings or condition and other everyday situations can be preformed in the foreign language. This is what they usually understand well and pick up quickly. Explanations and discussions are more difficult to understand but we should encourage them to listen and try to understand. Listening to the same things day after day helps a lot and

comprehension becomes better and better. Some children understand the meaning of what is said better than others – let them translate it into the mother tongue instead of you and you interfere only if they don't get it right. If you praise them for understanding, they try to become even better. It is also important for the pupils to gain the habits of using the foreign language while talking to each other like: asking for something, thanking for something, giving something to someone, expressing their feelings or condition.

Parents

In our country parents do not come to classes to observe their children and help the teacher at school. They come only to parents' meetings several times a year and to individual meetings with the teacher now and then. If we tell the parents our needs and what they could do to help their children, they will be of great help - especially if they are given the choice of things they could do. In play acting there are quite a number of things parents can do, such as: making materials for the stage, making cut-outs of drawings, baking cookies for the parties, even sewing costumes for a play. They may also lend picture books, audio and video cassettes that seem interesting and appropriate. This way parents are better informed of what their children are learning and, on the other hand, children feel that parents take part in their school life and activities.

Preparatory activities

Beginners have to be given a lot of input before they can produce their own sentences and express their thoughts. That's why we start with simpler drama activities such as: warming-up exercises with lots of movements, non-verbal and verbal exercises, brainstorming activities such as guessing games, simple role plays, mime games, imitations, word-play, simulations or short puppet-shows. Of course, there are other activities through which they gain input as, for example, by means of songs and rhymes, by watching films, cartoons, video cassettes, by listening to stories from a tape or read by the teacher.

Stories

One of the best ways of using stories is by means of drama. Sometimes it is quite difficult to find a proper story which can be adopted, adapted and exploited the way we want. This is why we have to have a good selection of stories till we come across the one that suits us. And even then we have to adapt it according to the knowledge of our children. Although we keep the story in essence we can put in the parts of speech we want to teach. There are stories and fairy tales that children already know and they

enjoy listening to them in the foreign language because they can partly understand them. Stories that the students don't know could be used for predicting and guessing while listening. Using pictures and gestures is an important part of story telling. For smaller children the bigger picture books are advisable. When we come across a story that everybody likes and the students want to hear it again and again we can be certain that such a story is a good starting point for dramatization. Simplifying the story can be done together with the children to make them think of the best way it can be shortened and at the same time to check what they can say without much difficulty and what part they like the best. Sometimes they want to change the contents of the story or to add some other moments into it – let them do it, let them use their imagination.

Here is an example of the story that my students liked very much: it is *"Duckling Swims"* by Rosalinda Kightley from Animal Board Books Series, published in London in 1985. This was done after several months of learning English. My students wanted to hear this story over and over again and they spontaneously started to imitate the characters that appeared in the story. It is rather simple and only little changes had to be made. They all wanted to act a different character each time, so everybody repeated everything and by exchanging the roles they all had the chance to learn it. I myself found this story interesting for this age group and very useful for practising some important parts of speech.

"Duckling swims"

The characters in the story are:
Mother Duck that leads the little Ducklings and teaches them how to swim,
The Little Duckling that is afraid of the water and is left behind,
The Frog that advises the Little Duckling to jump into the water,
The Fish that helps the Little Duckling swim.
Here is our shortened version:
Mother Duck: Swim, my little ducklings, like me! Quack, quack! Quack, Quack!
Ducklings: I can swim! We can swim! Quack, quack! Quack, Quack!
The Little Duckling: I'm afraid of the water!
The Frog: Jump into the water, like this!
The Little Duckling: Splash! ... Help! Help!
The Fish: I'll help you swim. Climb on my back!
The Little Duckling: I like the water! I can swim! Quack, Quack!
All: I can swim! We can swim! Quack, quack! Quack, Quack!

There are quite a number of different language items and concepts they learned performing this short drama: vocabulary, the use of the modal verb "can" for ability,

imperatives, expressing feelings, pronunciation, sentence intonation ... Basic social science is incorporated in it: animals and their life, then living in a family, having friends, helping each other ...

Creating their own stories

From time to time we can try creating their own stories with the children. They are very imaginative when they are given the opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts. Here is an example of the original story that my first graders did in the second half of the school year. Each group made up their story. They all brought their favourite toys from home. While playing with them they created imaginary situations. Although they couldn't say everything they wanted to, they tried to create different situations and often asked me to help them express themselves. Everybody joined in somehow and each of them contributed something to the story. They also helped each other when we were repeating it. As a matter of fact they were playing all the time but at the same time they were using the English language. Here is the first story:

That's what friends are for

Characters:

Bimbo, a Mouse	a helicopter
Kiki, a Little Chick	an ambulance
Piri, a Rabbit	a double-decker
Ana, a pretty girl and her dog	a train
The girl in a blue dress and her dog	
The Cat	
Panda	
A policeman	

Setting: The streets and parks of London.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

Bimbo, the Mouse: Let's go for a walk!
Piri, the Rabbit: Yes, let's go!
Kiki, the Little Chick: Let's go! (Kiki stays behind looking at a helicopter)
Kiki, the Little Chick: Oh, look! A helicopter! Look! A helicopter!
Wait for me! (Kiki falls down and hurts himself) – Help! Help!

The ambulance comes with a doctor: Let's go to hospital!

*   *   *

(Bimbo and Piri are looking for Kiki)
A policeman: What are you doing here?
Bimbo and Piri: We are looking for our friend Kiki.
Ana, the pretty girl: Kiki is in hospital.
The Little Girl in Blue (walking her dog): I saw the ambulance.

*   *   *

(A double-decker comes)
All: Let's go to visit Kiki! Yes, let's go!
Bimbo: What shall we take him?
Piri: Let's buy some flowers!
All: OK. Here's the money! Buy some roses! Buy some tulips!

*   *   *

(The train comes): Toooo, to-tooo!
All: Let's go to hospital! Let's go to visit Kiki! It's his birthday today.
(In hospital)
Kiki: I'm happy to see you!
All: How are you, Kiki?
Kiki: I'm fine, thank you!
All: Here are some flowers for you!
Kiki: Thank you very much!
All: Happy birthday to you... (singing) How old are you? (singing)
Kiki: I'm seven years old... (singing)
All: Happy birthday, Kiki! And come home soon!

*   *   *

The other group brought their toys and made up a different story called *Good Friends.* The process of doing it was the same. The results in that kind of work are actually not so important as the engagement of pupils while creating the story. They enjoy doing it, they think, they use the second language in the simulated situations and this is the greatest value of it. Notice the place where the animals got frightened by the bus and ran into the woods full of fresh air and peace. The world of magic arouses their imagination. Here is the second story:

Good Friends

Characters:

A Fox	Two Brother Bears
A Wolf	The Little Mouse
A Rabbit	Two Horses
A Little Bear	A Double-decker
A Cat	Pierrot
A Panda	A Little Magic House

Setting: A park near the woods.

All: We are all good friends!

The Fox: Let's play something!

The Wolf: Let's play "Catch"!

All: OK.

The Little Bear: I want to play with Donald Duck!

The Rabbit: Let's play "Catch" with them!

Panda: Can I play with you?

All: Yes, of course! Come on!

Two Horses: We like jumping!

The Cat and the Panda: Let's join the other animals!

Two Brother Bears: Can we play with you?

All: Of course. Come on! Join us!

The Little Mouse: Can I play with you?

All: Yes, of course. Come on! Join us!

A Double-decker comes: Too, to-too!

All: I'm afraid… We are afraid… Let's run to the woods! (They all run into the woods.)

All: I'm hungry… We are hungry…

Pierrot: Come with me! There's a little magic house! (leads them to the magic house)

All: Here's the food! It's good. Yum, yum!

Pierrot: I like bananas.

Horses: We like biscuits.

The Mouse: I like cheese.

The Cat: I like milk.

The Bears: We like honey.

Panda: I like chocolate biscuits.

The Rabbit: I like carrots.
The Wolf: I like meat.
The Fox: I like hamburgers.
All: We are tired. I'm sleepy. We are sleepy. Let's go to bed. Good night. Sleep well!
(The actual performance of the two stories has been videotaped.)

Holidays as the starting point for drama activities

Holidays are special time of the year which can be very well used for drama activities. Children like holidays because they bring a change to everyday routine and they want to participate in preparations for them. They feel the special atmosphere and are emotionally prepared to join in. These are the holidays suitable for carrying out drama activities: Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, St. Valentine's, Easter...

Halloween

This holiday is very suitable for getting children's imagination to work. They enjoy simulating something that excites them and brings them to the world of the unreal. Their emotions grow while they pretend to be ghosts, witches, bats, black cats, monsters, spiders... Enjoyable activities can go on while preparing for the central part of this holiday which is a short play (acting).

I have done it with my first graders and they have enormously enjoyed doing it. Preparations started about two weeks before Halloween, which is on 31 October.

Preparatory activities

· cutting a pumpkin (Jack o'lantern)
· drawings and cut-outs (ghosts, witches, bats, black cats...)
· displaying decorations
· playing games (Who am I?, guessing games, mime games)

Acting "Trick or Treat"

As Halloween is not a holiday for children in our country, I explained my pupils the custom that is held in some English speaking countries. Our children have a similar experience of disguising themselves during the time of carnival, which takes place in February. They accepted this simulated situation pretending they went "trick or treating". The acting started with the rhyme: In a dark, dark wood there is a dark, dark house... (We pulled the shades and the room was darkened.)

Everybody moves around and imagines to be a character that appears on Halloween. Different sounds are produced as they say:

· I'm a ghost. I can fly.
· I'm a bat. I can fly, too.
· I'm a black cat. Miaow-miaow.
· I'm a witch. Wee-wee.
· I'm a monster. I can grab you.
· Let's go "Trick or treating"!
· Let's ring the bell! Ring the bell! Ting-a-ling-a-ling!

The person that opens the door says: Who are you?

All: We are ghosts. We are bats. We are black cats. We are witches. We are monsters.

The person: What do you want?
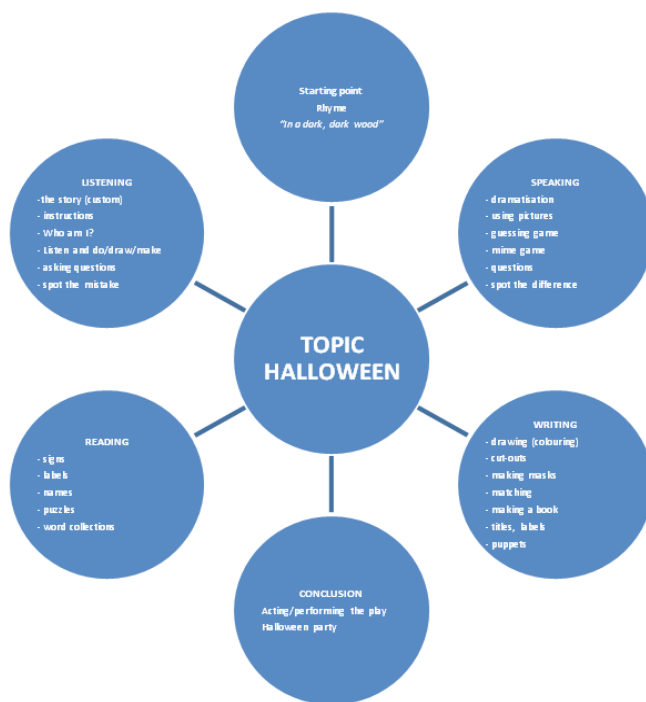
All: Trick or treat! Trick or treat!

The person: Oh, I'm afraid. Here are some sweets! (simulates throwing the sweets and everybody pretends picking the sweets up from the floor)

All: Thank you! Bye, bye-bye! Let's go to another house!

* * *

I have never seen happier faces than during this acting. Excitement, emotions, feelings and joy mixed together so that they cannot hide any. The sweets that they get are special ones. And all this happens in such a short time, the acting itself lasting only about five minutes. They wanted to perform this dramatization day after day, even long after Halloween was over. Later on we preformed it in the Simple Past Tense, saying what we were and what we were doing.

Presented here are the possibilities of using Halloween as the topic for different activities where all four skills are included. With beginners it can be done in a simple way and gradually, year after year, we can have more complex projects depending on the teacher's and pupils' interests, creativity and imagination:

Starting point
Rhyme
"In a dark, dark wood"

LISTENING
- the story (custom)
- instructions
- Who am i?
- Listen and do/draw/make
- asking questions
- spot the mistake

SPEAKING
- dramatisation
- using pictures
- guessing game
- mime game
- questions
- spot the difference

TOPIC HALLOWEEN

READING
- signs
- labels
- names
- puzzles
- word collections

WRITING
- drawing (colouring)
- cut-outs
- making masks
- matching
- making a book
- titles, labels
- puppets

CONCLUSION
Acting/performing the play
Halloween party

Speaking about holidays, Christmas is probably the most joyous for all people. I have done it with my pupils in a simple form of dramatic presentation where Christmas carols were included. Other activities can be a part of the Christmas project with the focus on performing a nativity play.

Fairy tales

If we decide to do a project with many activities circled around a topic with a lot of input for the children and different subjects included, we may choose one of the well-known fairy tales such as: Cinderella, Little Red Raiding Hood, Snow White, The Sleeping Beauty, Jack and the Beanstalk, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Three Little Pigs, The Elves and the Shoemaker and others. These and other fairy tales are suitable for drama activities but not in the way it is done in the theatres, where the actors get the text and learn it by heart. They can be used for creative drama activities, where the story actually becomes just the starting point. Most of the pupils know the content of these fairy tales and they are fond of them, which has been proved throughout years with all generations. Children read them in their own language, watch them on video-cassettes. There are also cartoons based on fairy tales which children enjoy watching. Teaching younger children we have to adapt the story to the level of children's knowl-

edge. The plot can be changed too and the characters introduced in some other way if wanted. The teacher usually prepares the things he wants to focus on, but I have noticed from my own experience that the best things come "on the spot". This depends on the situations, on the mood of the pupils, on the way the story is conducted and the ideas that come from all taking part. Such activities can go on for months with very many dramatic elements present during the work. Through such a project pupils get a lot of input and other teaching subjects are incorporated into it and not taught separately. There is always a chance to revise the vocabulary and structures they already know and use them in new situations. Spiral learning is achieved through fun, playing and joy. We can use all tenses - past, present and future. In spite of imaginative work the language that is used is real. Everybody has to make an effort to try to express his thoughts and feelings and put the words together so that they can be understood by others. Discussion with the pupils is very important. When the activity is their choice they like doing it and do not feel that they are being told to do something.

Here is an example of how the fairy tale *Snow White* can be exploited:
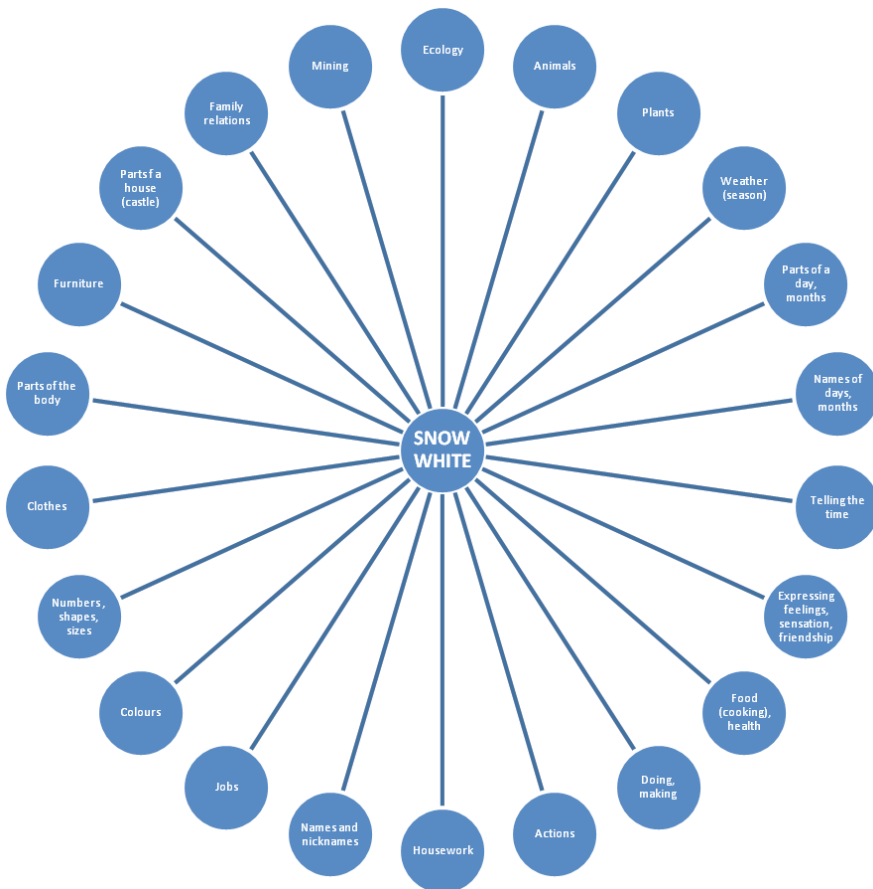
We have shown here only some possibilities of using drama in teaching a foreign language to young learners. In drama teaching anything can be taken as the starting point: any object, any animal, any rhyme or song, any story. From the starting point we build up our activities where all the teaching points are included hoping that everybody learns something from it but, what is even more important, feels comfortable and relaxed and enjoys doing it.

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Lidivina Štokić

ENGLISH ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Introduction

It was not easy when I first began content based teaching or teaching English across the curriculum. There were few teaching materials and it was obvious from the beginning that I would have to produce my own. There was also a need to make a choice of the most interesting topics from various subjects that I was then to integrate into my English lessons. I had to choose the way I was going to introduce a chosen topic, so that my pupils would feel comfortable and relaxed, and willing to re-learn information they were in fact already familiar with in Croatian, their mother tongue. Namely, all the chosen topics were first introduced to the pupils in Croatian during lessons with their class teacher. Working closely together, the class teacher and I helped each other a great deal, especially through the decision-making process.

The usual reasons for making a particular choice were:
- the usefulness of information,
- its frequency in everyday life,
- the possibility of using such information in a conversation with foreign visitors to our country,
- the possibility of expanding knowledge of the topic during the next few school years while working with a teacher who specialized in a certain subject.

I also needed to set the goals I wanted to achieve by teaching those chosen topics. These were:
- developing listening skills;
- making my pupils want to use as much of their knowledge of English in their oral answers or explanations as they felt they could in their fourth year of learning this foreign language;
- developing skills of scanning and skimming while reading short English texts on a certain topic;
- asking them to make intelligent guesses while reading by comparing information in an English text with what they already knew on that topic in Croatian;
- developing their writing skills;
- by simple copying key concepts and new words, or sentences from the blackboard or OHP transparencies; or
- by writing down their own questions on a topic and answers to such questions or ones that I prepared;
- by writing short paragraphs or compositions about a chosen topic.

Besides these goals there was yet another very important one. I wanted to create an atmosphere in which my pupils would feel confident and uninhibited in their English. Essentially, where they felt competent enough to communicate new information in this foreign language and to explore the possibility of various learning strategies.

This last goal made me think about how I should treat mistakes. My objective has always been to encourage fluency, but also to develop accuracy without inhibiting my pupils. So I always try to distinguish between the occasions when it is necessary to offer correction and those in which mistakes are actually allowed. My priority is to allow the children to feel confident about their performance. In this way there is more room for peer-correction or even self-correction that I find very useful. It shows that the pupils listen carefully to each other or, by correcting their own mistakes, they employ their level of knowledge of English or even use their intuition! I always try to treat mistakes as opportunities to teach my pupils about something new or to remind them of what they already know – if not in English, then in Croatian. I never hesitate to say, "That's a very interesting mistake!" or "I like your mistake". Perhaps that is the reason why my pupils are never very embarrassed when they make them, and even if we laugh, nobody is upset, because mistakes are a normal part of the learning process. I myself learn a lot from my pupils' mistakes, especially about their strategies of explaining something in English for the first time. So, mistakes can be fun when we decide to treat them with the best of our intentions, but without overdoing overdetailed correction.

During these four school years I have been using topics from various subjects like Mathematics, Basic Science, Basic Geography, Music and PE. Here I would like to present the stages of Introducing, Presenting and Revising two Basic Geography topics: Croatia – our homeland and Zagreb – the capital of Croatia.

Two topics

Croatia – my homeland

1) Introducing the topic

In my English language classroom I had the pupils' Basic Geography textbook in Croatian and a map of Croatia showing neighbouring countries, too. They were the first clues of what I was about to teach. I said a few introductory words in English pointing to the map of Europe in the textbook and to the map of Croatia on the wall. The pupils were already familiar with these and understood what I was telling them although some of the words were new to them, e.g., "Croatia is s i t u a t e d in SE Europe."

Then I asked them to tell me in English what they knew about our country. They either asked for a new word or stopped saying their sentence when they did not know

the word. I told them these words and wrote down only key ones on the blackboard. By the end this step, a considerable amount of information had been revised and a few key words and concepts had been recorded on the blackboard. For example, neighbouring countries, the Adriatic Sea, homeland, patriotism, flag, coat of arms, anthem, shape, borders, passport, situated, Middle European, Mediterranean, connections, ports, waterways, motorways, railway traffic, airports, crossroads, population, census, language, script, religion, currency, capital.

Then I asked them questions and by pointing to a key word helped my pupils with the answer. This time I also put a number by each entry; that helped classify the entries when the pupils were required to memorize the key words later.

2) Presenting the topic

For the next lesson I prepared an OHP transparency on which I wrote sentences in which I used the above mentioned key words.

First, the pupils read them silently and later asked me anything they could not remember or understand. Their main problem seemed to be correct pronunciation. Still, they did want to know whether they remembered it correctly or not.

Then they asked each other questions, so that the answers were those sentences they had read.

As a homework exercise for this lesson they drew a map of Croatia, neighbouring countries, and the Adriatic Sea.

During our next two classes, the pupils copied either key words or short sentences in their notebooks. After having reminded themselves of each of these by reading it aloud and practising it orally, they had a chance of writing everything down in order to be able to revise at home, too.

3) Revising the topic

There are many ways of revising a topic, but for the purpose of this article and the Project video-film, I chose three that my pupils liked the best.

It is also important to note that when it comes to revision, my role as a teacher is merely to observe and help when necessary. It gives me the pleasure of enjoying my pupils' knowledge. It is also an opportunity to evaluate and assess what they have learned, which is sometimes more difficult when it comes to oral rather than written checking of the level of their knowledge.

It is worth noting that the pupils are used to various classroom procedures, and can work independently on their own without my involvement, except for the explanation of each activity at the very beginning.

The three activities were all done as group work during which the pupils took active part in practising all four language skills while revising what they knew about heir homeland.

In the first activity called, *Find your pair*, the pupils were divided into two groups. Each group had a set of eight cards, one with questions on Croatia and the other with the answers to these questions. Since each of the pupils had one of the cards only, which might be either a question or an answer, she/he had to find her/his pair. Subsequently, they sat together with their pair partner and read the cards aloud. In this way they checked each other and revised at the same time.

The second activity was *Give the right explanation*. This time there were four groups of 4. Three groups had a minute to prepare oral explanations of the words given on three sets of cards. Group 4 then decided whether the given explanations were correct and complete, and they also gave 1 point for every explanation they liked.

Make your own questions was the third activity and it gave the pupils the opportunity to write, too. They worked in two groups of 6 and one group of 4. Groups 1 and 2 had a minute to write down two questions on Croatia on the OHP transparencies. Since they had to answer each other's questions orally, Group 3 decided whether the answers were correct.

Zagreb – the capital of Croatia

1) Introducing the topic

I asked the pupils to bring picture postcards of Zagreb, the street directory, books on Zagreb and souvenirs of our city to school. I also advised them to go to the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and ask for leaflets and brochures about our capital – but printed in English.

With all of these in the classroom we started with the street directory of Zagreb and first found the street where our school is.

2) Presenting the topic

We looked at the postcards and decided which of the sights were near the school and which were further from it. The pupils also attempted to translate some sight names into English. They checked their guesses in the brochures in English that they got at the TIC. (I am sure that one day when they travel abroad, they will know how to read and use leaflets and brochures for tourists and will be able to find their way wherever they are and learn about other people while enjoying their stay in a foreign country.)

The next step was repeating what they knew about the importance of the city today. Then we went into the past, the city's beginnings 900 years ago, and its development through the centuries.

It was fascinating how much the pupils could say in English! They were very motivated to say as much as possible to an imaginary group of foreign tourists visiting Zagreb.

I prepared the OHP transparencies with the information that seemed very important to my pupils in the last exercise. They copied them in their notebooks and read them out aloud afterwards.

3) Revising the topic

The pupils were asked to work in groups of 4 while choosing two key words, or concepts, or years, or facts that they wanted to put on a separate sheet of paper. After the groups exchanged the sheets, their next task was to write down two questions, one for each of the above. Then they exchanged the sheets once again and gave oral answers to the questions.

The next step was to write down those pieces of information that they thought should be on the tourist information board in our classroom. I prepared small sheets in various colours and my pupils decided what was important and who was going to write each piece of information. The result was a board full of maps and postcards of the sights of Zagreb accompanied by those multicoloured sheets displaying important information for tourists.

My role at this stage was passive. I only helped my pupils to arrange everything on the board, so that they could concentrate on the rest of the task.

The last step was a dramatization: *The sightseeing*. One pupil volunteered to be a guide to a group of English speaking tourists who asked a lot of questions. That was great fun!

Conclusion

The approach of introducing topics from other subjects into language lessons has some advantages worth mentioning.

- It gives learners a unique opportunity to experience the real use of English in the foreign language classroom.

- It is interesting for both learners and teachers to use existing skills and knowledge while encountering familiar topics in English.

- It facilitates the process of learning English, especially to expand vocabulary.

- It helps indirect learning by making pupils concentrate on the task and not only the language. This means it is close to a c q u i r i n g English through exposure and use.

- Different ways that are employed in other subjects to present their topics can be adopted and make your English lesson not only useful but very interesting, too.

- It gives the learners a holistic view of knowledge.

- It will be easier for those pupils who would like to continue their education in secondary schools with bilingual programmes to enrol in such schools.

It is a time-consuming process to prepare English lessons with topics integrated from other subjects. Some teachers are quite sceptical about it all. However, it is worth the effort and it can be fun!

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LANGUAGE (EFL) INTEGRATION WITH OTHER AREAS OF THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM FOCUSING ON ART

The process of carrying out Art and craft work in English lessons helps the teacher achieve linguistic aims by means of non – linguistic activities, which let the children feel relaxed and content, and develop their creativity, self-confidence and independence.

Art is extremely suitable for foreign language teaching to young learners (6-7-year-olds). There are several reasons why this is so. It is well known that little children, almost with no exception, love drawing, painting, modelling and all sorts of building activities. They are imaginative, curious and open to new experience, especially if the challenge is adequate to their age and stimulating with a pleasant feedback, that is, good results. Children at this age are still easily convinced that they can draw "just anything", and they rarely reject any suggestion. While drawing they are quite unaware of non-artistic objectives that the foreign language teacher wants them to attain. In that way the teacher can effectively reach linguistic aims by means of non-linguistic activities, while the pupils feel relaxed and "at home" in their foreign language classes. And yet this pleasant and friendly atmosphere might very soon turn into a boring routine if the children are not periodically exposed to a certain amount of change and surprise. Cleverly measured surprise helps to break off teaching and learning routine. The same happens to artwork integrated into a foreign language. If art tasks given to children to do are funny, exaggerated or even absurd, they inevitably make teaching English more dynamic and interesting, and the children are more motivated. In this way possibilities of producing uninventive, schematic and stereotyped forms are avoided.

All this, in combination with other non-linguistic activities, creates a feeling among children that learning a foreign language means fun, pleasure and activity.

In order to attain satisfying results in both language study and artwork, neither of these two school subjects should be taught separately with their own aims. "Art for the sake of Art" and "language for the sake of language" should by all means be avoided. Moreover, foreign language and Art and craft lessons, as well as all areas of the curriculum (mother tongue, Maths, Primary science, music and P.E.) should be integrated as much as possible. I find cross-curricular teaching perfectly advisable for primary school, especially with young learners. Focussing on what is similar and common in different subjects and on Topic work, it comes close to children's own way of satisfying their curiosity and their interests in the world around them. It also links classroom learning with the outside world much better than in traditional schooling (which is

unfortunately wide-spread in Croatia). It takes advantage of the fact that the utmost educational aims are common to all subjects.

My teaching EFL to young learners, besides its instructional aims, is based on two main educational objectives: to teach children to explore and to prompt them to independently solve any given problem, whether it is a linguistic, Maths, Art or even a practical everyday problem, since learning in school is only one aspect of children's daily learning with its ultimate aim, that is, to prepare them for the real life.

Art with its creativity aspect helps children a lot in this educational process.

Art and craft activities that my pupils perform in their English classes differ in range nad targets, and can be divided into three main groups:

1. Quite simple drawings. They are done in the last ten minutes of an EFL class. They usually represent follow-up activities, with some examples of cross-curricular teaching.

2. More complex Art and craft tasks. They are carried out in the EFL class once a month or more rarely. They can be done as individual or group work, representing an indispensable activity in a Topic work / Project work in cross-curricular teaching. It may be preceded by a lesson in another school subject (e.g., the mother tongue or Science), continued in an English lesson, and then again followed by a Music or Art and craft lesson in the mother tongue.

3. Art and craft tasks in an EFL class, transferred directly from the Art curriculum. They are done either as a follow-up activity to an English lesson or during an entire Art lesson taught through the medium of English.

No matter which of these three groups of Art tasks is carried out in an English class, each should logically follow the content previously taught in English. Topic work serves this purpose best. Since no Art is done separately from contents in other school subjects, children can easily understand and accept it. Now the teacher only needs to stimulate their creativity and give them some instructions for practical work. The outcome of such well organized Art is good language performance, as well as good artwork. Both the teacher and the learners are satisfied.

1. Simple Art tasks as either follow-up activities or – cross-curricular teaching activities

1.1 Drawing as a follow-up activity has a double aim: to relax pupils and to revise new vocabulary and structures by means of dialogues between the teacher and pupils while drawing (*My family / pets / toys / friends*). Children's answers are usually short and unconventional, since they feel relaxed and free from "work", but they keep up the offered conversation in a friendly manner.

1.2 Illustrations of a rhyme, song or story (*"London Bridge" / "Three Little Kittens" / "Mouse Soup" / "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" / "The Three Little Pigs"*) have two main purposes: to relax pupils and to revise new vocabulary. While illustrating its content, children also express their attitude to the particular rhyme / song / story. It may not have been used for some time in the class, though. Then the illustration takes a role of a reminder of both linguistic and emotional content.

1.3 Funny pictures obtained through a drawing dictation may have three main aims: to revise vocabulary in a relaxed manner, to check children's vocabulary attainment and to develop children's listening comprehension.

For example, the given space and size relations are purposely funny and unexpected to avoid pupils' drawing a mechanical conclusion following their previous experience, but also to help children feel pleased and amused while doing the dictation. (Some examples with the first graders: *Draw a big mouse on the little house. Draw a carpet on a big vase. Draw a fat cat in a small hat.*)

1.4 Children's work on the layout of greeting cards, notices or adverts represents a medium of introducing purposeful writing. (*Happy Birthday. / Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year / Be My Valentine. / Get well soon .../ Please shut the door. / Read this book:* e.g., *"The Three Little Pigs".*)

These examples have both instructional and cultural aims. They mostly relate to the second graders.

1.5 Creating "MY PICTURE DICTIONARY". Simple drawings accompany written words explaining their meaning. They also serve as visual reminders and are better for that purpose with very young learners than their written equivalents in the mother tongue. In my experience, young learners can much easier understand the purpose of a written form of an English word (which, unlike in Croatian, differs from a spoken form) when it is accompanied by a picture. The picture also helps children's visual memory of the written word.

Such a PICTURE DICTIONARY relates to the second graders.

1.6 Drawings as an aid to explain a certain process in cross-curricular teaching link English lessons with other school subjects, e.g., Primary science (*The life-cycle of the butterfly: eggs – caterpillar – pupa - butterfly*), Maths (Pictorial stage of solving a problem, a numeral line with a leaping frog, etc.).

All these Art and craft activities described above are done by using pencils, coloured pencils or felt-tip pens in pupils' sketch pads or notebooks with some exceptions of cardboard cards.

2. More complex Art and craft activities as an important stage in Topic work / Project work

2.1 A group drawing on a large piece of paper can summarize certain language content. (*The Funny / Good / Fat / Bright-coloured Monster; My favourite Dinosaur; The animals on the funny train*). Talking in English runs parallel with the drawing/painting if each pupil in the group is given a role in advance. An unusual topic and a large size of paper prompt children's creativity and ability to explore. It also builds a relaxed atmosphere. Moreover, the conversation in English achieves its language purpose and motives children's artwork.

2.2 Artwork can be an indispensable stage in complex work with stories (e.g., "Foolish Goose" in the first grade): 1. listening to the story; 2. retelling with pictures; 3. making masks and simple pieces of scenery; 4. role-play.

Each child makes its own mask (goose – or owl – mask) in accordance with a mask-master, but with freedom to fully express his/her creativity. The linguistic purpose of this artwork is to revise certain vocabulary and structures, but also to introduce some useful instructions in English: *Cut out, paste, make small holes, use sticky tape*, etc. These activities help children develop their ability to make things, as well as their self-confidence and independence.

The process of making a useful thing also makes children's work purposeful and motives them for Art classes, as well as for learning English.

The simple set design (the sun, the moon, stars, a river) is made during group activity. Large pieces of paper and the teacher's unusual suggestions prompt pupils' imagination, as well as help them not to present the well known themes in schematic shape. (*Draw the big bright-coloured sun in yellow, orange and red. Imagine the wind blowing; What happens with the water? Draw the waves... If the water is clean, can you see any fish? Draw a fish jumping...*)

The second graders worked on visual materials for the story *"The Enormous Turnip"* including magnetic cut-out figures of characters to put onto the blackboard, large adverts (*This book is good. Read it!*) with an "enormous turnip", a big picture-recipe for turnip-soup and individual illustrations for the front cover.

2.3 Children's Big Story Book (*"I can do it!"*) is a group work, done in accordance with an original picture book, but with some text adaptation and free illustrations. Each child does one page: a picture and a simple caption.

Making up a book relates to the second graders.

2.4 Art and craft activities in the Project work *"Teddies' and Bears' Week"* with the first graders represent only one segment of cross-curricular activities, done in English and Croatian and shared between the specialist English teacher and the class teacher.

The Topic work is organized around "bears". In their mother tongue lessons the teacher and pupils explore the traditional story *"Goldilocks and the Three Bears"*; in Science pupils study about bears; in Maths they add and subtract by means of magnetic teddy bears' pictures, etc.

In English lessons the language work is based on the same story, but in English, including a picture book and two cassettes with a recorded story and a song.

There are plenty of materials to be compared, in the same way in which the same story told in two different languages is compared.

Children's artwork is done with both teachers and is flexibly used as visual aids (supporting materials) whenever needed. It consists of simple sketches of teddies' heads in the Maths notebook, drawings of the three bears and the three bowls in the sketch-pad, a comparative drawing of a real bear and a teddy in the writing-notebook, cut-out figures of Goldilocks and the Bears mounted onto sticks, a birthday card cut-out in the shape of a teddy's head (with a story in the mother tongue).

In English classes my pupils have revised the skipping rhyme *"Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear..."* using some elements of P.E. exercises (*Jump high, reach the sky, touch your toes*). Some more "commands" are included: *turn around, touch the ground, bend head low, touch your toe.*

Playing an active role in this Project my pupils have developed an excellent feeling for purposeful learning and quite natural links among school subjects. There was also very good collaboration between the class teacher and me, even during our English lessons, since her English is very good. For the reasons described above all the lessons had that necessary continuity, without being interrupted every 45 minutes in accordance with the timetable.

Creative activities described from 2.1 to 2.4 can be done not only with coloured pencils and felt-tip pens, but also by collage (a technique of pasting either cut-out coloured papers or bits of newspaper and magazine illustrations on a sheet of paper), water-colours and tempera. Naturally, all these techniques added now to the list only make pupils' Art activities more demanding, demand more serious preparations from both teacher and pupils and produce more problems while being performed.

In addition all this two-dimensional artwork (mostly drawing and painting), some three-dimensional Art and craft work can be added as well. Pupils can use some more or less easily obtainable materials: plasticine, clay, wire, sticks and tongue pressers (if laths are not accessible), cardboard boxes and cotton-wool, wool and cloth. (These three last items are specially suitable for puppet making).

There are several alternative examples for Art activities described under 2.1 – 2.4 with both first and second graders, each age group in accordance with its language and motor coordination abilities.

"The Christmas Project" includes some three-dimensional paper work: a free-standing Christmas tree decorated with simple cut-out figures and ornaments, all done following teachers' instructions.

The *"Fruit and Vegetable"* Project / Topic work includes plasticine modelling of fruit and vegetable items to "sell in the shop/market", as well as three-dimensional fruit containers, paper bags, free standing shop signs and fruit labels, all made of paper.

In the *"Teddies' and Bears' Week"* Project the three bowls (of different size) could be modelled in plasticine or clay instead of being drawn.

The choice of an art technique should, in general, depend on pupils' age, as well as on the teacher's own preference for particular ones. But, at any rate it is, in my opinion, useful to collaborate with the art teacher, especially if you expect high standard quality of your pupils' artwork. Since I am lucky enough to have been also trained in art teaching, I find all this much easier.

3. Art and craft tasks in EFL classes transferred from Art and craft curriculum

The notion of *"texture"* is being explored in the Art curriculum, while *"Senses"* are being taught in continuity from kindergarten to school subjects "Primary Science" and "Science".

Artwork with tasks about *"texture"* should follow the Topic work curriculum links when transferred to English classes. It has to be preceded by the Unit *"Senses"* whose main theme is worked out in detail in the subunit *"The Senses of Touch".* (*What do you touch things with? What does … feel like? It feels hard/rough. The texture of something is the way it feels when touched.*)

The drawings in pencil, coloured pencils or felt-tip pens can show analysis of the texture of fur, bark, walnut and wild chestnut shells, roots…

Similar Art and craft tasks can also be explored in plasticine or clay.

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Mirjana Tomašević-Dančević

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND CREATIVITY IN TEACHING ENGLISH

The content of this chapter is supported by the presentation of my teaching methods and my pupils' work in the video film *English with Fourth Graders* (Vilke, 1995).

The advantages of cross-curricular language teaching are well known: the new language is seen by the children as something normal and natural, not as something separated from the rest of their learning.

Some other reasons for integrated FL teaching could be added to these given above:

If pupils participate in such an intensive and motivating FL course, as the case is with pupils who take part in the Croatian Project of learning a FL from the first grade, they are adequately prepared for more extensive work, both linguistic and content work. Such interdisciplinary education enables them not only to attain better FL competence and simultaneously widen and strengthen other subject knowledge, but also to satisfy their interests in the world around them and "real life" in a more natural way (i.e., through Topic work/Project work chosen to suit their interests). Thus, children tend to develop their self-confidence and a more critical approach to problems, their knowledge is more coherent and they display more readiness to explore.

Moreover, cross-curricular teaching facilitates the development of children's creative thinking more significantly than if I were to teach English and Art separately. My teaching experience has shown the advantages of cross-curricular teaching, especially in the area of pupils' motivation and results as well.

The development of children's creative thinking refers to teaching children to develop flexibility of thought and to be inventive, (i.e., to be able to solve any given problem in a new and most effective way). The creative mind is based on exploration activities.

Art with its creativity aspect helps this process considerably since it stimulates children to do permanent exploration and experimental activities, not only while doing Art tasks given by the teacher, but very often while doing ones for the sake of their own interest and curiosity.

This is attributed to the phenomenon that children, once stimulated to draw, usually develop the need to express themselves by drawing. They also, nearly without any exception, love painting, modelling, and building up activities (Tomašević-Dančević, 1993). They most often than not self-initially explore, do experiments and find creative solutions to self-given problems, all of which give Art a special place in children's learning process.

Although this discussion is on the development of creative thought through cross-curricular teaching with Art, I want to point out that teaching/learning any school subject can prompt children's creativity of mind, and especially when integrated teaching approaches are used.

As for the role of Art activities in this process, Betty Edwards in her book *"Drawing On the Right Side of the Brain"* (1989) states:

"By learning to draw you will learn to see differently and, as the artist Rodin lyrically states, to become confident of the natural world, to awaken your eye to the lovely language of forms, to express yourself in that language.

(…) From this (drawing) experience you will develop your ability to perceive things freshly in their totality, to see underlying patterns and possibilities for new combinations. Creative solutions to problems, whether personal or professional, will be accessible through new modes of thinking and new ways of using the power of your whole brain.

Drawing, pleasurable and rewarding though it is, is but a key to open the door to other goals."

It is worth noting here that this also works with other Art techniques, for example painting or sculpting. In addition, Environmental education, one of the themes of this chapter, is perfectly suited to both integrated FL teaching and the development of children's crative thinking.

In her article *Linking the classroom to the world: The Environment and EFL,* Susan Stempleski (1993) claims:

"This concern (recognition of the urgency of environmental problems) is reflected in schools around the world, where teachers of all subjects and at all grade levels are using the environmental theme as a means of linking the classroom to the world."

Unfortunately, in the Croatian educational system there is neither an interdisciplinary curriculum at any school level, nor an environmental curriculum. The experiments in both these fields are mostly left to the teachers themselves.

As for *linking the classroom to the world,* it should become a more common way of teaching subjects at school not only to increase pupils' motivation, but also because learning at school is only one aspect of children's daily learning with its ultimate aim, i.e., to prepare them for real life (Tomašević-Dančević, 1993). Of course, school should teach children to increase the quality of that "real life".

In the article referred to earlier, S. Stempleski (1993) maintains:

"Environmental topics can be linked to every subject in the curriculum: science, history, geography, mathematics, even music and art. By using the environment as a theme, we can help bridge the gap between EFL and other school subjects. Students gain academic knowledge and develop skills that can enhance achievement in all areas of the curriculum."

I will demonstrate this later, using examples from my teaching experience.

The same author also remarks (Stempleski, 1993):

"In addition to providing of framework for the practice of the basic skills, environmental topics can serve as a focus for stimulating the development of higher language skills such as critical thinking, group decision-making, and selective reading."

Moreover, a higher language skill, such as creative writing, can be added. It is practised quite a lot in my classes and combined with making up stories. Both activities are usually done as follow-up activities on well-known stories.

As for the role of story in ELT, Edie Garvie in her book *Story as Vehicle* (1990:19) states:

"In English language teaching (ELT) courses for primary teachers (...), story usually features as one technique or strategy amongst many others (...). There is also a fair bit about it in the literature, often linked with other strategies such as use of music, puppets and drama, and creative writing."

What is advocated in her book is "that story can also be used as a methodology for pulling everything else together (...), to carry all the important things we want our pupils to learn about and do with English."

According to the quotation of James Moffet (Rosen, 1995), story has an important role in the lives of children:

"They (children) utter themselves almost entirely through stories – real or invented – and they apprehend what others say through story."

Garvie also claims:

"Story stimulates and gives enjoyment. This is a prime purpose which must not be forgotten" (Garvie, 1993).

Additionally, in the story she sees a "wonderful opportunity for furthering the child's awareness of language." (Garvie, 1990:19).

Andrew Wright (1993) finds several reasons why story should play a central role in ELT to children: 1. motivation, 2. meaning, 3. fluency, 4. language familiarisation, 5. stimulus for speaking and writing, 6. communication, and 7. general curriculum.

If we follow the "Cummins Debate"(Garvie, 1990: 7-15), story could be said to help the development of both BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and CALP (cognitive, academic language proficiency), especially when children create and write down their story themselves.

To conclude the theoretical part of this paper some observations about children's story invention and creative writing in EFL should be considered. It should be noted that with very young learners these two skills cannot in an equal manner develop in equal proportion, since their speaking abilities are much better then their writing ones.

As a result of being intensively exposed to appropriate and inspiring children's literature (poetry and stories) and to the relevant follow-up work, children at an early age are able to create and tell their own poems and stories in English.

On the other hand, teaching/learning creative writing in EFL is a long-lasting process. Writing a poem or a story for other children to read is preceded by gradual writing activities such as writing at word level (e.g., labels, shopping lists, dictionaries), writing at sentence level (captions for pictures, speech bubbles for cartoons, diaries) and writing at text level (advertisements, Christmas/birthday cards, invitations) (Ellis, 1991: 59).

When writing a story a learner has to "encapsulate meaning and express it in what/ how he writes"; he has to be able to handle the so called "secretarial skills", the skill of construction or composition, the devices for discourse work, and the style of his writing (Garvie, 1990: 49-50).

Finally, making up a book of their own, represents a complex activity which engages all the children's abilities mentioned so far together with Art and craft (e.g., illustrations and lay-out). Such a book stands at the end of a long creative process, which connects children's interdisciplinary knowledge in the best way.

From teaching experience

Several cross-curricular EFL activities will be presented here:

1. The acquisition of new structures *If I were (not) a/an...I would/could* using the song *"If I were a carpenter..."* and children's discussion about ceramic figures of animals and plants they made themselves.

2. The children's creation of an ecological poster while discussing contemporary environmental problems and possible solutions.

3. The children's invention of a story, that is a 21st century fairly-tale with an ecological topic, and the illustrations for the story.

Grammar (Hypothetical condition), Art, Science, Environment, and Music

My original idea was to introduce the new structure *If I were a ...* by playing *"If I were a carpenter."*

Since I unexpectedly could not get the cassette tape, I told children the starting lyrics. I changed the third line. This proved to be advantageous because it gave me the opportunity to use *If I were a...* structure in a real context. Then, I jumbled the three lines written on separate cards. The children were required to put the words into correct order:

> *If I were a carpenter,*
> *and you were a lady,*
> *would you love me anyway...?*

"Unfortunately, I couldn't find the cassette, but *If I were a fairy, I would get* it, and *you could hear* the song."

(At the end of the lesson I could not resist singing the song myself, at least the part I know, since the reasons for using songs in FL teaching are too well-known).

After singing the lyrics I provided the full structure *If I were not a/an..., I would like to be an...*(because) *I could/would...* in order to initiate a discussion among the children about their favourite plants and animals:

"Well, I'm not a fairy, I'm a human. But *If I were not a* human, *I would like to be* an olive tree because I could give people food and shelter."

The children had modelled their figures in clay during their two Art lessons in English. The Art learning aims were: learning about 3-dimensional form, increasing awareness of the variety of shapes and textures in the natural environment, and developing new skills in clay modelling.

After a week the figures were fired in a klin. The ceramic elephants, turtles, trees, etc., were a result of English lessons integrated into Science, Environment, and Art. Prior to this exercise, the children's comments were, for example, "I would like to be an elephant because it is big and strong, but it doesn't do any harm to other animals."

Now, their comments about the figures they made were formulated in this way:

"If I were not a human/boy/girl, I would like to be...

... an elephant because I would be big and strong, but wouldn't do any harm to other animals.

... an oak tree. I could protect the soil and smaller plants from the hot sun, the wind and the heavy rain.

... a rose bush. I could help make the Earth a more beautiful place to live in.

... a crocodile. I could swim lazily in the river all day long."

The children also made an apple tree, a mushroom, a dolphin, two fish, two dogs, three birds, two turtles, two lions, a cat, a hippo, a snail, a seal, a rabbit, a penguin, one more crocodile and two more elephants.

An ecological poster (Art and Environment)

From first grade on, the children were gradually exposed to environmental topics, both by their class and English teacher. At first, Art, children's literature and Science lessons were mostly used to reinforce their experiences in nature and deepen their appreciation of beauty and diversity of nature. In integrated EFL lessons they listened to stories like *The Tiny Little Seed* (Carle, 1987), *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1974) and *The Ugly Duckling* (Anderson, 1990). They did some interesting texts and exercises in *Click* magazines (MGM), such as a series "Animal Lovers" in 1993/94.

They also watched some video films such as *The Ugly Duckling* (Longman, 1982), and *My First Nature Video* (Dorling Kindersley,1992-1994).

In their Art lessons in English they drew and painted flowers, butterflies, bees, the sky seen through the window, the trees in the school yard, etc., and modelled fruits and animals. With their class teacher they attended "The School in Nature" at the nearby mountain, and also a little seaside town.

Gradually they were more and more informed about environmental problems. They were shown, and partly read themselves, picture books such as: *The Ladybird Green Book* (Ganeri, 1992), *Ecology* (Ganeri, 1991), *Rescue Mission: Planet Earth* (Children of the World, 1994) and *The Young Green Consumer Guide* (Elkington, 1990). They found some useful vocabulary in a bilingual article in a Croatian magazine called TIN (Tomašević-Dančević, 1994). In that way they learned to "think ecologically" and to achieve the "new global environmental ethic" (UNESCO, 1991: 62).

Of course, at this age children are taught in an optimistic way. For example, how to make a contribution to their own environment. Problem-solving at the family and school level, as well as local problem-solving should be an essential part of the environmental education process.

So, besides their partly changed behaviour at home and school, on Earth day my pupils did some cleaning and gardening in the school yard with their teachers and parents. They also watched the very popular *Captain Planet* cartoons on the Cartoon Net/video tapes and promotional video cartoon, which helped them accept global norms of behaviour. *The World in Danger: Eco School* (Frankić, Hudek, Pirš & Spajić 1995).

For their group work on an ecological poster the children had to collect cut-outs from magazines and newspapers showing visual examples of air/water/earth pollution. Finally, each pupil could choose a picture connected with a problem s/he wanted to present to the class. All the "problems" were gradually compiled on a small picture of planet Earth placed at the bottom of the poster while at the top of the poster there was a message S.O.S.

The children's comments included:
"We live in a beautiful world, but we often make a mass of it.
People throw away their rubbish everywhere.
Many thrown away things can't decay if you bury them.
But the most of our day's rubbish could be recycled.
We must not pollute rivers, lakes and seas.
We should buy phosphate-free cleaning powders and liquids.
We should keep wild places litter-free.
People should stop destroying trees, and especially rain forests.

We should not buy goods which use CFCs because these gases destroy the ozone layer round the Earth.

Let's help the Earth!"

As for the Art learning aims, they were: learning about design (making a poster, and the role of letters in a poster), learning about the composition of 2-dimensional forms, and developing new skills in cutting out and sticking.

Making up a story, creative writing, Environment, Art

At the beginning of third grade my pupils were already accustomed to making up stories, as well as producing hand-made books. That is why we decided to enter the JET *Story competition*, opened at the end of the previous school year.

We worked on the story for about a month. First, we briefly reviewed all the well-known fairy tales. Then several children gave their suggestions for the topic of the story, but at this stage no coherent ideas emerged that could be used as a starting point.

I suggested an ecological fairy tale. Some of the questions to prompt children's creative thinking were: what could be some of the most serious environmental problems in the future; who could possibly be good or bad characters; where and how could they live: why should they be in conflicting relations, etc.

Furthermore, during this long creative process we used to play a sort of sequence simulation game. The children's first task was to plan an ecologically sound future country or town. The next task was to plan a technically superior but ecologically wasted country or town. The children then role-played the previously created characters, both in their own environments and in the gradually created or simulated conflict situations, the climax of which was the third battle for or against the eco land. (N.B., the actual war against Croatia made this last simulated situation more significant and realistic to the children.)

Using simulations and role-playing, some kind of *realistic conflict-of-interest situations* were brought into the classroom (UNESCO, 1991). In this way the pupils could themselves try to solve environmental problems. However, the distinctive characteristic of the described simulations was that my pupils' environmental decision-making process could include some solutions which are possible only in the realty of a fairy tale. Yet, this lack/advantage should not lessen the value of children's creative problem-solving process, since such *environmental management* still had its own firm logic. It also offered certain solutions to the problems which could be the optimistically possible predictions for the future.

As for the language the children used when role-playing the main characters, it was the language borrowed from their favourite stories. This was thought to be the magic language for communication in the world of fairy tales, and especially in the unknown

world of the simulated future. In a way fairy tale language connected the (imaginary) past with (possible) future, the well known with new adventures, but also the world of too complicated problems with the world of game. This made the children feel self-confident and independent in new situations.

At a certain stage of writing the simulation game the pupils tried, usually at home, some creative writing to give their own solutions to the given problem. However, it was me who did most of the writing in the whole process of making up the story. When the tale was finished, each of the 30 pupils made their own illustration for the chapter they liked best. The Art learning aims of the illustrations were: learning about form (presented by line and colour); learning about design (illustrating a story); stimulating imagination; developing new skills in drawing with coloured pencils and felt-tip pens.

The story won second prize. It was published and recorded in *The Battle for Greenland*. (The story is provided at the end of this chapter.)

Conclusion

Teaching experience with primary school pupils described in this chapter is expected to prove the advantages of interdisciplinary teaching, and especially EFL teaching across the curriculum. The pupils get better language knowledge and more coherent integrated subject knowledge. The teaching/learning done in the classroom is linked to the real world. The pupils are also given more chance to develop their creative thinking. Such teaching makes them feel that learning a foreign language is connected with fun and pleasure, new experience, and action. In this way it motivates them to gain new knowledge. Simultaneously it helps them to develop their self-confidence, independence, and a critical mind.

21st CENTURY FAIRY TALE

SECOND PRIZE: The Battle for Greenland

Once upon a time, in a land far away there lived a good and wise king. He had a beautiful and intelligent daughter. The Princess loved computers, but she also loved nature.

The King ruled the happy and prosperous people. They all lived in small towns of glass towers. Each tower had its own system of solar energy. The noiseless floating trolleys ran all around. Everybody had their own harmless airship, airbike or air-roller-skates. They loved to go to their green parks and woods. In those days there was no other country with so many well preserved forests, lakes and rivers and so many animals. No other land had such fresh air and so much natural food. Other countries had scarcely any of these amenities. This is why everybody called this land Greenland.

In another part of the Earth there lived a bad and greedy king, who was a disguised wizard. He ruled a country with the highest technology in the world. His towns looked like big silver spaceships. His floating castle was the shape of an enormous crown covered in gold and jewels. He had a big army of powerful robots marching all around. They had conquered all the neighbouring countries. They piloted spaceships to the orbital stations and to the Moon, where they dug precious stones and minerals. The robots also did experiments with dangerous weapons and poisons.

In the Wizard's land there was not a single green plant left. He hated animals as well. His robots used his magic recipes to make food. They also made all sorts of pets. Instead of fountains and ponds with fresh water he had perfect glass illusions. Because of the experiments and lack of plants there was scarcely any oxygen in the air. Thus, his people had to live in a sort of astronaut suit all the time. That land was called Superland.

The Wizard had a magic mirror computer on his bedroom wall. He used to ask:

"Oh, mirror, mirror on the wall, which land's the fairest of them all?"

His mirror was programmed to reply:

"Oh, your Majesty, your land is the most beautiful of all."

But one day the mirror replied:

"Oh, your Majesty, your land is beautiful,

but Greenland is more beautiful than yours."

The evil king got mad with anger and jealousy. He decided to conquer that country as well. He consulted his super-intelligent computers and robots. Then he sent his big robot army to Greenland in powerful war airships.

Fortunately the clever Princess, with the help of her computers, discovered the Wizard's secret war plans. A young and brave prince, who was in love with the Princess, came to help.

To the Wizard's great surprise his frightening army was defeated. He got more furious than before. He made up his mind to get Greenland at all costs. This time the Good King's army suffered great loss, but at the end the Wizard's troops were defeated again. His rage and jealousy overcame him. When he could not get Greenland, he raged, he must destroy it, once and forever. First he sent strong winds to Greenland which carried clouds of deadly poisonous smoke and rain.

The Prince and Princess knew that there wasn't much time left. They rode their fast airbikes to the Good Fairy, who lived in a wood. She was very old, with not much magic art left, but she agreed to help.

She made her spell:

"Abracadabra wheezy wo,

I'll do a miracle to help you."

And that is just what she did. Suddenly there was an enormous spherical eco-shield all above the land. No poisons and power could pierce it. But the old Fairy warned them that the magic would stop working at midnight.

In no time the Wizard himself and his air force attacked Greenland. They fired their deadly weapons all day long, but with no effects. Yet, the Wizard and his black robot-knights did not want to give up. The clock was about to strike twelve. All at once there was a big explosion. The concentration of all the shells, gases and poisonous rays, which reflected from eco-shield, resulted in a terrible boomerang which returned to the invaders. The Wizard and his army turned into dust. The great whirlwind pushed them far away into space.

At that moment the spell broke, but only few bits of ash fell on Greenland. Its good luck acted as a message to all Earth's rulers to try to save their own environments. They were all invited to the wedding celebration in Greenland. The Prince and the Princess lived happily ever after.

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Maja Rijavec
HOW TO OUTDO THE TEXTBOOK

EFL teachers often complain about limitations their compulsory course books and textbooks place on their work, imposing a style of teaching which makes the process tiresome and unrewarding.

This chapter is addressed to those unlucky teachers of English who, apart from all the difficulties connected with teaching, have to cope with the textbook itself, often inadequate in many respects.

The most widespread deficiency of textbooks for children is the inadequate content of the texts. Conceptually poor or empty subject matter that cannot appeal to the young learners is usually accompanied by a dull and totally commonplace atmosphere, and totally unsuitable to arouse pupils' interests. I still remember one of my first lessons in German. The text, meant for 11-years-olds was entitled *Die Bauerngenossenschaft* (The Peasant Co-operative Society). No wonder I gave up learning the language altogether! The artificially constructed texts not only disregard learners' interests, but also underestimate their intellectual capacities and their knowledge of the world. They present a simplified version of what adults consider a child's world should be like. It is an ideal world of flat characters: loving parents, honest old men, hard-working peasants, impeccable teachers and sometimes naughty, but always happy children, uttering correct sentences about insignificant topics. It is amazing how interesting and relevant topics can be turned into dull ones by the edifying, matter-of-fact style commonly used in textbooks. In addition, tasks for practice included in textbooks usually allow little room for creativity. They roughly fall into two categories: grammar gymnastics and data reproduction. In this way, apart from being off-putting, the textbooks encourage only formal knowledge and do not contribute to general education as much as they could.

There is no such thing as an ideal textbook, yet we can imagine one. In theory, it would be a textbook designed for one specific teacher and learner pair, preferably by the teacher himself/herself. It would have to take into account the specific demands of the learner (his or her interests and abilities) as well as the teacher's. However, in practice we have to do with what we have and make the most of it.

In this chapter I would like to describe ways of handling elementary level texts, no matter how inadequate or poor they are, in order to make them more acceptable and more interesting.

First of all, we should free ourselves from the tyranny of the course book by changing our general attitude towards it. We should stop treating it as the Bible and feeling guilty in case we do not fulfil its purposes completely. A course book should be treated

as a tool for achieving the ends of teaching, one that can be used as freely and creatively as the teacher finds it necessary. The improvements can cover several aspects: context, attitude towards the subject matter, characters, style, and form.

How to improve the context

Almost any context can be made more interesting by slight modifications achieved by introductory remarks or those made during or after the presentation of the text. Let's examine the unavoidable and the inevitable topics, such as sightseeing. A sightseeing tour itself can be very exciting, but an objective account of it leaves the average learner feeling quite indifferent. Picture postcards and slides do not help. A useful thing to do can be to mix a few personal or witty remarks into the presentation describing how the tourists experienced a particular sight or how they felt while visiting it. Another possibility is to add a final sentence that changes the whole context by an unexpected turn, even a shock. An element of surprise always makes the context more appealing. For example, we could tell the pupils that all they have heard is just what a tourist told his wife while, in fact, he spent the whole afternoon in the pub. We can then expand upon the new situation introducing fun and imagination. We can discuss why the person went to the pub, what he did there, whom he met, etc. From the language point of view such a conversation could be more useful than learning data about the sights of a city most of the pupils will never visit. The context can be changed in still another way: by presenting the given text as part of a larger whole. Following this principle we can turn a sightseeing tour into a detective story. Pupils can be asked to help with the case by giving detailed description of the places where they saw the suspect. We can also create an attractive context for the sightseeing vocabulary if the pupils pretend to be taking ET round and telling him about the sights. Elements of mystery and suspense introduced in this way have proved to be highly motivating. Still another way of changing the context is to replace a sentence or two so that the title is no longer appropriate and ask the pupils to find a more suitable one. We can also ask them to divide the text into several parts and change the story by changing their order. Furthermore, almost any text can be presented as a series of predictions. In a step by step presentation the children are involved in creating the story and may offer several versions of the text, which can be written down, compared, and discussed. The original textbook version can be used just for comparison or to consolidate language items. The teacher can also rewrite the text changing or omitting details and then provide the revised version as handouts for pupils to correct by comparing it with the original version. Of course, with young children the most rewarding method is to turn every subject-matter into a story or a game.

How to change the attitude

When we examine a given text from a different perspective we are set free to play with it. With older pupils we can arouse their interest by allowing them to criticize the text. They can discuss whether they like it or not and why, whether it is convincing or silly, which part of the text is the best, etc. Then they can select good points and correct poor ones. With younger children the best change is to introduce humour. Everything can be analysed from a humorous point of view. We can make fun of the text itself, of the characters and their relationships. Information presented in the text can be rearranged in a funny way. Sentences can be combined in an unusual order and we can turn the text upside down and still preserve its purpose of teaching language. Here is an illustration of this technique. The original text reads as fallows:

"We can tell the time by means of watches and clocks. A watch is carried in a waistcoat pocket or is worn on the wrist with a strap or ribbon. A clock is too big for a pocket and is placed on the mantelpiece or is hung on the wall. The big clocks that stand on the floor are called grandfather clocks."

This is the humorous variation:

"Grandfather clocks stand on the floor in their waistcoats. We can tell the time if our pocket is hung on the wall or if we place our wrist on the mantelpiece. If a watch is too big to be worn on a ribbon it is called a clock."

Besides having fun the pupils will unperceptably learn the words and the structures in order to be able to produce such a piece of writing.

How to overcome the typical textbook style

A dull, matter-of-fact style is not easy to utilize advantageously. It certainly discourages the young readers but an improvement would require adding a pinch of artistic flavour which only rare persons are able to do. What every teacher can do is to insert a sentence or two to stir emotions and shift the whole thing to another register. For example:

Many duties are carried out at the Post Office. Letters are delivered, telephone and bank services are provided, postal orders are sold, and wires are sent.

Addition: *Clearly that's why the postman didn't have time to deliver Michael's letter! I've been waiting for a month.*

How to improve characters

This is the easiest part of the problem. Textbook characters usually have no character traits. Thus, we are free to decide what kind of persons they might be, describe them

and modify their utterances according to their assumed personality. Children love attributing qualities, describing looks and clothes as well as feelings and problems of the characters they meet. They can also introduce new characters to enrich the story.

How to improve form

A text, in terms of form can be too difficult, too easy, or the order of presentation can be wrong. In the first case we can simplify it to the point that suits our pupils' level of knowledge, photocopy the simplified version and work on it in class until pupils are prepared to acquire the original one. I would not recommend to cut the text into shorter parts because it would add to the previously mentioned conceptual emptiness and put further stress on mastering linguistic form outside a meaningful context.

On the other hand, if the text is too simple, we can enrich it by loading it with appropriate vocabulary or structure items in every imaginable way. Some of the ways have been suggested above.

A textbook is usually not designed as an open material, but we can cut it open and use its contents in whatever way we like. We should bear in mind that our job is to teach English, not the textbook lessons.

Still, I must admit there are examples beyond revision. The *Bauerngenossenschaft* example definitely needs to be excluded.

Section 4: FOCUSING ON ACQUISITION OF GRAMMAR, LEXIS AND READING SKILLS

Mirjana Vilke

SHOULD WE TEACH CHILDREN GRAMMAR?

In 1973, that is, almost 30 years ago, Heidy Dulay and Marina Burt wrote a well-known and very influential article, *Should we teach children syntax?* The concept of *syntax* as they interpreted it there and the concept of grammar in this particular context are almost identical, so I borrowed and adapted this well-known title in order to juxtapose our respective answers.

Dulay and Burt's answer to the question posed in the title was a very firm **no**, whereas ours is going to be **yes, but...**

Dulay and Burt came to their conclusion on the basis of a study conducted in the USA in three school districts, two in Northern California and one in New York City. They studied **natural** speech elicited from 145 Spanish speaking five-to-eight-year-olds who were all learning English. The conclusion they came to was that exposing a child to a **natural communication situation** is sufficient to activate his language learning processes, and that learning the syntax should be left to children. Our answer would probably be the same if we could supply children in our schools with natural communication situations. We all know children who have picked up their English and other foreign languages by living in the surroundings in which the respective languages were spoken natively.

What we have in mind here is institutionalized English taught in Croatian primary schools from the first grade on with any number of weekly periods ranging from two to five. The more intensive input of the foreign language we can afford, the less time should be devoted to the teaching of syntax. However, with an average limited input of English in our schools, children should be prompted in activating their processes of acquiring and learning grammar.

There are many differences between children of different ages due to the stage they have reached in their development – biological, intellectual, cognitive, affective and social. In teaching grammar, these differences should be taken very seriously into consideration.

Following Piaget's stages of children's cognitive development, a distinction should be made between children at the stage of *concrete operations*, that is from the age of 7

to roughly 11 years, and those entering the stage of *formal operations* that according to Piaget starts at roughly 11 years of age.

When grammar is taught to children from 7 to 11 years, a number of conditions should be fulfilled:

1. It should be taught via functional categories.
2. Categories should be selected.
3. The use of grammatical terminology should be extremely limited.
4. Grammatical mistakes should be tolerated.
5. All the help that the mother tongue can offer should be used.
6. Sociocultural categories should be contrasted.

Let's consider each of these conditions in some detail:

1. Grammar should be taught to children via functional categories (not grammatical ones).

Grammar is an abstract presentation of the language system. Children at the stage of concrete operations, that is from 7 to 11 years of age, cannot understand abstract concepts. On the other hand, they can memorise anything from paradigms, strings of nonsense words, nursery rhymes (often nonsensical) to grammar rules, without being aware of the meaning. The abuse of this capacity of children may be exemplified by the demands for the memorisation of masses of versatile written materials by traditional school methods. In teaching English grammar, anything similar to the above should be abandoned. In our long-term research on the process of children's acquisition and learning of English, it was observed that children are perfectly capable of understanding the basic relationships expressed by the language via functional categories (Vilke, 1995).

So, instead of teaching them *singular* and *plural* they should be shown the difference between *one* and *more than one* which they will need in communicating in the foreign language. *Possession* as a functional category is expressed through a number of grammatical categories – *possessive pronouns, possessive adjectives,* the *saxon genitive,* the *of phrase,* and *I have got.*

As egocentrism is one of the characteristics of children at this stage of development, they will be very happy to be able to say that something belongs to them and not to somebody else, or to proudly say *I've got a new computer game.* At this point their language acquisition device will be ready for generalisations in functional categories.

2. Categories we want to teach should be selected.

In our research projects we have often observed that concepts expressed by some grammatical categories are simply not used in children's language performance. Pronouns are a typical example. Even if they understand the meaning, they prefer the more concrete use of nouns. In one of our studies the children were shown two pictures. In one, there was a girl with a red ball, in the other a boy. The question was:

Who has got a red ball – he or she? In a large majority of cases, the answer was *(the) girl* (Vilke, 1988).

The teacher could hardly leave out pronouns in classroom discourse, but the thing to recommend would be to postpone insistence on their correct use until a later date. It would imply treating pronouns and other *difficult* parts of the grammatical system as vocabulary items. In this particular case *difficult* means too abstract for the age and not essential for communication (*articles, third person –s, auxiliary verbs,* and the like).

3. The use of grammatical terminology should be extremely limited.

Children have been very much sinned against when the learning of abstract concepts comes onto the educational scene. They can memorise anything in a parrot-like manner if they have to, but they can understand only those concepts that are in the domain of their level of cognitive maturity developing over time. Children between the ages of 7 and 11 years, being in the stage of Piaget's *concrete operations*, understand how the language functions on one hand, but, on the other, they can't understand the abstract presentation of the same language functions, which is what grammar is basically about. They will have certainly become familiar with concepts like sentence, verb, noun, tense in their mother tongue classes (and, alas, with many more!) but the teacher should not hesitate to bring home to them the same concepts once again. Speaking about the term *tense,* it would be advisable to stress the difference between *time, tense* and *weather* which are covered by the same word *vrijeme* in Croatian. Grammatical terminology should be at this age used with a lot of caution if our aim is to turn our young students in the direction of communicative competence. Their early efforts in advancing to this particular goal will be much better catered for if the teacher resorts to the functional categories which help to do things with the language. For example, the expressions *Open the door! Stand up!* indicating something that has to be performed, carry expressions much more meaning at this age than the term *imperative*.

4. Grammatical mistakes should be tolerated.

Basically, there are two kinds of oral exercises that are used in a language classroom, *skill getting* and *skill using* activities (Rivers, 1981). In *skill getting* activities, the stress is on the acquisition of the correct form. Such activities include different mechanical exercises, like language practice through songs, poems, nursery rhymes, structured role plays, etc., which children enjoy performing in a playful manner. They will not mind repeating each utterance many times, as long as each member of a group has a go and can utter it with little or no changes. Here, the teacher should insist on accuracy, especially on the accuracy of pronunciation, to make the most of the ability of the learners of this age group to imitate the phonetic system of the foreign language. When dealing with this kind of exercise, grammatical mistakes should be taken care of, too, especially when set phrases are practised. *What's the time?, What's the weather like today,? I am*

hungry, I am tired, etc., can hardly be said in any other way, and the sooner our learners internalise it, the better.

In *skill using* activities, the important thing is the message the learner tries to convey. With their limited repertoire of English structures and vocabulary items, the learner will make an effort to express their real thoughts, ideas, and needs. If the message gets through to the receiver, it will be a success on which to base further advances into the world of the real use of the language. The teacher's corrections of grammatical mistakes will be completely counter-productive at this point, as they will distract (and even frustrate) the learner who makes efforts to follow the thread of their thoughts. Nevertheless, the teacher is not supposed to forget about the mistakes, as they will have to be registered and taken care of on a later occasion when the *skill getting* activities are the goal of teaching.

5. *All the help that the mother tongue can offer should be used.*

The presence of the learner's mother tongue is a reality nobody can deny. All the methods of teaching foreign languages have been deeply aware of its existence and consequently, have treated it in different ways. Some, like the *grammar-translation method,* started from it, *the direct method* pretended it did not exist, and the structuralists went even further. L. Bloomfield, for example, suggested that in learning foreign languages you should forget about all other languages, especially your own (Bloomfield, 1942).

At the present moment we all feel that a learner's mother tongue is a precious asset that we, in the foreign language teaching field, should cherish and use for the best of our learners.

Vygotsky (1986: 196) is very explicit about that: *Success in learning a foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language. The child can transfer to the new language the system of meanings he already possesses in his own. The reverse is also true – a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language. The child learns to see his native language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations.*

According to Vygotsky, the existence of the child's mother tongue is a facilitating factor in the process of learning a new language, but – we should add – only if the approach to teaching and the teacher treat it as such. *The system of meanings* the child has acquired in their mother tongue needs to be transferred to the new language with explanations of all the differences between the two languages. The differences between Croatian and English, as between any first and any target language, exist on all linguistic levels. Even on the phonetic level, in spite of children's unsurpassed ability to imitate the foreign phonetic system, it may well happen that, due to the very limited input they receive in the English classes, the child hears and pronounces the nearest

approximation to their Croatian phonemes, and instead of using the unknown /ð/ it will use the Croatian /d/ or /z/ (e.g., in *mother* and *father).*

If the teacher does not make an effort to explain that *I have lived in Zagreb for ten years* does not denote a past action as when the perfect tense is used in Croatian, the learner will identify the function of the two respective structures as the same, which will result in an erroneous expression. The same is true of **black bread, *young potatoes* and **black wine* on the semantic level. In these, as in many more other cases, the two languages must be contrasted and the learners informed about the differences.

Psychologically, it is sometimes useful to stress that *sameness* of the two languages in certain respects (e.g., *in English, as in Croatian, thoughts are expressed in sentences which start with a capital letter and end with a full stop*).

Translation exercises from the first into the target language or vice versa can be of great help if the teacher wants to make sure that the correct meaning of a word or an utterance has found the way to the learners.

On the other hand, class interaction of all kinds should be conducted in the target language with the first language coming in as a welcome help to prevent the breach of communication, be it on the level of the word, structure or discourse.

6. Sociocultural categories should be contrasted.

Sometimes young learners have problems in understanding sociocultural conventions that are different in the two languages.

They should be familiarised with some of them even at the early stages of learning. The obvious example is *Hello!* used as a greeting in English as opposed to the Croatian telephone entry *Halo!*

The story of *you* as a pronoun used for both singular and plural should also be revealed to the learners as well as the strange character of the personal pronoun of the first person singular (I) that appears in writing in the shape of a vertical line. Addressing and greeting people and the conventions that accompany these functions should also be clarified and the differences between the two cultures stressed. Some way or other it is a common belief that all these minor matters of language and culture need no clarification and hence so many unidiomatic and erroneous uses in the repertoire of our learners and speakers of English.

By trying to take care of the listed conditions and perhaps adding some more in teaching children elements of grammar, we may hope that one day it will help them to internalise the grammar system to such an extent that they will be able to use the foreign idiom in a near-native way in their life and vocation.

According to Piaget (1973) children after the age of 12 gradually develop into abstract thinkers capable of understanding linguistic processes at work in the grammatical system of a language. The grammar of a foreign language (including its terminol-

ogy) to an adolescent can be quite comprehensible if presented in the right way. What is *the right way* is still questionable. What we are sure of is that there is more than one *right way*, depending on many factors such as the personality traits of a person, attitudes towards this foreign language, motivation to learn, language anxiety, conditions of learning, etc. Recent studies on the strategies of learning have shed more light on these questions.

On the other hand, we can state with a certain amount of certainty what the wrong way is: It is the learning by heart of grammatical rules and paradigms to win a mark at school, which used to be an established routine in traditional schools.

Hopefully, 21st century schools will never again resort to such methods.

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Marta Medved Krajnović

THE LEXICAL APPROACH IN EARLY FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Introduction

In the last decade the questions probing the nature of lexis, its acquisition, teaching and evaluation, have come into the focus of many applied linguists' research. Lexical knowledge has started to be (re)considered as central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language. Authors who advocate the lexical approach in foreign language teaching and learning argue that:

> Vocabulary and lexical units are at the core of learning and communication. No amount of grammatical or other type of linguistic knowledge can be employed in communication or discourse without the mediation of vocabulary. Indeed, vocabulary and lexical expressions can sustain a great deal of rudimentary communication without much support from other aspects of the language system (Schmitt 2000:xi).

Similarly, they argue that "[w]ithout grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (Wilkins in Lewis 1997:16).

This new attitude towards the role of vocabulary in language (first, second or foreign) has been prompted by the findings in corpus linguistics, psycholinguistics and applied linguistics that are daily changing our understanding of the function of vocabulary in discourse. Moreover, they have also changed our understanding of the very nature of lexis. It has been realised that much of everyday spoken communication relies on units larger than single words – on so-called **multi-word units**.

This new understanding of the nature and significance of lexical knowledge in language has to play a more central role in the knowledge base of foreign language teachers.

New approaches to lexis

Research findings coming from the field of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis highlight the diversity and frequency of lexical elements above the word level and their cohesive role in spoken discourse. They also highlight that polarisation between lexis and grammar is sometimes unnecessary. In his discussion of the principles that

function in discourse, Sinclair (1991) points out the distinction between the open-choice principle and the idiom-principle. According to the first, more traditional view of language, words combine freely, abiding to grammatical rules only. According to the second, more modern view of language, language is also governed by lexical rules, i.e. principles that limit the choice of words in a discourse. Some of the principles merely reflect knowledge of the world: because some phenomena co-occur in nature, the words expressing these concepts will co-occur in language. However, some principles are of a purely linguistic nature, that is, completely arbitrary (for example, there is no reason for not saying *to put something on fire, but fluent speakers of English know that the appropriate phrase is to set something on fire).

It is easy to notice that new approaches to the nature of lexis bring about new views on the nature of grammar, traditionally the focus of linguistic analysis. At first sight, it may seem that grammar has lost its importance ('Language consists of grammaticalised lexis not lexical grammar'; Lewis 1993:vi), but this is not the case. Moreover, it can even be said that, within the lexical approach, the knowledge of grammar becomes even more important because it is considered to be the source of variation in language. While lexical knowledge enables us to communicate easily and freely, grammatical knowledge instills the speaker's personality and creativeness into the fixed lexical patterns.

Authors like Lewis (1993; 1997; 2000), Schmitt (2000), Sinclair (1991), Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), to name just a few, all point out that a great amount of language used consists of multi-word chunks. However, each author classifies and defines these units in a somewhat different way. It seems that the most problematic are those multi-word units that were first recognised as such – collocations, idioms and phrasal verbs. Accepting that language consists of even larger lexical chunks meant including traditional multi-word units into a new system of representation.

One of the classifications of the lexical elements in language that does not include the modern concept of multi-word units may be presented as follows:

A) one-word units – words and compounds (e.g., car; blackmail)

B) **collocations.**

According to this view, collocations can have a different degree of fixedness. For example, according to Cowie and Howarth (1995), idioms are the most fixed collocations because they do not allow for any type of variability within their structure. Moreover, the meaning of a particular idiom is noncompositional, which means that it can't be guessed from the meanings of its constituent parts (e.g., *kick the bucket* meaning 'to die'). The second class of collocations consists of those expressions that are also fixed, but their meaning is more transparent because each word in the expression adds something to the meaning of the unit as a whole (e.g., *to smell a rat*). The third type

of collocations would be those with a transparent meaning and allowing for a limited amount of variability (e.g., *have/feel/experience a need; as dark/black as night/coal/ink*).

Most authors would agree that there are two basic types of collocation: grammatical or syntactic and semantic or lexical. The most frequent examples of the first type are phrasal verbs (*look after, pick up*) while the second type usually consists of a combination of words of equal 'status' (noun and verb – *ball bounces;* verb and noun - *cause trouble;* adjective and noun – *artificial intelligence*). Some authors suggest a third type of collocation that is neither purely grammatical nor purely semantic. Examples are the following: *at one o'clock* but *on Sunday* or *in January*.

Schmitt (2000: 99-102) combined different authors' approaches and classified the lexical elements in the following way:

A) one-word units – words in the traditional sense

B) collocations – Schmitt stresses the tendency of the words to co-occur, but he also stresses a degree of freedom that these combinations have

C) multi-word units – primarily characterised by their institutionalised nature. This means that native speakers of a particular language recognise them as units that regularly occur in language, in the same form and with the same meaning. Schmitt classifies them as the following:

· compound words (*sky-scraper, haircut*)

· phrasal verbs (*break up, let down*)

· fixed phrases (*back and forth, to and fro*)

· idioms (*bite the dust, have a chip on one's shoulder*)

· proverbs (*out of sight, out of mind*)

· lexical phrases/lexical chunks (*to make a long story short*)

Lewis' (1997:7-12) classification could be summarised as following:

A) one-word units:

· simple words

· words that are at the border-line between one-word and multi-word units, absolutely fixed, they can be written as one word (*nevertheless*) or more words (*by the way*)

B) multi-word units:

· collocations (grammatical – *relevant to, take over;* semantic – *drug addict, make a mistake*)

· fixed expressions (social greetings – *Happy New Year; It's a lovely morning, isn't it?;* politeness phrases – *No, thank you, I'm fine. I'll have to be going;* 'phrase book' language – *Can you tell me the way to... please?;* idioms - *You're making a mountain out of a molehill*)

- semi-fixed expressions (according to Lewis this is the most frequent and the most complex group that includes expressions that are almost completely fixed – *It's ..., There's ...,* but also expressions that would typically occur in specific types of discourse, for example, in academic articles – *There are, broadly speaking, two views of ... The more traditional ...*).

A more detailed analysis of the above-presented classifications and, in particular, their application to the analysis of spoken or written discourse shows some overlapping and inconsistency, but what these authors agree upon is the following: multi-word units, whatever their classification, are the key elements in the everyday speech of native speakers. Their centrality comes from the fact that memorised multi-word units allow for quick and easy language processing[1], both at the level of language comprehension and at the level of language production.

In terms of the acquisition and learning of a foreign language, Read (2001:2) claims that multi-word units play an important role not only in the learners' language production during the early phases of mastering a foreign language, but also in the development of fluency similar to that of native speakers during the later phases of foreign language acquisition or learning. In addition, Schmitt (2000:142) argues that the acquisition of multi-word units helps the acquisition of grammar, and Lewis (1997:58) argues the same about the acquisition of intonation and pronunciation. Furthermore, the fact that most multi-word units are based on prototypical words (i.e., words frequent in discourse and therefore presented early to foreign language learners) makes us think of introducing multi-word units into the process of foreign language teaching in a more systematic way.

Multi-word units and foreign language teaching

There are several possible problems related to the attempt of a systematic introduction of multi-word units into foreign language teaching programmes. It seems that multi-word units are a universal language feature, but it also seems that not all types of multi-word units are equally frequent in all languages and they do not segment the semantic and syntactic continuum in the same way in all languages.

Learners of English as a foreign language find English idioms and phrasal verbs the most difficult multi-word type because of the usual noncompositionality of their meaning. On the other hand, if meaning is transparent and therefore comprehension is

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[1]   Psycholinguistic research has shown that larger lexical units are memorised in the same way as single lexical elements. This implies that native speakers spend the same amount of time and energy while understanding or producing a multi-word unit as while understanding or producing a single word.

made easier, the arbitrariness of lexico-grammatical combinations that make up a particular multi-word unit (for example, *red wine* and not **black wine* as in Croatian, *back and forth* and not **forth and back*) causes great difficulty in language production. If we add to this the lack of information about the real frequency of particular multi-word units in discourse (a problem that might be solved by corpus linguistics in the near future), we can really question what the best sequence of teaching these units might be.

Because of all this, most authors question whether any kind of systematic introduction of multi-word units into foreign language teaching is at all possible or useful. The answers to this question differ. Some authors claim that these units should be left to the process of spontaneous acquisition or autonomous learning. The role of the teacher, if any, would only be to point to the existence and importance of multi-word units in the spontaneous speech of native speakers of English. Other authors offer very detailed suggestions on how to approach multi-word units in English language teaching (e.g., Lewis, 1997) although Lewis himself stresses that his approach has not yet been validated by teaching practice).

It seems that, for the time being, the best approach in the early learning of English as a foreign language would be to expose learners to a rich and intensive language input in communicatively oriented contexts.

Research aims

Since in the Croatian early foreign language learning project (Vilke & Vrhovac 1993; 1995; Vrhovac et al., 1999) the main approach was the communicative approach – exposing children to intensive, contextualised language input – and since children were partly learning and partly acquiring English as a foreign language[2], our first aim was to see whether these children were using multi-word units in their English language production. Our hypothesis was that most of the children would be using multi-word units. We further wanted to explore what type of units the project children were using and to what extent.

Our second aim was to compare the use of multi-word units in the children's production in English to the use of multi-word units in the children's mother tongue production.

Research methodology

For the purposes of our research we tested 100 11-year-old children from eight different schools in Zagreb. At the time of testing, the children were finishing their fifth

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[2] Because of the context of learning – both formal (school) and informal (TV, internet), and the age of the learners (6-10) when they cannot be exposed to metalinguistic explanations.

year of intensive English language learning. They were given the task to retell a story (a 10-minute version of *The Beauty and the Beast*) that they had just seen on video. The whole class watched the video together twice. Immediately after watching, the children came individually to a separate room where they retold the story to the interviewer, first in English and then in Croatian. The stories were tape-recorded and then transcribed.

The reasons for choosing a story retelling task as the data elicitation instrument were the following:

- retelling a story is a complex linguistic and communicative act that enables us to gather a rich amount of data in a relatively short period of time
- story retelling is a contextualised communicative act which allows for a higher authenticity of the data gathered
- children like listening to and telling stories; we assumed that this would make their production more natural and relaxed during the interview.

Results and discussion

Part one

A detailed analysis of 100 children's retellings in English showed the following:

1. all children, irrespective of the linguistic and communicative quality of their stories, used multi-word units during the story retelling task [3]
2. as the linguistic and communicative quality of children's retelling increased, the diversity and accuracy of the used multi-word units increased too.

According to the second finding we could group children's stories into three categories.

Category A

Retellings in which only the most frequent multi-word units from the storytelling context were used (for example, *One day... Once upon a time...*). They were produced by children of lower linguistic and narrative competence, that is, children who in their speech often made morphosyntactic errors, and whose stories were rather short (45 words per story on average).

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[3]   We would like to stress that we did not do a statistical analysis of the use of multi-word units in the children's stories for two main reasons. First, vocabulary studies have not yet come up with a reliable solution of how to account for the different lengths of the analysed texts (Vermeer, 2000; Read & Chapelle, 2001). Second, in our study, we even had a more complex problem – the different lengths of children's stories were combined with the different lengths of the used multi-word units (ranging from two words, as in phrasal verbs, to several words, as in lexical phrases). All attempts to express our data in numerical terms proved non-transparent.

Category B

Retellings in which a wider range of multi-word units was used, but these units usually had some kind of collocational error (grammatical or semantic).

Category C

Retellings in which multi-word units were used accurately for most of the time. They were produced by the children with the highest linguistic and narrative competence among the children interviewed, that is, children who rarely made morphosyntactic errors and whose stories were rather long (591 words per story on average).

The analysis of errors in children's multi-word units suggested the following classification:

· errors caused by the children's lack of morphosyntactic competence (usually the wrong use of the verb tense – present instead of past tense, wrong formation of the past tense; errors in subject-verb concordance; frequent use of *he* instead of *she*).

· Errors caused by mother tongue interference (for example: *after some two or three days; *want for the present; *riding on horse;* yell on; *told with a gentle voice; *on half of way; *forgot on the time; *beginning of their together life*).

· 'collocational' errors (these errors actually show the high level of the learner's communicative competence in the foreign language: the learner 'feels' that there is a lexical unit that best expresses what he/she wants to say in English, but he/she can't produce it accurately). For example: *Not die to me!; *It looked that as there was a spring; *He didn't want she to...; *Beast was no more beast; *threw a spell over him; *in stand of; *He translated to the beautiful prince; *save him for dying...*

The above-listed examples might suggest that the project learners had a kind of linguistic intuition about the existence of multi-word units in spoken discourse. However, the ability to use correctly less frequent and more complex multi-word units develops gradually and is related to higher levels of linguistic and narrative (communicative) competence. We could also suppose that those learners, because of their age and the teaching methods[4] they were exposed to, were not conscious of the communicative effectiveness of the use of multi-word units in everyday speech. Therefore, the fact that even the weaker learners used multi-word units in their stories might suggest two things:

· multi-word units were highly frequent in the input children were exposed to (within or outside the school context);

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[4] During the early years of English language learning there was no explicit teaching or awareness raising of the presence of multi-word units in spoken discourse.

- the project children were, at least partly, acquiring English as a foreign language and in some aspects of their speech achieved almost native-like competence.

The last observation could be further confirmed by the fact that in the parts of their stories where they used direct speech or introduced more personal elements (e.g., expressed uncertainty), children almost exclusively used multi-word units. We will list a few examples: *I think it was...; I'm not sure; I don't know; I can't remember now; ... something like that; How should I say; Go away!; Leave me alone!; It doesn't matter; I don't want to!; All right!; I'm gonna die.*

Part two

A detailed analysis of 100 children's stories retold in Croatian showed the following:
1. the number of multi-word units in the Croatian story of a particular learner seemed, on average, lower than the number of multi-word units in the English story of the same learner.
2. multi-word units in the Croatian stories also contained errors.

A contrastive analysis of the use of multi-word units in the English and Croatian retellings showed that English and Croatian express their idiomaticity in different ways. This would imply that our young learners need a very rich exposure to English spoken discourse in order to acquire its formulaic nature. However, some of the Croatian multi-word units are parallel to the English constructions – this can be used as a basis for the positive transfer from the mother tongue into the foreign language.

As for the errors in the Croatian version of the children's stories, some of them show that the development of multi-word knowledge is a gradual process, not only in the foreign language but also in the mother tongue. Examples are the following: *vratiti na život; *sve mu je bilo bolje i bolje; *izgrizla u ruku; *molila je da oprosti za svog oca; *napravio ples,* etc. Some collocational errors were even caused by the interference of English (e.g., *bacila je preko toga princa jednu kletvu; *ozdravio u nekoliko minuta*), but they were only present in the retellings of children who had achieved better competence in English. The presence of errors (or mistakes?!) in children's speech production in the mother tongue has to be kept in mind when we evaluate children's speech production in the foreign language.

Conclusion

The above-presented research results strengthened our positive attitude towards a systematic introduction of multi-word units into early English language teaching. Several factors work in favour of the lexical approach.

The most important one is that the lexical approach is not really a new approach in the early foreign language teaching in Croatia. The project's approach to teaching and learning was extremely communicatively oriented. This went along with the notion that words and formulaic phrases are the children's first and main communicative tool, both in first and in foreign language acquisition and production. The project children were exposed to lexical (one-word and multi-word) richness through stories, role-plays, songs, video; however, this approach was not verbalised in terms of the latest terminology of the lexical approach.

Another important fact is that in the project the stress was on foreign language acquisition and, according to current knowledge, it seems that spontaneous acquisition is the 'approach' that works best with the lexical approach.

We should also mention the fact that intensive foreign language teaching starting from the first grade gives teachers enough time to introduce new approaches into their work and observe their effectiveness.

We can conclude that what remains to be done is to make language teachers more aware of the latest research findings that explain the nature and stress the importance and the frequency of multi-word units in everyday speech. This could prompt teachers to introduce even more lexical expressions into their own speech and into communicatively-oriented classroom activities, the effectiveness of which has already been verified.

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Renata Šamo

READING: Some Theoretical Issues and Their Pedagogical Implications

In the past there have been many influential theories and some of these have been reflected in a number of methods of teaching reading and the publishing of materials to support the methods. However, the controversies about reading have offered no single definitive all-encompassing theory or method concerning the crucial questions: what is reading, what is it that readers have to do, and how is reading to be taught? Nowadays it seems important for teachers to have some recent insights into reading as a dynamic process which involves author-text-reader interaction, that is, to make students, even young learners, aware of intertextual as well as intratextual interaction in order to help them deal with a wide range of information sources on their own.

1. Introduction

In order to answer how children learn to read, we need some broader understanding about a complex process that has perhaps generated more controversy than any other aspect of language teaching. The discussions and debates have thus related to beliefs about what reading is, what it is that readers have to do and how reading is to be taught. In the past there have been many influential theories and some of these have been reflected in a number of methods of teaching reading and the publishing of materials to support the methods.

Anyway, the controversies about reading have offered no single definitive all-encompassing theory or method, and one of the things teachers have to do in order to feel in control is to inform themselves. The aim of this chapter is to provide a brief historical overview and then to look more closely at some recent significant developments within the theory of L2 reading, inevitably influenced by some accounts of L1 reading.

2. Reading: Models and Methods

Although there has been a range of models, based on different theoretical assumptions of the process of reading, the three following categories have been presented in literature on reading as the most remarkable ones: *the bottom-up model*, *the top-down model* and *the interactive models*. Presenting two contrasting views, the first two models have aroused discussions on the concept of reading with some interactive models as their direct result.

Before providing a historical perspective on the issues, it is necessary to define *a model of reading*. The term refers to ''... a systematic set of guesses or predictions about a hidden process, which are then subjected to ''testing'' through experimental studies'' (Davies, 1995:57).

2.1. Bottom-up Model

The bottom-up or *outside-in model* is known to be the first abstract theory of reading. According to its basic assumptions, reading is viewed as the sequential processing of text: from letters to sounds, to words, to sentences and finally to meaning and thinking. However, it should be noted that one of the main weaknesses of such a simplified concept of reading is as follows: it is hardly possible to suppose that fluent adult readers pay equal attention to each letter or each word in text.

Today it is quite clear that progression through text, implied by the bottom-up model, cannot reflect the sequence of reading instruction in educational contexts because it is assumed that the stated serial processing imposes a heavy burden on short-term or working memory. In beginning to read, such a burden can be ineffective, forcing the reader to rely heavily on the lower-level sources of information such as grapho-phonemic correspondences.

However, the bottom-up model was used to support approaches to the teaching of reading which focused attention on decontextualized reading both in L1 and L2 reading. The distinctive feature of the main early methods of reading – *alphabetic*, *phonic* and *look-and-say method* – is the unit to be used in the beginning reading instruction. Starting with letters or sounds, and how important the phonic knowledge is in the initial recognition of meaningful words, phrases or sentences – represented the key issue among educationalists during the first half of the 20th century.

The initial conventional view of reading as a hierarchy of specific skills, a taxonomy of behaviours, that are to be gradually acquired by applying a firmly structured reading programme, influenced the approach to the teaching of reading that was primarily focused on the ability to read words.

In the 1970s, however, a group of influential psycholinguists, headed by **F. Smith** and **K. Goodman**, changed the previous behaviouristic view of reading into a new concept of reading as a psycholinguistic process.

2.2. Top-down Model

In sharp contrast to the bottom-up model, the top-down or *inside-out model* implies the reverse of the processing sequence, including thinking and meaning at a very early stage of reading. Minimal attention is thus paid to grapho-phonemic correspondences, but special emphasis is placed on the higher-level sources of information, predominantly on guessing and prediction.

The essence of the top-down model is to be found in the well-known definition of reading as "*a psycholinguistic guessing game*".[5] Not only has K. Goodman contributed to attempts at defining reading, but he also redirected the previous concept of reading as mechanical decoding. As is known, *the psycholinguistic model* relies heavily on information stored in memory. According to Goodman, the skilled reader, in his search for meaning, tends to pay maximum attention to the context at the expense of attention to visual information in text.

The view of reading as ''*the reduction of uncertainty*'' (Wallace, 1992:39) reveals that F. Smith has also stressed the importance of selectivity during the process of reading. The author has argued that the reader is allowed to make a choice of his own in order to grasp a proper meaning of the text being read. However, F. Smith has claimed that the reader's choice is restricted by his knowledge of relevant features of language and text (*linguistic knowledge*) and by his knowledge of the world (*schematic knowledge*). Therefore, the brain, with its prior knowledge of the world, of how texts are written, and of grammatical conventions, appears to contribute more information to reading than the visual symbols on the printed page. Deeply convinced that *"children learn to read only by reading"*, the author has been a serious opponent to the decontextualized teaching of reading.

The change from decontextualized reading to reading in the context of meaning has also resulted in some new reading goals. As we have already pointed out, earlier approaches tended to emphasise accurate word recognition not only as the reading goal but also as the standard of successful reading of children (and adults, as well). According to the authors of the psycholinguistic model, however, the reconstruction of the writer's ideas and messages, with meaning in the central role, has become the ultimate reading goal. In order to approximate the writer's intended message, the skilled reader interacts with the text, using the existing knowledge as well as the information on the page.

Accounts of reading as a selective process show that the two theorists have not considered each source of information to be equally important to each reader. Moreover, the main proponents of the alternative view of reading have also pointed out the wrong assumption that insistence on error-free recognition of each word on the page or on the correct interpretation of each sound in the text can guarantee a better understanding.

The implication for teaching is inescapable. Instead of assuming that children can only read what they have been taught, Smith and Gooodman have assumed that they can only read what they understand and can interact with, drawing on their experi-

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[5]   Goodman published his famous article ''Reading: A Psycholinguistic Game'' in *Journal of the Reading Specialist* 6 (1967).

ences and concepts. Due to the very strong emphasis on reading aimed at understanding meaning, silent reading is the preferred mode because reading aloud is believed to make additional demands on the person reading, often resulting in a loss of real meaning. Consequently, teachers are the ones who help their students to select the most productive clues at different levels, while students become active partners during the process, respecting the support of adults or the support of their more skilled classmates. A proper selection of meaningful texts is then viewed as one of the key issues of the new approach to reading.

The first serious attempt at introducing reading into the context of meaning and the real reading needs of children was represented by *the story method* which tried to promote the importance of the natural interrelation between spoken and written language. Although the launch of stories at an early stage of teaching was welcomed as a rescue from those monotonous drills in identifying words on flash cards, the initial enthusiasm of many teachers gave way to dissatisfaction; so the search for more interesting reading materials continued. They still lacked some new materials which could make the teaching of reading much more motivating and enjoyable.

2.3. Interactive Models[6]

The importance of the visual and cognitive processing of text is best implied by the interactive model of reading, with the reading process largely following the bottom-up model but with input from the top-down processes when necessary.

Evidence for the currently accepted view of reading comes primarily from eye-movement data, which has become available over the past 10 or 15 years. The development of sophisticated but powerful laser and computer technology has permitted much more accurate recording of eye movements. It indicates that under normal conditions word recognition occurs very rapidly, generally in less than a quarter of a second, and that it occurs automatically, without the reader making use of context.

Hence, there is no time for generating and testing all the hypotheses that the psycholinguistic model implies. The current view best fits the assumption of rapid, automatic, context-free word recognition in the normal reading of fluent readers. However, this model does not deny the use of context as an aid to comprehension, nor is phonemic decoding ruled out, but these are both assumed to be aids to word recognition which are often unnecessary for fluent readers. It is in this respect that reading is now regarded as *an interactive-compensatory process*.[7]

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[6]   A brief overview of some influential interactive models can be found in Davies (1995).

[7]   In order to refer to one of the recent views of reading, we have accepted the interactive model, proposed by K. Stanovich. The author presented his theory in the article ''Towards an Interactive-Compensatory Model: Individual Differences in the Development of Reading Fluency'' (*Reading Research Quaterly* 16, 1980, 32-71).

What are the main pedagogical implications? First of all, it is important to make the distinction between *being* a fluent reader and *learning to become* a fluent reader. While a child is learning to read, the compensatory part of the reading process is vital. When children are building up confidence and gradually extending their sight vocabulary, they need to use all the tools available, including intelligent guesswork. The recent view of reading has consequently led to some new demands for the child regarding his repertoire of reading strategies, especially *phonic knowledge* and *phonemic awareness*.

Children have to learn how the smallest units of spoken sound, phonemes, correspond to their written forms, graphemes, and, in order to do this successfully, they need to develop the ability to hear sounds in their heads and categorize them. Children should know that a single change of phonemes or graphemes can produce a quite different word with a very different meaning, for example *hot* and *pot*.

Some recent British research, done by **L. Bradley**, **P. Bryant** and **U. Goswami**, has centred attention on children's awareness of the phonemic structure of spoken words as a strong indicator of future success in learning to read and progress in spelling. It has been shown that there is a clear link between the early development of sensitivity to rhyme or alliteration and progress in reading. For many children this sensitivity develops informally through exposure to nursery rhymes long before they go to school. One of the most significant recent developments has therefore been in our understanding of phonics in children's reading and in particular the contribution that phonemic awareness can make towards success in reading.

During the 1980s, the development of life-long reading habits in accordance with the real reading needs of readers turned out to be the ultimate goal of the reading instruction. The new goal also required a new approach of teachers to their task. Instead of helping children how to learn to read, teachers became aware of their additional responsibility related to the selection of well-written stories and a concern for individual differences among children, including their reading abilities, too.

Dissatisfaction with a vast range of graded reading schemes caused louder and louder claims for the introduction of children's literature of high quality which could meet the social, emotional, aesthetic, and, above all, cognitive demands of children in L1 and L2 reading. So, *the real books method* has been considered quite appropriate to the holistic concept of communication and teaching of language skills.

More recently, **L. Waterland** has published an interesting booklet, describing a specific "*apprenticeship approach*" to teaching reading. *Read with Me* (1985) has become a kind of handbook for parents, children's care-takers and teachers. By adding a social dimension to the psycholinguistic concept of reading, Waterland has supposed that children who perceive reading at home and reading at school as a similar activity seem

willing to share their reading experiences with others. Such *shared reading* is based on the proposition[8] that in "many ways the acquisition of written language is comparable with that of spoken language" (Waterland, 1985:13). Its secret lies in adults' reading to and with the child as they spoke to and with him while he was learning to talk.

What are the weak points of using real books? The most serious criticism start from the assumption that reading can be learned without direct teaching and that reading can only be taught either through reading schemes or through real books. Besides, all books that are not part of a reading scheme are considered "good", whereas all reading scheme books are not. The real book approach also suffers because it became associated with another assumption, that is, phonic teaching is not necessary. Huge public controversy about these issues led to a number of government-initiated surveys during the 1990s.

3. L2 Reading: Theory and Acquisition

Similar trends to those outlined above can be observed in the theory of second language reading. The most important aspects of learning to read in a second language have also resulted from the theoretical and practical considerations during the last two decades. Besides, the research on L2 reading acquisition has broadened our understandings about the process of reading as a complex interaction at different levels. According to **K. Koda**, three fundamental differences between L1 and L2 reading should be noted:

1. the L2 reader has prior reading experience
2. L2 reading involves at least two languages
3. L2 reading ability develops before adequate oral fluency is achieved.

I. van Wijnendaele (1998) has pointed out, however, that the factors listed above do not include socio-cultural factors which are known to influence L2 reading acquisition. The same author has also given a review of the most influential theories that have been proposed for L2 reading acquisition. Some researchers explain the differences between L1 and L2 readers predominantly in terms of *automatic* versus *controlled* processes. Other theorists explain these differences in terms of *bottom-up* versus *top-down* processing, while a third group of authors deals with the question whether reading problems in a second language are *reading problems* or *language problems*.

3.1. Automatic versus Controlled Processing

Learning to read, viewed as the acquisition of complex cognitive skills, implies two types of operations – automatic and controlled processes. Automatic processes oc-

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[8]   There are five of them, see in *Read with Me*. The cited proposition is the first one in the list.

cur quickly without requiring special attention, whereas controlled processes are slow and source demanding. According to the first group of researchers, reading acquisition can be considered as a progressive transition from controlled to automatic processing. Learners beginning to read try to cope with phonological information in a controlled way (one-by-one grapho-phonemic matching) until they have a command of word decoding. The controlled processes then shift to syntax and semantics. The more automatic decoding abilities he has, the more attention the reader can direct to sentence comprehension. The extent to which certain reading skills have become automatic or still require controlled processing can be indicated by different strategies used by good and poor readers. Good readers can use their syntactic and semantic knowledge of the language to grasp the meaning of the text. In contrast, poor readers have less efficient strategies available.

The differences between L1 and L2 reading in terms of the transition from controlled to automatic processing have indicated more syntactic errors than lexical ones in poor L2 readers. This finding has generally been ascribed to the fact that native speakers have a well- developed syntactic knowledge in spoken language which enables them to prevent syntactic errors in reading. L2 readers, however, lack the effortless access to this information. Reading performance profits from the presence of well-mastered, automatic processing in the spoken language, as we have seen above.

Another important issue in the discussion on automatic versus controlled processes is the extent to which L2 reading acquisition can profit from the existence of automatic reading processes in the first language. It should be noted here that early studies into how and when the first language influences the second language mostly examined the negative outcomes of cross-linguistic transfer in reading. Later, researchers started to look for positive transfer as well. They have argued that positive transfer can provide information on how to make instructions in L2 teaching optimal. Their main concern has been to help the learner to profit from competences already achieved in the mother tongue. Moreover, it has been believed that L2 learners must be aware of the formal structural similarities between languages, as these are not enough for transfer to occur.

3.2. Bottom-up versus Top-down Processing

We have already explained that the distinctive feature between these two approaches is the nature of their input. In the literature on L2 reading acquisition, however, a lot of attention has been paid to top-down processes that are also called *concept-based processes*. This theory of reading emphasises the importance of background knowledge for understanding written text. Due to the fact that the reader's background knowledge is strongly influenced by his own culture, L2 readers may have difficulties in building the right schema for the text they are reading. In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of theo-

ries have been proposed with the basic message that reading comprehension depends critically on the reader's ability to relate information from the text to already existing background knowledge, which may generate most of L2 reading problems.

Being among the first theorists who pointed out the limitations of the top-down way of information processing, **D.E. Eskey** (as cited in Alderson, 2000) has argued that the stated processes consider fluent reading as correct text understanding and thus de-emphasise the perceptual and decoding aspect of the reading process. According to Eskey, this model may be accurate for fluent readers but underestimates the problems less proficient readers face. The lack of attention to decoding problems, he believes, may produce a distorted picture of the real problems of L2 readers. The research, done by the second group of authors, has resulted in the conclusion that the influence of bottom-up processes in word recognition decreases as children become more experienced. These processes are then more or less replaced by top-down influences in combination with socio-cultural factors.

However, the problems with the top-down model have turned many researchers to interactive models (see 2.3.), which are based on a constant interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes during reading. Good readers are nowadays considered not only as good text decoders but also as good text interpreters.

3.3. Language or Reading Problem?

Are problems in second language reading language or reading problems? The question should be considered within the distinction between *the universal* and *the specific* approach.

The supporters of the universal approach have focused their attention on the conditions which inhibit or facilitate the transfer of reading skills from the first to the second language. According to **J. Cummins** and his often cited *Threshold Hypothesis*, language transfer is only possible after a threshold level of L2 proficiency has been attained. Cummins' theory has been acknowledged, among others, by **J.E. Brisbois** (as cited in van Wijnendaele, 1998), as well as his conclusion that reading skills can be transferred between languages, especially in proficient L2 learners. However, this has been criticised for ignoring the cross-linguistic dimension of language processing.

In contrast, the language-specific view is based on the assumption that the linguistic features essential for understanding and producing language are not universal, that is, persons with different language backgrounds use different strategies when reading in a non-native language. According to R. Berman (as cited in van Wijnendaele, 1998), good syntactic knowledge is important. The author has pointed out that successful readers are able to extract meaning from text because they understand its syntactic structure.

Is L2 reading a language problem or a reading problem? In his first chapter of *Reading in a Foreign Language* (1985), **Ch. Alderson** concluded: ''... it appears to be both a language and a reading problem, but with firmer evidence that it is a language problem, for lower levels of foreign language competence, than a reading problem'' (p. 24).

The theoretical models of reading outlined above relate to the kind of information readers focus on while reading a text. In the same light, **J. Devine** suggests that readers can be basically divided into ''sound-centred readers'' (who pay attention to the graphemic and phonemic aspects of a text) and ''meaning-centred readers'' (who pay attention to text understanding). As we are mostly concerned about the demanding process of L2 reading, it may be of particular interest to show a relationship between the theories of reading and the reader's success in text comprehension. According to the same author, the sound-based model of reading, combined with the low L2 proficiency, results in a strongly limited transfer of effective reading abilities from the first to the second language, whereas the negative effects of poor L2 knowledge can be overcome by the meaning-based approach and the reader is permitted to transfer good reading strategies from L1 to L2. Although L2 reading is mostly viewed as a language problem, emotional and socio-cultural factors may also be considered.

L2 reading in its educational context(s) has also reflected similar trends. Learning to read and reading for enjoyment in L1 classrooms have thus been related to *intensive reading* and *extensive reading* in L2 classrooms. The latter distinction is no longer considered useful as recent research has shown that the child's developing competence requires a variety of reading experiences – from word recognition games and pronunciation practice to problem-solving activities. The very recent story-based approach to reading has opened up the matter of using simplified or authentic storybooks with children learning English. Quite obviously, it coincides with the matter of using graded schemes or real books with English-speaking children. The advocates of authentic storybooks have claimed that they provide real language, bringing the real world into the classroom. L2 teachers should know that storybooks, apart from being motivating for children, can '' ... trigger a wealth of purposeful language-learning activities '' (Ellis & Brewster, 1991:16). Of course, if they are used in a proper way, and the methodology of using storybooks has been given in the handbook stated above.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the theory of L1/L2 reading and the teaching of L1/L2 reading are closely interrelated. Besides, it has indicated that research on such a complex and subtle process can never be static. Recent insights into reading have revealed a gradual move away from a strictly private, individual activity towards a dynamic

process which involves an author-text-reader interaction. From the teaching point of view, it should be stressed that the process of reading as such implies the so-called intertextual as well as intratextual interaction. So, the teacher is supposed to inform himself in order to make the student aware of all the complexity of reading and to help him become a strategic reader who will be able to deal with a wide range of information sources on his own.

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Renata Šamo
THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC READERS

Introduction

Our aim in this chapter is to present a view of reading, which emphasises a reader's progression through a text, that is, looking at reading as a process rather than as a product.

For the last two decades, researchers into both first and second language reading have argued against the static view of reading. They have proposed a dynamic relationship between text and reader instead.

It is therefore possible to talk of product and process approaches to reading; moreover, it is even possible in relation to the learning and teaching of early reading. A product approach to reading is generally focused on assessing outcomes of reading (e.g., surface fluency during reading aloud or answers to the comprehension questions which usually follow a reading task) whereas a process approach is to stress how texts are processed by readers, with a special emphasis on the nature of reading miscues. The latter approach is also known as a strategy-based approach because reading strategies actually involve ways of processing text which may be determined by the text itself, the reader's purpose and the reading situation.

Strategic approach to reading

Just as learning to read should particularly be viewed as a developmental process, strategic reading can be considered fundamental to the development and education of children. According to Paris, Wasik and Turner (1991), there are six crucial reasons. These are as follows:

First, strategies allow readers to elaborate, organise, and evaluate information derived from text. Second, the acquisition of reading strategies coincides and overlaps with the development during childhood of multiple cognitive strategies to enhance attention, memory, communication, and learning. Third, strategies are controlled by readers; they are personal cognitive tools that can be used selectively and flexibly. Fourth, strategic reading reflects metacognition and motivation because readers need to have both the knowledge and disposition to use strategies. Fifth, strategies that foster reading and thinking can be taught directly by teachers. And sixth, strategic reading can enhance learning throughout the curriculum (p. 609).

It seems that great responsibility is put on the teacher because the strategy-oriented teacher is supposed to be concerned about observing readers in the course of reading as well as assessing outcomes. Above all, he or she is expected to be interested in the reader's own perception of problems during the reading process. A strategic approach to the teaching of reading thus demonstrates interest in what goes on during reading and the nature of outcomes, as well. Instead of "hearing learners read" and focusing exclusively on the correct pronunciation or appropriate answers to the comprehension questions, the teacher can also encourage the use of shared knowledge in the course of reading.

In our usual teaching context, there may be some dilemmas on how to turn to the developmental process of strategic reading. Our special focus in this chapter is on one of the possible suggestions aimed at making young readers aware of what reading really is and how it is to be best learnt. It seems especially important to note that the suggested procedure can be both applied in the teaching of first and second language reading.

As we have mentioned above, one of the most common reading tasks is a comprehension "test". No matter which type of test you choose (e.g., multiple-choice or some other questions), it is essential to make questions which still check both your pupils' explicit and implicit understanding of a given text. In other words, readers must be tempted to read the lines, to read between the lines, and to read beyond the lines. As for the text itself, we would suggest a text basically in accordance with their actual reading competence – neither too demanding nor too easy to understand. The point is to face young readers (or other readers, of course) with certain problems in processing the text but not to make them feel inhibited by the reading task itself. Your choice of reading materials can include everyday stories with main characters at the age of your pupils and with quite similar life experiences as well as unusual stories far from reality with main characters whose adventures will elicit children's imagination to a higher degree.

At this point you may wonder what is so special about the whole procedure in terms of the strategic approach to reading. Right, this is something we usually do in our reading lessons. That is why we suggest that you ask your learners to fill in the questionnaire (in Croatian, L1) immediately after reading the text silently and answering the comprehension questions (see Appendices). In order to find out some valuable details about their strategic behaviour, ask your pupils to remember the ways in which they did their reading task and to write down whatever they want you to know about their reading, but it would be a good idea to read through the questionnaire together with your pupils before you set them the task. They must understand what they are asked and what the purpose of such an activity is. We believe that an open questionnaire will give them enough space and opportunity to reflect on their own

pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading physical and mental activities. Do not limit the time available for answering the questions and, what is even more important, explain that there are no wrong answers because all their answers will be accepted, as they are supposed to write down what they really believe and what they have actually done while doing the task.

We consider it extremely important to point out the categories of questions included in the questionnaire. A careful survey will reveal three groups of questions: those which are related to their concept of L2 reading, those which reflect their strategic behaviour, and those which allow them to evaluate their own reading.

As Question 10 (Appendix 3) refers to the very concept of reading, we would rather start with this category which is to reveal how your pupils perceive reading, not only in this particular context but in any other reading situation, as well. How familiar with the concept of print and, above all, with the nature of reading they are will certainly indicate how much attention they pay to meaning.

Within the second category of questions (1-9, Appendix 3), the most important one in terms of strategic reading, it is possible to identify the following components of the reading process: previewing, monitoring, meaning construction, dealing with unfamiliar words, identifying main ideas, recognising and interpreting comprehension failures, and text evaluation and reflecting. It seems quite obvious that such a questionnaire views the process of reading as a dynamic sequence of different activities before, during, and after reading a text. There is no doubt that you can expect useful data about your own pupils and their way of thinking or acting in a test-like reading situation which should be viewed as classroom research whose results are to be applied diagnostically in the whole process of learning.

From the psychological point of view, the question considering your pupils' reading self-esteem (Question 11, App. 3) is very important. It gives you the opportunity to see how young learners perceive themselves as readers, but also offers some additional clue about their understanding of what reading is and what happens when we read. The obtained results may also give you certain information about their concept of L2 reading in comparison with their perception of L1 reading.

Conclusion

Let us conclude this chapter with our belief that one of the distinctive features of the strategy-oriented teacher in the context of L1 as well as L2 reading in his or her ability to encourage pupils towards a productive interaction with the text in accordance with the cognitive, social and cultural needs of the readers themselves. Being constantly encouraged by their teachers to behave strategically, pupils will have a good chance to

become autonomous learners which is considered the ultimate goal of modern teaching. Of course, the sooner they start learning this way the better long-term results they will be able to obtain.

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APPENDICES

It is evening, and it is very cold. There is a bad storm, and it is snowing. The girls are sitting near the fire and listening to their mother. Then somebody knocks at the door. The mother stops reading.

She says, ''Somebody's out there in the cold snow. Open the door quickly, Snow-white.''

Snow-white opens the door. Then she runs to her mother. A big, brown bear is at the door, and they are all afraid.

''I'm not going to eat you, ''the bear says, ''but I'm very cold and hungry.''

The mother stands up. ''Come in,'' she says. ''It's warm and dry here, and we've got lots of food.''

She gives the bear some food, and then he lies down on the floor near the fire. He stays for the night. In the morning the sun shines. Snow-white opens the door, and he goes away.

1. What's the season in the story?

   a) It's autumn.
   b) It's winter.
   c) It's spring.

2. Is it warm in the room?

   a) Yes, it is warm.
   b) No, it's very cold.
   c) I don't know.

3. What's the mother doing?

   a) She's cooking dinner.
   b) She's reading a book.
   c) She's sleeping in her bed.

4. The animal at the door is:

   a) small
   b) strong
   c) not very big.

5. What's he going to do?

    a) He's going to read a book with Snow-white's family.
    b) He's going to eat them.
    c) He's going to have some food.

6. He is sleeping:

    a) outside
    b) in Snow-white's bed
    c) in the room.

7. He goes away:

    a) at midnight
    b) in the evening
    c) in the morning.

8. What's his colour?

    a) Black and white.
    b) Only white.
    c) Brown.

9. Who gives the bear some food?

    a) Snow-white.
    b) Snow-white and her sister.
    c) Their mother.

10. In the morning at the end of the story the bear is:

    a) Very cold and hungry.
    b) Warm and happy.
    c) Sleepy.

Note: Pupils are to be given the text and the comprehension questions at the same time.

1. Što si prvo učino kada si dobio tekst?[When you got the text, what did you do first?]

2. Kako si čitao ovaj tekst (sporo, poluglasno, u sebi, pažljivo, pratio sam tekst prstom ili olovkom, prevodio sam u sebi, ili na neki drugi način)? [How did you read this text (slowly, half-loudly, silently, carefully, following the text with a finger or a pencil, translating in your mind, or in some other way)?]

3. Koliko si puta pročitao tekst da bi mogao odgovoriti na pitanja? [Kow many times did you read the text to be able to answer the questions?]

4. Je li ti bilo lako ili teško razumjeti tekst? Objasni zašto. [Was it easy or difficult for you to understand the text? Explain why.]

5. Jesi li u tekstu pronašao neku nepoznatu riječ ili riječi? Koju/koje? [Did you find any unfamiliar words in the text? Which?]

6. Kako si odredio njezino značenje? [How did you determine their meaning?]

7. Koji dio priče smatraš najvažnijim? Zašto? [Which part do you consider the most important? Why?]

8. Na koje pitanje nisi uspio lako ili odmah odgovoriti? Zašto? Što si učinio da i na to pitanje pokušaš odgovoriti? [Which question didn't you manage to answer easily or straight away? What did you do to answer that question too?]

9. Postoji li još neko pitanje koje ti je zadalo poteškoće? Koje? Objasni kao i u pitanju broj 8! [Is there any other questions which caused difficulty? Which? Explain like you did in question 8!]

10. Što znači čitati na stranom, engleskom jeziku? [What does reading in a foreign language, English mean?]

11. Što misliš kako čitaš na engleskom jeziku? Zašto tako misliš? [How well do you think you read in English? Why do you think so?]

Note: Pupils are not to be allowed to have access to the text and the comprehension questions while answering the questionnaire.

Smiljana Narančić Kovač
Danijel Likar

READING AUTHENTIC STORIES IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE WITH SEVENTH GRADERS

The benefits of using authentic unabridged literary texts in EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching go beyond the improvement of the students' basic skills and their overall linguistic competence. At present, both language-oriented and literature-oriented teaching materials based upon literary texts are available, and are becoming more popular with EFL teachers and their students. The examples of the former are Bassnett and Grundy's *Language through Literature* (1993), published as a resource book for teachers, as well as McRae and Pantaleoni's *Chapter & Verse,* the aim of which is to "encourage students' initiative, autonomy and development by increasing their linguistic and communicative competence through classroom interaction" (1990: *v*). The examples of the latter are Gower and Pearson's *Reading Literature* (1986) and Collie and Porter Ladousse's *Paths into Poetry* (1991), both aimed at students from an intermediate level upwards. Using literature with younger learners, however, especially in Croatia, has mostly been connected with using authentic picture books such as Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1970) in class.

The introduction of literary texts in EFL teaching to pre-intermediate students aged 11 to 15 involves problems of two kinds. On one hand, the students still possess limited linguistic competence; on the other hand, it is presumed that their literary interests are usually above the level of the available texts of an appropriate linguistic level.

In the present study the results of the first part of a larger-scale investigation are presented and analysed. An attempt was made to establish whether seventh graders, that is, 13 or 14-year-old students, learning English in regular Croatian schools are capable of reading authentic literary texts on their own, provided the texts are carefully chosen and methodologically prepared. The first section of the investigation tested the individual reading of and response to a shorter text, a modern fable. The research also included a survey on the students' reading habits both in Croatian and English and their competence, readiness, and response to individually reading a novel-length children's book, the results of which will be published separately. The final stage was optional and consisted of lending children various books of their own choice to read at their own pace. The investigation took place in Zagreb in May 2000.

Method

Subjects

The sample consisted of 111 seventh-grade students at two urban primary schools; most of them were aged 13 (there were eighteen aged 14, four aged 12 and one aged 15). There were 62 boys and 49 girls. Their overall academic achievement varied from low to excellent, just like their English language marks at school, so that, in this respect, the sample is representative of the Croatian primary school population. Most of the children had been attending English classes from their first grade, as they were part of the Zagreb project introducing the learning of English at an early age in the formal school environment (Vilke & Vrhovac, 1993; Vilke & Vrhovac, 1995). Other children in the sample had started learning English early as well, either at school or in addition to their regular syllabus. There were only 12 students who had started as fourth graders or later.[9]

Materials

The story chosen for the investigation was A. Lobel's "The Camel Dances" from his book of new *Fables* (1980). A camel wants to become a ballet dancer. She works hard under the hot sun and then, when ready, she announces a recital. The audience openly disapproves of the camel's dancing. The camel continues dancing for herself, and it gives her "many years of pleasure."

The story meets several criteria that make it appropriate for the purposes of the research. It is rather short; it consists of only 177 words, that is, of 22 sentences of an average length of 8.05 words (189 words and 23 sentences including the title and the moral). The syntax is also simple and the text is repetitive in places (both words and structures are repeated). As a result, the text is not difficult from the linguistic point of view. However, the vocabulary and the author's expression are not restricted by the need to facilitate understanding of the text. It is obviously aimed at native speakers. For example, there are almost 20 vocabulary items that may pose difficulty, such as *to have one's heart set on something, arabesque, blistered, fatigue,* etc. Therefore, the readers in our sample needed to apply reading strategies such as making inferences about the vocabulary and relying upon overall understanding of the text. Finally, the text is intriguing in its content and the story is concluded in an unexpected way, which

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[9] This fact shows the difficulty the researchers encounter in finding a relevant control group in Zagreb to test the success of the project itself; on one hand, the children who do not start learning English by the fourth grade seem to be mostly those whose academic achievement seems to be on the poor side, on the other hand, it would be almost impossible to find an urban class of students who would be homogenous in this respect.

prompts the reader's reaction: the camel is not crushed by the difficult situation, but has enough self-assertiveness to overcome it.

The feedback form, the questionnaire, comprised 12 questions which were divided into three groups. The first six items were aimed at testing the students' understanding of the fable, four questions were aimed at the students' personal responses to the story, and two questions were evaluative: the subjects needed to assess their own understanding of the story and then to grade the story on a scale from 1 (not good at all) to 5 (excellent). The latter questions offered scales to choose from, and the former two groups required verbal answers. Four of the six questions from the first group included *yes/no* answers as well, but both solutions were acceptable. The subjects were asked to explain their choices in writing, and in one case they were even asked to provide two pieces of verbal feedback in addition to their *yes/no* choice. It is the verbal explanation that counted as relevant or irrelevant and was thus the signal of the students' understanding of the story. Individual opinion was required throughout the feedback form.

The language of the form was Croatian. The reasons for employing the subjects' mother tongue were to minimise the students' stress, to make it easier for them to express themselves and to reduce their reluctance to provide verbal answers due to anxiety caused by the possibility of error. Besides, it was not their EFL writing skills, but their understanding of and response to a literary text that were tested.

Procedure

The subjects were given the fable to read once at their own pace. The individual reading time was measured and noted, and then they were given the feedback sheets to fill in. They were allowed to ask the researchers questions. They were repeatedly reassured that any answer of theirs would be invaluable to the researchers, who were interested in their opinion. The atmosphere was friendly and highly cooperative. After the task had been completed, individual data was collected by means of a questionnaire.

Results

Time. As can be seen from Table 1, a great majority of the subjects (almost 70%; i.e., 37.84% + 31.53%) finished reading the fable in one or two minutes. Only about 8% needed over four minutes, but none five. However, the initial reading was smooth and none of the subjects reported any problems. Interestingly, in comparison, about 8% of the subjects taking part in this research reported in a separate questionnaire that they did not like to read at all, and about 15% of them did not find compulsory reading at school interesting in the least (Narančić Kovač, 2000: 106f).

Table 1. Time needed to read the story

Time: minutes	Students	%
1	42	37.84
2	35	31.53
3	25	22.52
4	9	8.11
5 and >5	0	0.00
Sum	**111**	**100.00**

The subjects' readiness to provide expanded verbal responses in writing can be seen from the totals given in **Table 2** and in the chart in **Fig. 1.** The response rate is particularly high for the first six questions, as only three responses were missing among the *yes/no* choices, and as only 35 verbal responses in explanation of the students' opinion were missing, which is only 5.26% of the total possible answers to those questions. The remaining 78 missing responses were among those to the second set of questions aimed at a personal reaction to the story, which is 17.57% of the total possible answers in this category.

Table 2. Students' responses

	No. of responses provided		No. of questions without response		Total possible responses
Yes/No questions	441	99.32%	3	0.68%	444
Comprehension (Questions 1-6)	631	94.74%	35	5.26%	666
Personal responses (Questions 7-10)	366	82.43%	78	17.57%	444
Evaluation (Questions 11-12)	222	100.00%	0		222
Total completed responses	**1219**	**91.52%**	**113**	**8.48%**	1332

It can be seen that the number of unanswered questions is very small indeed, which shows the subjects' enthusiasm for the task. It seems they reacted with interest both to the reading materials and to the methodological approach in which they were not evaluated, but where they had an opportunity to express their own opinions. Even more, they seemed to have been particularly ready to evaluate their own understanding of the story and the story itself. There were no responses missing in that category.
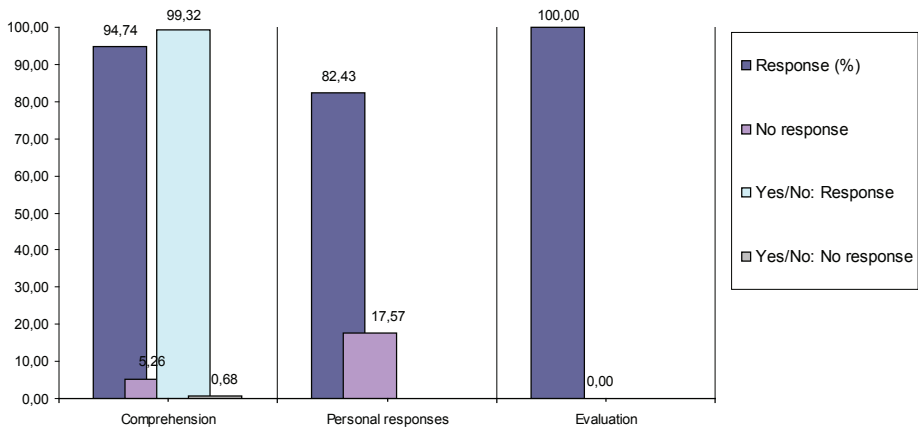
Fig. 1. Students' responses

Besides, as can be seen from **Table 3** and **Fig. 2**, as many as 100 subjects, or more than 90%, provided at least 8 verbal responses.

Table 3. Distribution of responses

Resp. per stud.	Responses provided	Relevant responses	Irrelevant responses
Value	f (subjects)	f (subjects)	f (subjects)
0	0	0	85
1	0	0	16
2	0	0	4
3	0	0	3
4	1	3	3
5	2	3	0
6	2	8	0
7	6	7	0
8	19	24	0
9	33	24	0
10	48	42	0
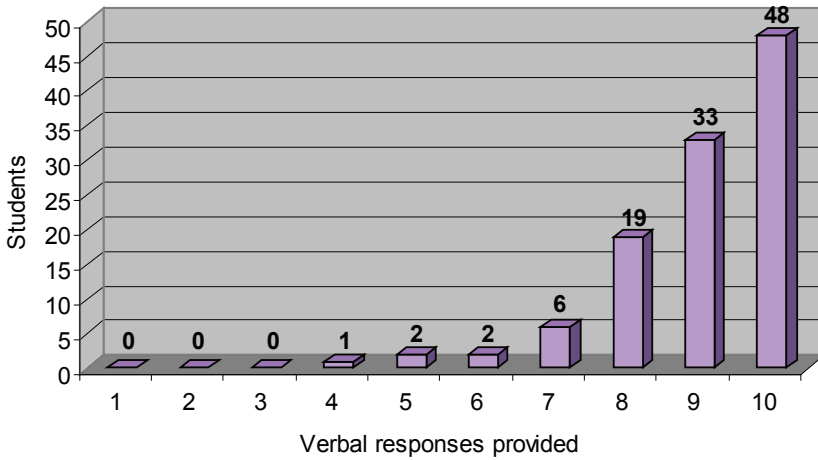
Fig. 2. Distribution of verbal responses

In addition to that, they seemed to have been exceptionally successful in providing relevant answers: as can be seen in **Fig. 3,** as many as 85 subjects (76.58%) provided only relevant responses (no irrelevant responses), which demonstrates their high level of understanding of the story and/or meaningful personal response to it. There were 16 (14.41%) students whose responses included only one irrelevant one, and only 10 students (9.01%) who had between two and four irrelevant responses. None had more.
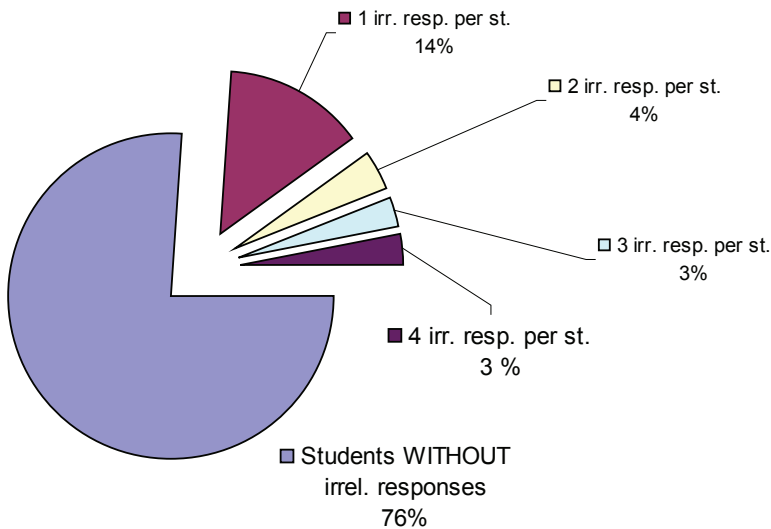
Fig. 3. Distribution of irrelevant responses

The distribution of relevant responses (**Fig. 4**) also shows the general success in understanding the story, because as many as 90 students in all provided 8 or more relevant answers, and almost half of those the maximum of 10 relevant answers.
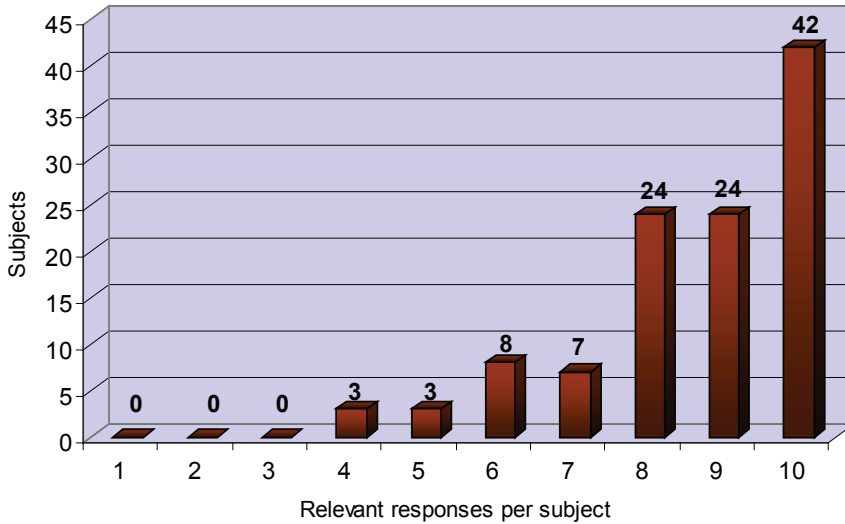
Fig. 4. Distribution of relevant responses

The distribution of the responses to individual questions covering reading comprehension and personal responses is shown in **Table 4.** High percentages of relevant answers persist throughout.

#	Questions	Resp	%	No R.	%	YES	%	NO	%	V. Rsp	%	Relev	%	Irrel.	%	No VR.	%
1	Did the camel ever learn to dance well?	111	100	0	0.00	41	36.94	70	63.06								
	Why do you think so?									110	99.10	105	95.45	5	4.55	1	0.90
2	Was the camel happy?	111	100	0	0.00	86	77.48**	27	24.32								
	Why do you think so?									110	99.10	106	96.36	4	3.64	1	0.90
3	The camel's best decision was...									98	88.29	94	95.92	4	4.08	13	11.71
4	Do you agree with the way... ?	108	97.30	3	2.70	39	36.11	69	63.89								
	- If not: what should they have said or done?									73**	65.77	71	97.26	2	2.74	1***	1.45
	Why do you think so?									98	88.29	91	92.86	7	7.69	13	11.71
5	Did the camel really care about the opinion of others?	111	100	0	0	18	16.22	93	83.78								
	Why do you think so?									107	96.40	104	97.20	3	2.88	4	3.60
6	Why did the camel announce the recital at all?									108	97.30	107	99.07	1	0.93	3	2.70
7	What dancing it to camel ... is to me.									95	85.59	92	96.84	3	3.26	16	14.41
8	This camel is similar to me in that									99	89.19	94	94.95	5	5.32	12	10.81
9	This camel is different from me in that									95	85.59	84	88.42	11	13.10	16	14.41
10	...reminds me of this camel because									77	69.37	73	94.81	4	5.48	34	30.63

Table 4. Distribution of the responses by question

*   *Two students decided both yes and no counted.*

**   *Six students provided an explanation to their yes choice.*

***   *One response was missing among 69 no choices: i.e. when the subjects were expected to provide an explanation.*

The distribution of 'yes' vs. 'no' answers to the four questions that offered a choice is also given. It can be seen that the students' answers were usually divided into two unequal groups, but they, as a rule, managed to convincingly support their individual choices in either case, demonstrating thus their excellent understanding of the text.

It can also be seen that providing personal responses posed a slightly more difficult problem than providing the answers referring to the story itself.

Verbal responses to comprehension questions. Examples of the subjects' verbal expansions of their choices demonstrate the versatile interpretative potential their individual readings offer.

Thus, in response to the **first question**, *Did the camel ever learn to dance well*, the most frequent argument for *yes* was along the lines of 'she worked so hard, she must have learned eventually after having practised for so long' kind, and for *no*, 'after all, she is a camel and they really are clumsy'. Both explanations were marked as relevant because they revealed an understanding of the problem the main character faced in the story. Other interesting explanations of the choice in the answer to the first question include "Yes. She knew how to dance, but other camels were jealous"; "When everybody said she could not learn how to dance, she did learn because she wanted to prove to them that she could do it"; "Because she really wanted to learn"; "Because she thought so"; "Because everybody is born with the gift of dancing. One only has to express it and then to keep and cherish it"; or "No. Nobody liked her dancing"; "Nobody taught her how to dance"; "She was ridiculous"; "Because she is an animal"; "She spent so much time practising, and in that hot sun" (The implication of the latter explanation being that she would have learned earlier if she had been any good); "Because she had nobody to support her. She had nobody to motivate her for dancing." It is easy to see that the students' opinions offered interesting and elaborate topics for class discussion in which ideas would bounce off each other and different personal and moral issues would surface for every reader. It is similar with the other responses, as well.

The **second** question, *Was the camel happy,* demanded decisions based upon understanding one of the most important aspects of the story. 'Yes' was most frequently supported by the fact that the camel liked dancing. 'No', on the other hand, was frequently explained by the fact that others rudely told her that she did not know how to dance and that the audience did not like her dancing. Interesting answers included "Both: first, she was unhappy because of the reaction of the audience, then she was happy because she enjoyed dancing for her own pleasure"; "Yes. Because she learned how to dance"; "Because she danced for herself even though she did not know how to dance"; "She enjoyed what she did"; "Because she continued dancing for herself"; "Because she worked so hard"; "Because she was brave"; "Because she knew how to

dance"; "Because she achieved what she wanted completely on her own"; "She was successful in what she wanted and she persisted in it"; "She was happy while she was learning how to dance"; "Because she had confidence in herself. One must have confidence in oneself, she practised, practised... " or "No. Because she failed"; "Because she never learned how to dance"; "Because they constantly criticised her"; "Because others laughed at her and teased her"; "Because other camels did not accept her as a dancer, so she had to dance alone".

To decide about the camel's **best decision** was closest to a kind of information-finding task. Most of the subjects opted for the camel's decision to continue doing what she liked best in spite of everybody. However, other convincing choices could be found, such as "to learn to dance", "not to bother with other people's opinions". A rare irrelevant answer was "not to dance".

The students split on the **fourth** question, *Do you agree with the way in which the audience told the camel their opinion*, as well. The minority, 39 students, thought of variants of 'honesty is the best policy' and answered *yes*, but the majority, 63 students, thought the critics could have been more polite and kind, or that they should have supported the camel in her endeavours, and answered *no*. Three students failed to answer this question, but those who did respond gave various suggestions as to what the others should have said or done. Examples are: They should have "consoled her", "encouraged her to practise more", "told her that the ballet is difficult", "told her how nice it was that she had tried to dance ballet", "applauded", but also that they should have written "a letter, because it is worse when somebody tells you something to your face than through a letter or by phone" and that they should have told her "how she was mistaken and how to correct that, because real friends always help each other". Further examples of the students' attitudes supporting 'I do not agree with their ways' are that "the audience were rude and impolite, they did not show any respect for the camel's hard work"; that "ridiculing someone (the camel in this case) may lead to hurting that person's feelings"; that "the camel might have become angry"; that if they had encouraged her, "the camel would have been happier, not so sad"; that "you never tell things like that to somebody's face"; that "they should not have disgraced her"; that "when someone is told that he or she is the same as everybody else, that person does not feel good"; that the camel "deserved" kinder words; that "we must not offend people"; that "it made the camel embarrassed and unhappy"; that "they are insensitive"; that "other camels were envious"; that "it is not the camel's fault that she is all clumsy". Interesting examples in support of the 'I agree' attitude are "If they had told her that she knew how to dance, she would have become conceited"; "They would only have deluded her otherwise"; "It only stimulated her to practise more"; "Everybody has the right to express his/her opinion"; "They only spared her more disgrace".

Next, 92 students thought the camel did not really **care about the opinion of others**, because she continued dancing in spite of everything, or because she danced for herself. Nevertheless, 18 students thought she did care, at least a bit; otherwise she would not have prepared the recital at all and would not have asked all those people to watch her.

Finally, in response to the **sixth** question, most students agreed that the camel announced the recital because she wanted to demonstrate her newly gained skills to others. Other interesting answers included "Because she wanted to show the others that she was special and different from other ordinary camels"; "Because she wanted to become famous"; "Because she wanted to find out what others thought about it" and "She wanted to entertain others".

Interestingly, several responses marked as irrelevant were those reduced to "I do not know." We find them significant, though, because such a response shows the subjects' wish to write down something at least, and to express themselves.

Personal response to the story was stimulated by four unfinished sentences in which the students were invited to compare themselves and other people they know with the camel.

For instance, in item **seven**, they were invited to recognise some of their own activities as something they enjoyed and were ready to pursue just as the camel pursued dancing. At the same time, their favourite activity was recognised as something valuable and worth the trouble because it mattered to them, just as dancing did to our camel. In addition to that, the uniqueness of dancing to the camel was emphasised in their impression, so that some students pointed out what they considered to be of greatest value to them. The answers hence ranged from "sport", "football", "basketball", "roller-skating", "drawing", "art", "chess", "computer games", etc., through "Chinese and the glagolitic alphabet", "learning", "piano lessons", "mathematics", and "ballet", even "school", to "my diary", "my cat", "my friends", "Mum and Dad", "my family". The students presented an amazing scope of interests, activities and beloved people they valued most in their lives. About 85% of the subjects completed this sentence, almost 97% of whom did so relevantly.

Those who recognised the **similarities** between themselves and the camel noted features such as determined, persistent, stubborn, hard-working, proud, as well as that she, "like me ...does not give up"; "wants to become famous and have (a lot of) money"; "likes to do things she enjoys"; "does not care about what others think"; "wants to show others something and hear their opinion, because I like it when others frankly tell me the truth even when it is not nice". A very good parallel is given in "I, too, think that what I do on my computer is good, but it is (in fact) very poor".

The self-evaluation reveals the subjects did not find the story difficult to understand; as can be seen in **Table 5**, the average value was 4. The story itself was evaluated

with an average mark of 3.94, reflecting the students' overall liking of the fable. The main objection to the story by those subjects who gave it a lower mark, which some of them explained to the examiners, was that its contents and genre seemed to be 'for smaller children'.

Table 5. Evaluation

	Very poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	Very good 4	Excel-lent 5	3/4	4/5	Average
	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	
Assess your understanding of the story.	2	6	27	35	41	-	-	4
What is your mark for the story?	3	6	19	46	31	1	5	3.94

Discussion

The results show that the subjects understood the story very well without using reference books and relying only on their own judgment. When they provided an explanation for their choices, it was generally relevant so that there were very few irrelevant entries. Besides, the response rate was particularly high. As many as 607 out of the 631 given responses were relevant, which makes 91.14% of the total possible answers for the whole sample. In addition to that, as many as one third of our sample (42 students) scored the maximum of 10 relevant verbal responses.

It could be presumed that the story was not difficult enough for the tested population. Still, unabridged original texts are very rarely used for individual reading at school due to the fact that educators and students themselves do not think the students' linguistic competence would be sufficient. Our results prove them wrong. The text used in this research is unabridged and not adapted. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is possible to find such authentic texts that could be easily mastered by the general population of seventh-graders learning EFL.

On the other hand, it might be suggested that the comprehension questions were too easy. However, although they were easy to answer, it can be argued that they tested the understanding of the story at a deeper level than conventional comprehension questions do. They were designed in an unconventional way, and that might have in-

fluenced the results: the subjects were not under stress due to the possibility of error, they did not feel tested, but were kindly asked for their **opinion**. As what they thought was what mattered, any of their answers would be correct. However, in trying to explain their choices, they had to think more about the implications of the story. As a result, their understanding of the story was revealed clearly to the researchers despite the fact that it was only a secondary product of their endeavour. The students' self-confidence was thus supported and that, in turn, may have expanded their enthusiasm for completing the task.

Besides, the questions drew the students' attention to specific literary problems tackled by the story. They were not self-explanatory, and the answers had to be wrought out. For example, the first question, "Did the camel ever learn to dance well?" could not be answered conclusively using the information from the story. As a result, 36.94% of the subjects said *yes*, and 63.06 said *no*.

In providing the explanation, the readers really needed to get involved and to think about it.

The examples of the children's answers show, therefore, that the questions were not too easy to answer; yet they facilitated understanding of the story by directing the readers towards the relevant problems implied in the fable. As a result, understanding of the story was tested not only at the linguistic level, but also at the literary level. At both levels, the subjects demonstrated an excellent understanding of an authentic story in a foreign language.

However, the personal response questions definitely posed more difficulty to the students than the former set. This could already be seen in the tasks of comparing oneself with the camel (favourite things and activities, similarities, differences), as about 17 to 27 students failed to provide relevant responses to those tasks. It was especially so when they tried to compare somebody else with the camel, as over a third (38) of the subjects had problems with that. The responses required a relatively high level of self-evaluation and sincerity, which is not always easy for anyone, let alone pre-adolescents. On the other hand, some of them might simply not have remembered anyone appropriate, or the answers might have seemed too personal. Some of those students would probably need some help and guidance from the teacher.

Nevertheless, these questions triggered individual responses in the large majority of students, which helped them establish a relationship between the ideas underlying the story and their own, individual experiences. Their answers further confirmed their understanding of the story, but they also demonstrated the subjects' potential to communicate with a literary text in a foreign language at a personal level, and to see it as relevant to their own experiences.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that short stories can be used as part of regular EFL teaching, and that it is highly probable that students will be able to understand an authentic story written for children in a foreign language provided it is not of particular linguistic or stylistic complexity. Of course, the level of difficulty would need to be considered in individual cases, but there definitely are stories available which could meet the needs and be supported by the linguistic competence of an average seventh grader. Short questions or topics for discussion similar to those used in this research could prompt feedback from students and motivate them to exchange their experiences and opinions in connection with their reading with other students. Thus, they would benefit from their individual reading even more, at multiple levels that include their linguistic and literary competence as well as their intellectual and communicative skills.

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APPENDIX

UPITNIK NAKON ČITANJA PRIČE Arnolda Lobela THE CAMEL DANCES

Ime i prezime: ....

Vrijeme: .... min

Datum: ....

Molimo Te, odgovori na pitanja ili dopuni rečenice.

Trebamo Tvoje mišljenje!

1.   Je li deva ikada naučila dobro plesati balet?

               ☐ da   ☐ ne

Zašto tako misliš?

....

....

....

2.   Je li deva bila sretna?

               ☐ jest   ☐ nije

Zašto tako misliš?

....

....

....

3.   Najbolja je devina odluka bila...

....

....

4.   Publika je devi iskreno rekla što misli.

Je li se to, po Tvome mišljenju, trebalo reći drugačije ili baš ovako?

               ☐ baš ovako   ☐ dugačije

Kako?   ....

Zašto tako misliš?

....

5. Je li devi bilo važno tuđe mišljenje?

☐ da ☐ ne

Zašto tako misliš?

....
....
....

6. Zašto je deva uopće priredila nastup?

....
....
....

7. Kao što deva ima ples, ja imam ....
....

8. Ova mi je deva slična po tome što ....
....
jer ....

9. Od ove se deve razlikujem po tome što..
..........jer ....

10. .... (Tko?) me podsjeća na devu iz ove priče jer ....
....
....
....

11. Koliko si razumjela/razumio priču?

☐ nimalo ☐ ponešto ☐ prilično ☐ skoro sve ☐ potpuno

12. Na kraju, koju je ocjenu (od 1 do 5) zavrijedila ova priča?

☺ Zahvaljujemo Ti na suradnji!

Section 5: FOCUSING ON THE LINGUISTIC AND NON-LINGUISTIC OUTCOMES OF EARLY EFL LEARNING

Milena Kovačević

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN CHILDREN: SOME EVIDENCE FROM TESTING ENGLISH WITH FIRST GRADERS

Within the Zagreb research project on the early introduction of foreign languages (English, French, Italian and German) into the school curriculum[10], English was taught with first graders in four primary schools in Zagreb during the 1991/92 school year. The first graders received one period of English instruction a day, that is, five periods per week throughout the school year.

In order to gain a more in-depth knowledge of the ways children acquire a second language[11], in this case specifically of the ways children aged 7-8 years acquire English

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[10]　On the underlying conception of the Project and on the educative value of beginning foreign language learning early, see Mirjana Vilke's chapter. Also, the Zagreb project is seen as part of an overall project organized under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

[11]　*Foreign language acquisition* is used in this paper to refer to a phenomenon that – though it may be related to – should not be a priori identified with second language acquisition. Research in second language study clearly delimits first and second language acquisition yet fails, at times, to make a clear distinction between second and foreign language acquisition/learning (either by incorporating the notion of foreign language into that of second language, or, for instance, by taking the term second language to refer to any language being learned other than the first language, cf. Singleton, 1989). In our circumstances English is felt to be a foreign language rather than a second one. Furthermore, one must mention the hypothesis that the processes Krashen and others have called *acquisition* (the unconscious formulation of grammatical principles) and *learning* (the conscious cognitive-based study of grammar) represent two systems for internalizing knowledge about language. This is important for our study in that at the age of eight the child predominantly *acquires* a foreign language, despite the fact that he is exposed to it – though very intensively – in a formal environment. T. D. Tarrell, who advocates the natural approach to language teaching, emphasizes that the activities promoting acquisition "are indispensable for all students" (1988:67). However, it is especially at the early age that the unconscious acquisition process is superior to the learning one (due to the child's level of cognitive development). It is here that the role of foreign language teacher comes in: "since in most cases of foreign language (and often even in second language) study, the student has little chance for acquisition outside the classroom, the instructor must provide this kind of experience". (Tarrell, 1988:67)

The term foreign language acquisition is felt then to describe most accurately (as distinctive from second language acquisition/learning and foreign language learning) the process the child has undergone in the study.

in the early stage of their formal education, an interview was carried out in the four schools towards the end of the school year.

This chapter is concerned with some essential insights into foreign language acquisition in children, based upon the analysis of the data obtained in the interview. It is believed that the insights derived from the study may have important implications both theoretically and educationally.

Part I of the chapter relates to the process of conducting the research, data collecting procedures and the conditions prevailing during the data collection[12]. In part II patterns and regularities observed in and derived from the analysis of the data are reported.

I. The purpose of the research. One hundred and five first graders were interviewed in the four Zagreb primary schools towards the end of school year 1991/92. The first graders, their average age being 7-8, had had five periods of English teaching during the first year of formal schooling.

The purpose of the research was to get insights into foreign language acquisition in young learners who had received intensive English instruction in a formal classroom environment. At a more specific level, the research was aimed at getting insights into the ways children cope with understanding English and producing English utterances, to see whether there are any strategies that they use, and if there are, whether there are any regularities in the usage. The purpose of the research determined its heuristic/inductive nature: we wanted to proceed from the data (data-driven as opposed to hypothesis-driven research) to patterns which are suggested by the data themselves.[13]

I.1. English instruction and the interview data. One specific point must be made first as to the nature of English instruction to the first graders. The Project assumed the versatility of teaching approaches as one of its basic principles; no insistence was placed upon one preferred teaching method or approach towards young language learners. This resulted in the differing and experimental nature of English language teaching in the primary schools. The four teachers of English were creating what might be called a common nucleus of English syllabus for first graders, but the syllabus was more of a descriptive than a prescriptive nature. This allowed for the possibility of the teacher's highly individual self-expression in classroom activities; the individual impact was felt

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[12] The information is relevant when reporting results from qualitative research. (cf. Seliger & Shohamy, 1990)

[13] In the methodology of second language research, the terms heuristic and deductive relate to the purpose of the research. The basic distinction lies in that the heuristic research is data driven, it means it starts with no preconceptions about the data, and the product of such research is description or hypothesis; by contrast, if the aim of the research is deductive, the research is hypothesis driven, it makes predictions and tests hypotheses, and the product of such research is a theory. (cf. Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, pp. 30-31)

both on the level of the teacher's worldview or the type of psychological attitude taken towards children and on the level of a particular teaching approach or techniques the teacher engaged in. The point at issue here is that this had implications for the nature of data obtained from the children: it has strongly been observed in data analysis that if the teacher, for instance, persistently insisted on precise and accurate pronunciation of English sounds, this affected to a large extent the phonological quality of the utterances children produced; or that, if the teacher insisted on the creative use of communicative patterns in classroom activities, children's utterances were felt to be more unexpected/unpredictable, that is, language was used as a means to communicate something the child thought it necessary to communicate.[14]

I.2. Data collection procedures. Vocabulary and grammar structures in the teaching of English in the four schools were taken as the basis for the content/questions of the interview. A number of investigators had attended the English classes, observing and recording English utterances produced by the teacher and the children in classroom activities. On the basis of the recorded material it was possible to make a corpus of the vocabulary and structures that were common to all four classes.[15]

The analysis of the corpus has revealed that certain thematic elements were used in the teaching of English in all four schools. The themes are inherently connected with the sensitive elements of the child's world: members of family, friends (therefore the common vocabulary: *mummy, daddy, brother, sister, friend*); colours (the number of colours taught varies from eight to ten, the most frequent being *pink, red, blue, green, white, black*); the world of animals (the core vocabulary reveals that it is the animals from the jungle that are most exciting for the child's imagination – *snake, elephant, tiger, lion*; but *cat* and *dog* are obligatory); parts of the body (with the structures *I can see, I can hear, I can smell, Can you see?, No, I can't, Yes, I can* appearing alongside); the

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[14] I would like to point out that, at the interpretive level of the research data, what I am implying here is: first, that the second/foreign language teacher serves as a *model* of language behaviour and language use to young learners and that any aspect of the model the teacher is inclined to use consistently is readily imitated/adopted by the children; second, the model figure of the language teacher may be crucial for the *quality* of early language learning experience. In the educational debate over early second language instruction the issue of a positive/negative early experience of second language learning is seen as important as the maturational or the age factor issue. (cf. Singleton, 1989: 244)

[15] I would like to point out the issue of *subjectivity* in the process of recording the English utterances. The corpus of words and structures recorded by the investigators is only a part of the overall usage of language expressions in classroom communication. The recorded material is based upon empirical data and is necessarily determined by the investigator's subjective selection. This does not imply, however, that the collected data are not valid; they are linguistically valid and relevant for the research as far as any empirical linguistic data can be. The point is that the researcher should be aware of the degree of subjectivity involved in research procedures. In our case, the heuristic/inductive nature of the research accounts for the "low-level of explicitness" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989) in data collecting procedures.

world of nature, countryside (especially *flowers, birds, the sun, the moon*) versatile vocabulary and structures from numerous songs and games the children sang and played.

The analysis of the corpus of the common syntactic structures[16] has revealed that, taking a somewhat grammatical perspective, the usage of basic auxiliaries (*can, have*) is predominant, particularly in communicative patterns where questions and answers (affirmative and negative) are interrelated, as in a simple case: *Have you got a brother/ sister?*, or especially in requests like *Can I have a cup of tea?, Can I play with you?*. The analysis has also revealed a predominant tendency that a number of structures are used with a variety of themes, that is, that they can be strongly thematized by being used with diverse thematic vocabulary. Furthermore, the core structures show that some of the main verbs (e.g., *go, come, do, see, hear*) are represented by means of imperatives functioning as commands or requests (it is suggested that the context of classroom activities, that is, various games, "required" the particular usage). Last but not least, much insistence has been placed on communicative usage of greetings (e.g., *Good morning, Good night, Bye, bye*) and on the verbal gestures of cultured behaviour (*Thank you, Please*).

I.3. The interview – type, methodology, design. The material being observed, recorded and analysed in terms of core vocabulary and grammatical structures used in a formal classroom environment at the primary level of English teaching, the interviewing of 105 young learners, aged 7-8, was carried out towards the end of the school year.

The interviews[17], which averaged 10-15 minutes in length with each child, were tape recorded and transcribed.

The questions of the interview were determined beforehand.

1. The child was first asked in English: *What is your name? How old are you? Have you got a brother/sister? What is your brother's/sister's name? How old is he/she?*
2. The child was then shown two large sheets of paper with 19 coloured pictures of beings (humans, animals) and objects on it; the child was asked - *What can you see in this pictures?* – to name the beings/objects that he/she recognised.
3. The child was then asked to read five cards having mathematical operations of plus and minus (with numbers to 12) on each (e.g., three plus five is eight).

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[16] It is only for the purpose of the research analysis that the observed and recorded material of the language used in classroom communication is divided into categories of basic vocabulary and grammar structures. Apart from the analytic abstraction, the two are inseparable in language use. It must be noted that they are inseparable and interrelated especially from the point of the child's use of the foreign language, which is characterised by absence of conceptualisation and by an unconscious search for regularities. By contrast, in classroom context teachers usually do make a conscious effort to teach particular vocabulary and particular grammar rules.

[17] Bearing in mind the heuristic/inductive purpose of the research, it should be noted that the interviews, as personalized form, "permit a level of in-depth information gathering, free response and flexibility that cannot be obtained by other procedures" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 166)

4. In this part the child was asked *Kako Englezi kažu?* [*How do English people say this?*] – *Dobro jutro* [*Good morning*], *Laku noć* [*Good night*], *Gladan sam* [*I'm hungry*], *Pospan sam* [*I'm sleepy*], *Kako si?* [*How are you?*], *Dobro sam* [*I'm fine*], *Mogu li dobiti malo vode?* [*May/can I have some water please?*].

5. Towards the end of the interview the child was shown a picture of a funny monster holding pencils of different colours; the child was asked *What colours can you see in this picture?* and to say which colour he liked most (two alternative questions: *What colour do you like best?* or *What is your favourite colour?*).

6. Finally, there was a picture of six cats, eight dogs and ten flowers under the coloured picture; the child was asked to say how many cats/dogs/flowers he/she could see.

The interview, as a type of data collecting procedure, was a semi-open or semi-structured interview[18], and had a low degree of explicitness. Though the interview questions, by their very nature, are inclined to elicit specific answers from children (e.g., whether and how they use personal pronouns in 1) or whether and how, for instance, they use plural in 6) so that the research analysis may focus on investigating these particular segments, the analysis of data obtained in the interview show that there is an array of "unexpected" and "unpredicted" answers on the part of the inter-viewees. This is partly due to the conditions under which the research was conducted in the four schools; the interviewers used different techniques of asking and eliciting answers – sometimes they "helped" the child by suggesting a possible answer, or pro-voked the child's production of an utterance by evoking a situational context in which it was presumed that he had heard it, or elaborated the question and gave more time to the child to think and speak.[19]

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[18] According to the degrees of explicitness and structure, interviews range from very open to very structured ones. In second language research methodology there are three main types of interviews: open, semi-open, and structured. Open interviews have broad freedom of expression and elabora-tion and often resemble informal talk; semi-open or semi-structured interviews "consist of specific and defined questions determined beforehand, but at the same time allow some elaboration in the questions and answers"; structured interviews are used when specific information is needed and no elaboration is allowed in either the questions or answers. (Cf. Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 16ff)

[19] This brings us, I think, to the very important question of what constitutes the child's "knowledge" of a foreign language in the early stage of his acquiring and how it can be assessed. The analysis of data obtained suggests that it is rather hard to say what the child's real knowledge (in terms of "objective" knowledge) is, which, it seems to me, implies that the research in early second language acquisition can hardly measure some objective knowledge of children for at least three reasons: acquiring of a second language in the early stage is a process; children use language primarily to communicate and convey meaning; the child may understand what they ask him but need not know how to produce the utterance he would like to, that is, the levels of understanding and production in early second language acquisition are delimited.

It should be therefore noted that in the process of conducting the research there were contextual variables that to a certain degree influenced the type of utterances children came to produce in the interview. Finally, one must also mention the possibility that the child was aware of the fact that some kind of "testing" was being done, and that this awareness may have affected the child's particular use of language in a communicational context. Tarone (1981) claims that a language learner's performance "depends on whether they are participating in planned or unplanned discourse" and that "second language learners can be observed to make *different use* (italicised by M.K.) of their interlanguage systems in different tasks. Thus performance in one set of circumstances does not guarantee an identical or even similar performance in a different situation".[20]

In sum, what was obvious in analyzing the transcribed data was that, as to the nature of data obtained, there were four different sets of transcripts. From a methodological point of view, it seems then important to be aware that

- the interview data obtained are to a certain extent different in each of the four schools, due to a contextual variable (the degree of elaboration and intervention in the questions and answers) and the teaching approach variable (discussed in I.1);
- it is only on a more general level that it is possible to identify typical commonalities and regularities in children's language use across the overall transcribed data;
- the differing nature of the data requires that the four transcripts be analyzed separately, and then compared.

II. Findings on a general level. Let me start with an interpretative suggestion that, in the process of listening to the tapes, transcribing and analyzing the interview data,

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It seems to me, therefore, that it is useful to make s distinction between the interviews and tests as done by Seliger & Shohamy (1989). Tests investigate *knowledge* of the second language (grammar, vocabulary, reading, metalinguistic awareness, general proficiency), whereas interviews are used to collect data on, on one hand, attitudes and motivation, and on the other hand, "they have also been used recently for obtaining information about *strategies* (italicized by M.K.) which language learners use in the process of producing and acquiring a second language in a variety of contexts". (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 167)

Though this is not suggested by Seliger and Shohamy, I would imply that, at a methodological level, tests seem to be most appropriate for adult second language learners, whereas interviews, besides being especially appropriate for obtaining data on adult learners' strategies (i.e., verbal reporting) and on attitudes and motivation, are of much importance in getting insights into the child's strategies in acquiring a second language. Unlike the adult, the child cannot report on the strategies he uses to acquire a new language – due to unconscious and unconceptualized nature of early acquiring – but from the child's very usage of the new language we can infer, by means of analytic and interpretative procedures, what the strategies are. This means that the term "learner strategy" when applied to young learners requires a redefinition of the term as it is used in literature (Rubin, 1981; Wenden, 1982; 1986;, O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) to refer to adult learner strategy.

[20]   Quoted according to Seliger & Shohamy, 1989: 181.

it was the child's pronunciation and the quality of the acquired phonetic system that fascinated most.[21] Secondly, in analyzing the material a whole array of regularities and regular patterns was observed a) in the ways children used second language structures, b) in the strategies they specifically used in producing idioms, c) in the ways they shifted from their mother tongue to the second language and vice versa.

Data analysis shows most explicitly that children have attained a high standard of pronunciation. The majority of children appear to have had no difficulty in acquiring the English phonetic system; the striking feature in their production of English utterances is that they pronounce the characteristic English sounds – the ones that do not appear in the Croatian phonetic system – in a manner that can hardly be distinguished from that of native speakers. The child's pronunciation is observed to have the qualities of fluency and softness.

This relates particularly to the sounds [t] and [d], which are strongly observed to be pronounced as authentic English sounds, e.g., as alveolar in *ten, twelve, No, I haven't, dog*. The majority of children excel at pronouncing the specific English sounds [æ] and [θ], using them with remarkably high degree of authenticity in *cat, rabbit, apple* for instance, and especially in *thank you* and *three*. The utterance *five minus three is two* is indicative of the quality of the acquired pronunciation (the "softness" of the diphthong [ai], short [∂] in *minus*, [θ] in *three*, alveolar [t] in *two*). A very fine pronunciation of the typical English sound [r] is heard in *rabbit* and *hungry*.

Data analysis shows that most of the children imitate intonation patterns they have heard in the classroom situational context, especially in questions like *How are you?*, with special stress being placed on *are*. Furthermore, a striking correlation between the child's psychological traits concerning his/her attitude towards communication and the use of intonation patterns has been observed. As a rule, the children who expressed eagerness to communicate in English and who gave a quick response to the questions asked – the tone of their voice being cheerful and lively – used intonation most naturally; the "silent" children, who were reluctant to express themselves through language – the tone of their voice having a shy and depressing quality – did not use marked intonation.

II.1. The analysis of the ways children answered the questions in the interview circumstances shows that most of the children – boys especially – definitely prefer giving short answers (*yes* or *no*).[22] In analyzing the answers to the questions *What's*

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[21]   I am aware that the term "fascination" may seem inappropriate for the type of discourse the research report belongs to; still, I am using the term at a highly interpretative level to suggest a degree of quality the children showed in pronouncing English utterances.

[22]   It will be argued later that children in this development stage use language to convey meaning. For the child, it seems to me, a short answer to a question (e.g., *Have you got a brother?*) is sufficient in so far as it has conveyed the basic message. It can be hypothesized that the child has acquired the elaborated form (e.g., *Yes, I have got a brother*), but the reason he is not using it does not lie in that

your name? and *How old are you?* a regularity has been observed in that most of the children give full answers, using first person singular in both the personal and possessive pronoun (e.g., *My name is Ines,* or *I'm Davor,* or *I'm seven*). It has strongly been observed, however, that first noticeable silence in the course of the interview with most children appears when the question *How old is your brother/sister?* is asked, that is, when the child is supposed to start with *he/she*; most of the children understand the question and then, after a short silence/pause, a brief answer devoid of the third person singular pronoun, yet still conveying the essential message, is given (e.g., *eight, ten*). A small number of children did not give any answer to the question, and, at an interpretive level, I would suggest that they did understand the question but did not know how to cope with *he/she*.[23]

In sum, data analysis shows that most of the children understand the meaning of pronouns, but that at the level of production only *I* is systematically used whereas *he/she* is avoided by giving a short structural form (e.g., instead of *She is ten*, first a pause, then *Ten*).[24] It seems as if the very concept of *he/she* is somewhat vague in children's perception at that age.

Let me now give a striking example of the strategies the child uses in communicating meaning:
- *How old is your brother?*
  The child: ... (*a long pause*) ...*On ima mjeseci.* [*He has got months*]
- Ah, onda ništa. [*Well, then, it's OK*]
  The child: *Small boy.*

What that example shows is that, first, the child understands the meaning of *How old is your brother?*, second, that the child turns to his mother tongue to express what he finds he cannot express in the foreign language (*On ima mjeseci*), and third that

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the child is not capable of producing it, but in that the child *thinks/feels* that the full answer is not necessary.

[23] Children were very confident in answering the previous question *How old are you?* with a full structure *I'm seven*. As they know the meaning of the words *your brother/sister* it can hardly be supposed that they could not "catch" the analogy in meaning between the two-

    How old are you?
    How old is your brother/sister?

[24] In her study of the acquisition of syntactic structures in children whose native language was English, between the ages 5 and 10, Carol Chomsky (1969) came up with the results: "Contrary to the commonly held view that a child has mastered the structures of his native language by the time he reaches the age of 6, we find that active syntactic acquisition is taking place up to the age of 9 and perhaps even beyond" (Chomsky, 1973: 121, fourth edition).

Mirjana Vilke's reporting on the results of a test item on pronominalization within the earlier Zagreb research project is almost identical to our findings: "most children understand what *he* and *she* stand for, but prefer using nouns, which probably look less abstract" (Vilke, 1988:124).

he now shifts to English, using the known words to convey the same meaning (*Small boy*). The example is indicative of a regularity observed in the data, namely, that

- the level of understanding English is superior to the level of production
- the child uses both his mother and second language to communicate meaning
- as the level of production has a restricted scope in the early stage of acquiring English, the child uses creative strategies to convey the intended meaning. The key category in the strategies is the noun.

II.2. The very data have led us to focus on the usage of the indefinite article, as it has been observed that most of the children do not make a distinction in using *a/ an*. In connection with this, a strong tendency has been traced in that the children persistently stick to the acquired structures, for which it is presumed that they have long been repeated in the very initial stage of learning, (e.g., *I can see a girl, This is a boy, It's a flower*); the acquired structures (specifically *I can see a ..., This is a ..., It's a...*) are "coined" automatically with various nouns (e.g., *I can see a elephant, This is a apple, It's a orange*). A small group of children is observed to have "felt" that something was wrong and to have corrected themselves by using the appropriate *an* (e.g., first *I can see a orange,* then a pause, then corrects himself (*I can see an orange*).

I would suggest that the self-correction procedures, observed in children at different points of their foreign language use, imply that in the process of acquiring a foreign language the child unconsciously notices that the new language has rules of its own. In the interview data it is in the field of the unexpected (the child's unexpected responses/ reactions) that most of the child's unconscious thinking over the new language has been traced. An example may illustrate the depth of the "unconscious meta-reflection":

- *Kako bi Englez rekao "Gladan sam"?* [*How would an Englishman say „Gladan sam" = "I'm hungry"?*]
  The child: *Hungry.*
- *A pospan sam?* [*And what about "pospan sam"= "I'm sleepy"*]
  The child: ... *(silence)* ... *Mogu li ja sam pospan? ...* [*May I say „Ja sam pospan"?*]
- (a little bit confused) *Da, da, možeš.* [*Yes, you may*]
  The child: *I'm ... I'm ...*

The example shows that the child a) identifies, possibly by means of simple analogy, *gladan sam* and *hungry*,[25] that is, omits the subject in his English utterance, b) does not respond to *pospan sam,* but unexpectedly asks to say *ja sam pospan*,[26] c) *starts his English equivalent I'm ...I'm.* The example shows that the child has come to the point – under the "pressure" of an immediate communicative context – to compare the two

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[25]   The Croatian utterance *Gladan sam* does not have the explicit subject, that is, the subject is "hidden behind".

[26]   In the Croatian utterance *Ja sam pospan*, *ja* is the explicit subject *I*.

language systems, and to unconsciously notice the difference between the two, namely, that English requires the subject (*I'm.. I'm*) and that its word order is fixed.[27]

II.3. Data findings indicate that most of the children find it difficult to produce an idiomatic structure fully. In trying to find an English equivalent to *Mogu li dobiti malo vode?* [*May/can I have some water please?*] only 12 of 105 began their sentence with *Can I...* (silence) or *Can I have...*(silence) or *Can I have water*. The children who could not remember the idiom are observed to use a highly regular language pattern: first silence and then a structure *Water, please* or *Please, water*. For instance, a boy had a long period of silence; then he asked in Croatian *Kako se kaže voda?* [*How do you say "voda"?*]; the interviewer said *Water*, after which the child immediately created his equivalent of the idiom – *Please, water*. The child's utterances show that he a) focuses on meaning, b) uses strategies of a regular pattern to create the meaning (the noun + the verbal gesture of cultured behaviour).

III. Conclusion. This chapter has reported on some basic findings of a study carried out to gain insights into the ways children aged 7-8 acquire English at the primary level of formal education. At a more general level, the basic findings, under the interview conditions stipulated, are:

- children have acquired the English phonetic system with a high degree of authentic pronunciation
- the level of comprehension is superior to the level of production (performance)
- at the level of performance, regularities have been observed in the ways children use structures and idioms; their primary communicative intention is to convey meaning, and they use the strategies to communicate the intended meaning; the key category in focus is the noun
- children systematically use *I/my* but do not use *he/she*, though they understand the meaning; the findings ought to be related to those from the study of Carol Chomsky (1969) and are in line with the findings reported by Mirjana Vilke (1974, 1988)
- some children use self-correction procedures, which implies that they unconsciously recognise that the second language they are learning functions in a specific way.

A special analysis of the four transcripts, with different aspects in focus, as to show to what degree and how different approaches in foreign language teaching affect the early acquiring of the language, is needed. The findings of the analysis may have important educational implications.

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[27] The metalanguage I am using here is the researcher's interpretative metalanguage and is, therefore, far from the child's perception of the language he is acquiring.

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Mirjana Vilke

CHILDREN AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN CROATIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOUR YEARS OF A PROJECT

Introduction

The ultimate aim of starting the work on this project was a vision of future native speakers of Croatian who could use one of the widespread languages of western civilization in their life and work. This is why we started with four languages: English, French, German, and Italian. This is why we moved the start of the process of learning these languages from ten to six or seven years old. The pragmatic idea behind the undertaking was – why not use the period of human life when the child has plenty of good will and time, when the daily chores and duties are not pressing and when the child is at its best to acquire certain aspects of language performance.

It would provide enough time for the child to reach a high standard of proficiency by the end of secondary education when the need to use foreign language actually arises.

We actually started to look for an optimal age to begin institutionalised learning of foreign languages in the seventies when in a series of "Natural experiments" we tested the phenomenon of language-learning blocks which according to Lenneberg (1967) appear at puberty. A comparison between 8-year-old and 18-year-old beginners of English showed that the former group had advantages especially in pronunciation. We turned to this age group equipped with Piaget's rich evidence of their characteristics and abilities. (Vilke, 1976a). To discover more about the potential achievements of children of this age we based our investigations on the evidence, available at the time, of children's acquisition of their own language as well as a second and foreign language. Our evidence comes from varied sources such as psychology, developmental psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, interlanguage studies, morpheme studies, and last but not least, the experience of teachers who worked with this age group. They always seemed to claim that the results of work could be very good if the children were approached in the right way (Vilke, 1976b).

But what is the right way? Do we know enough about either the language or the child to choose the right way? Chomsky himself, the supreme authority of the time on any study of language acquisition, thought we did not. I refer here to his well known statement that neither linguistics nor psychology can help to improve teaching of languages (Chomsky, 1968). However, the need to communicate in a widespread lan-

guage for a small language community like Croatia seemed to become more and more important as time went by. So, our first pilot project started in 1973 and our 8-year olds who started their English or German at the age of 8 were quite successful. The project did not bring about fabulous results for reasons that now seem quite transparent but it supplied us with insights that helped us to shape the present project (Vilke, 1979). Consequently, when we started in 1991, it was not from scratch.

We directed our efforts in two interrelated directions. One was the investigation of different aspects of children's performance, conducted by applied linguists and psychologists using the methods of research employed in the field – tests, questionnaires, and interviews. The other was the actual work of teachers in the classroom. The teachers were encouraged to use their own creative ways of teaching, depending on their intuition and the requirements of the individual groups of learners, as well as their own (the teachers') personality traits. However, there were a few conditions that had to be fulfilled. Namely, the teachers should make children happy and relaxed during the classes to secure receptive learning with no "weeds and big stones" to struggle with – to use Curran's metaphor (Curran, 1972).

We have now completed four school years of the work in the Project. The first generation of our learners have had their foreign language for five periods a week in the first and second grade and four periods a week in the third and fourth grade in groups of 12 to 15 learners. About 2,000 learners of English, French, German, and Italian have been taught in this way in Zagreb, with addition of some classes in Rijeka, Split, Pula, and Osijek, which covers approximately 1,000 more children. It is a small sample of learners if any generalizations are attempted, but on the other hand, it is easier to conduct systematic observation, exchange ideas and apply different measuring instruments if the number of learners is limited. We are well aware that whatever results are achieved they will be valid in our sociocultural environment while in any other area they will have to be verified as many extralinguistic factors that influence the teaching are present in any class situation. However, it is our hope that when our educational authorities decide to introduce foreign languages into the first grade of the primary school on a large scale, we shall be ready to offer a rational, minutely elaborated approach.

After four years of joint work of practising teachers and researchers I trust that we can offer tentative answers to several questions. They will be discussed by contributions in all four Project languages on the pages of the present publication which is actually a follow up of the book CHILDREN AND FOREIGN LANGIAGES/LES ENFANTS ET LES LANGUES ETRANGERES, (University of Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb, 1993).

The presentation that follows will deal with my own views of what has been achieved so far.

Have we found an optimal age to start?

It seems that the first grade (age 6 to 7) is a good time to start the long process of learning a foreign language. Many theoreticians support this thesis directly or indirectly. Piaget's work on cognitive development of children provides a framework offering clues for organization of teaching that would be appropriate for the level of intellectual maturity of learners (Piaget, 1973).

Lenneberg (1967), in his time, concentrated on the prepuberty phase, when for biological reasons children can learn foreign languages without a foreign accent. The "Sensitive period hypothesis" and its advocates suggest that this period in human life should be used to start mastering a foreign idiom. Krashen (1973) claims that an early start proves good in the long run.

R. Bley-Vroman (1989), who advanced his "Fundamental difference hypothesis", claimed that the domain-specific language acquisition system of children ceases to operate in adults. While adults possess native language knowledge and are able to operate general problem-solving systems "children have a crucial something such as personality state, attitude, degree of motivation, stage of ego-development or socialization, way of interacting or the like," (ibid., p. 51). Around puberty a general ability to deal with abstract formal systems is developed. This is the onset of Piaget's stage of formal operations, and consequently it could offer an ideal time to fill in the gaps in children's simplified systems of interlanguage that they developed in earlier years extremely successfully. Nevertheless, children are able to deal with the language in a kind of limited cognitive way. Bley-Vroman offers an acceptable explanation to that, claiming that in the stage of Piagetian concrete operations the language-specific cognitive system is the only cognitive module capable of dealing with language.

The Project experience supports the thesis. Children from 7 years on are capable to perform cognitive operations in a language, so one of the tasks of the Project was to find out more about that.

Our efforts were directed towards defining this "crucial something" in Bley-Vroman terms that makes children so successful in operating the phonological system of a foreign language and in communicating freely and expressively.

Adults give priority to understanding the subtle processes of foreign language grammar. Let us insist on their accuracy of expression based on analysis, synthesis, and other cognitive operations. They will be able to use such operations much more successfully if they have had a number of years of free and genuine communication as children.

According to the experience of Project teachers the work with 6-7-years-olds is both extremely difficult and very rewarding for the teacher who must very often play an additional role – that of a substitute parent, as the children still do not know the

rules of the game that are feasible in the classroom, and some of them are very slow and not sufficiently socialized.

In spite of all this, in a recent discussion of that issue, all our teachers who worked with the first grade declared that this was the time to start. During this period, the children go through a kind of novice stage and come to the second grade prepared for more serious work.

On the theoretical ground we investigated whether the process of learning a foreign language exerted any kind of "balance effect," that is, played a negative influence on learning other subjects, especially Croatian, and none was observed. On the contrary, children learning a foreign language showed more understanding of language as a system, which is in accordance with the well-known Vigotsky's thesis (Vigotsky, 1962).

What characteristics and abilities of children should be taken into consideration?

One certainly should not overlook the fact that there are individual differences in the way children develop language. Dealing with the first language acquisition Ann Peters (1977) suggested that there may be three types of language learners: 1. those who use an analytic approach (starting with the parts and building up the whole) 2. those who use a gestalt approach (from the whole to the various parts) 3. those who use both an analytic and a gestalt approach. Although the transfer of theories from L1 acquisition to the field of L2 in the past often proved to be counter-productive, the differences should not be neglected. However, it may be that in an FL class, where the input is structured and controlled, one should be more careful about the differences in the affective and attitudinal domain (see the chapters by Mihaljević Djigunović).

What we can accept without hesitation is Arnberg's statement that the development of the system of the language involves an interaction of the child's linguistic knowledge about the non-linguistic context and strategies used by the child in understanding or using the language (Arnberg, 1987).

Some of the characteristics of children at the stage of concrete operations, that can be attributed to the majority of children are included in the following. These must be accepted as important in planning any activity with the young learners:

· Children of this age become emotionally attached to the teacher to such an extent that it may become a decisive factor in their attitude towards the foreign language they are learning. As a rule they either like their teacher very much, or dislike her (him) completely.

· They should experience the process of learning English as a kind of game to which they are eager to contribute motorically, emotionally, and intellectually.

- Some children are extremely shy at the beginning and they must be given an opportunity to join in when they are ready, not when it pleases the teacher.
- Seven-year-olds often show a possessive attitude towards the teacher if they like her, but are not particularly interested in their peers in the class. Some children are not interested in making friends at that age.
- They cannot concentrate on one activity for more than five to ten minutes after which time they become tired and bored.
- With many children their imagination has yet to be aroused. I have observed first graders practising the structure "I can see", looking through the binoculars and giving way to their imagination by imagining all sorts of creatures and things – from extraterrestrials and flying saucers to dinosaurs and helicopters.

The teacher

Children need a leader for all their games, that is teachers that will dance and sing with them, play with them, draw and act with them - which is demanding not only intellectually and emotionally, but is also tough physical work. Few people realise what traps for teachers are hidden in the acronym TPR (total physical response). The teacher of a 7-year-old should know her English extremely well, especially on the communicative and phonological side, as in many cases she will be the only model to imitate.

She should love both the children and the work she is doing if she wants to be successful. At one of the Project meetings I have suggested that the teacher's behaviour should be that of TER – total emotional response – and the acronym was accepted and started to be used, showing that there was an empty slot in the system which was filled in readily.

She should be creative but this creativity should emerge from her personality traits, in other words, she should be convinced that what she does is worth doing and have her own justification for it. I shall try to illustrate it: Teacher A was a rather strict person, a perfectionist, who demanded much from her pupils from the very beginning, for example she insisted on accuracy of expression, especially that of pronunciation. Both she and her pupils used a lot of energy in English classes. Nevertheless, they formed a happy and successful group, as the children very quickly accepted the rules of the game the teacher advanced. Teacher B was rather strict with herself, but permissive with the children, she immersed them in a rich language bath to which they orally responded when they were ready. There was never a lack of volunteers in the class who wanted to participate in different (language) games. Both groups of learners are now in the fourth grade, both like their English and their teacher. Which group is linguistically better? We shall find out in a couple of years when the corpus of their knowledge

is analysed if it is important at all. Both teachers believe in their respective approaches and both are accepted by the children, who are highly motivated to continue.

Four years of observing different teaching procedures and activities

Four years of work provided us with the ideas of how to organize teaching to involve our young learners in listening and speaking, to shield shy students from the embarrassment of speaking in front of the class and to provide a safe, informal, and comfortable atmosphere. A number of contributions in this book deal with the different aspects of teaching techniques so I shall limit myself to highlighting two ways of teaching that proved to be very productive.

Content-related teaching

In content-related teaching the teacher is not dealing with language that is isolated and reduced to small pieces and the learners see the language and the concepts to be learned as part of an integrated whole. We fully agree with Curtain and Pesola (1994), who see the success of content-related teaching in the fact that "[i]n order for communication to take place, there must be some knowledge or information to be shared. Communicative competence can be developed as students feel the need to exchange the information with one another or with the teacher in a setting that has significance for all of the participants in the communication" (p.151). The teachers in the Project organized this kind of work in collaboration with the class teacher following class curriculum and reinforcing the children's work on mathematics and science and content of other school subjects areas, thus helping the learners and making new concepts less language dependent and language tasks more cognitively engaging.

Story-telling

Story-telling also deserves to be specially mentioned as it was practiced practically from the first day of the course. It was always carefully graded in accordance with the linguistic and cognitive level of the students, involving in some cases just listening, and in the others TPR, role playing, dramatization and even writing children's own stories, thus evoking children's creativity and stirring their imagination.

In recent years stories have been recognized as a very powerful tool in developing children's communicative as well as language competence both in the first and the second language. Bruner (1990) even claims that our perception of the world is shaped by the stories to which we are exposed and which we have internalized. Stories have

shown to be a very valuable aid in familiarizing the young learners with the ideas and values of the target culture, as they need very little language background to comprehend the myths, legends, and fairy tales popular in the target culture.

Some ideas on selection of the teaching input

Should the linguistic material presented to the children be selected and graded according to accepted pedagogical principles – from known to unknown, from simple to more complex, or should they be exposed to the language input no matter how complex it may be?

From second language acquisition studies the evidence was advanced that the language input was what really mattered (Dulay and Burt, 1973) and that children would pick up linguistic structures without teaching. This is probably true to a certain extent in second language situations when the children are exposed to the second language and its culture for a long time every day, but it certainly does not work in traditional school situations. In our Project the situation has been half way between the second and foreign language: five periods of weekly practice with the foreign language in groups of 12 to 15 learners gives ample time for some linguistic structures to be internalized spontaneously. Nevertheless, the fact remains that some parts of the linguistic system are remembered and used much more readily than others. Learning could be largely facilitated if structures that cause difficulty were avoided at this young age, or at least if the teachers could get hints when not to insist on their use. This is why we attempted some comparative cross-sectional studies in English, French, and German. Italian was not included for some technical reasons.

The first study

In order to investigate the use of personal pronouns by the children in the three languages four groups of Croatian learners were tested on their use of male and female personal pronouns 3rd person singular.

Subjects were: 88 learners of English – 3rd grade
50 learners of English – 4th grade
32 learners of French – 3rd grade
13 learners of German – 3rd grade

The task was to respond to two sentences written in Croatian:
Vesna je gladna. [Vesna is hungry] Ona jede jabuku. [She is eating an apple. Mirko je žedan. [Mirko is thirsty] On pije koka kolu. [He is drinking a coca-cola]

The examinees were asked to translate these sentences into their respective foreign language and say the translation to the teacher. The task was performed individually, and the learners could not see or hear each other's answers.

The pronouns were selected as in an earlier experiment I have observed (Vilke, 1988) that children learning English were reluctant to use *he* or *she* and preferred using the nouns instead, although most of them understood what *he* and *she* stand for. In his inaugural article on interlanguage Selinker (1972) mentioned as typical the mistake of Croatian speakers of English who use *he* instead of *she* in many cases. On the other hand C. Chomsky (1969) found that the process of pronominalization was not yet accomplished in English as a first language by the age of 6 or 7. In the present experiment we wanted to find further clues about the children's erroneous use of the pronouns, in case they do make errors after a relatively long practice. A further question we wanted to be highlighted relates to difficulties. Are they L1 specific, or L2 specific, or due to the level of cognitive maturity of children of that age? This is why our investigation included English, French and German.

The results were the following:

English – fourth grade
he and *she* correctly used by 46 learners
he instead of *she* by 4 learners

English – third grade
he and *she* correctly used by 81 learners
he instead of *she* by 7 learners

French – third grade
Il and *elle* correctly used by 19 learners
Il instead of *elle* by 12 learners

German – third grade
er and *sie* correctly used by all 13 learners

The teachers' comments on the general use of the personal pronouns were that at the beginning – that is in the first two grades – there was a certain confusion which gradually diminished. Thus, in the third and fourth grade, if there are any difficulties they are due to slips (the learners usually self-correct themselves.)

A higher number of learners who used <u>il</u> instead <u>elle</u> was observed only in French, but it cannot be taken as significant because the sample was too small.

The teachers reported the avoidance of using 3rd person personal pronoun plural, instead of which the learners prefer using personal names.

Teaching implications – at this early age, especially in the first two grades, teachers should not insist on accuracy in using pronouns as it seems to be in connection with the gradual language consciousness-raising, which advances with age.

In English, Croatian learners had also problems with <u>it</u> for inanimate and much rather used the nouns. This mistake can be attributed to the negative transfer from Croatian as we have grammatical gender and inanimates have masculine, feminine or neutral gender. To avoid the erroneous usage learners of English seem to be on a safer ground if they use the nouns.

The second study

To examine the special concepts expressed by the prepositions the learners of the three respective languages were chosen.

Their task was to play the game "Where is everything?". They were asked to describe the position of different objects in the class so that we could find out which preposition was most frequently used and whether there was any "universality" of usage across the three languages. It was again an individual procedure: one examiner – one examinee. The examinee was asked to describe where different objects in the class were placed. Subsequently, the examiner would write down their answers and then list six of the most frequently used prepositions in their order of frequency.

The tables of frequency are included in the following.

ENGLISH   138 learners

Total number of times of the most frequently used prepositions – 659

		correctly	incorrectly
ON	269 (40.8%)	261 (97%)	8 (3%)
IN	125 (19.0%)	107 (85%)	18 (15%)
UNDER	94 (14.3%)	81 (86%)	13 (14%)
BEHIND	74 (11.2%)	62 (84%)	12 (16%)
IN FRONT OF	51 (7.7%)	49 (96%)	2 (4%)
BETWEEN	46 (7.0%)	46 (100%)	-

FRENCH   32 learners

Total number of times of the most frequently used prepositions -103

SUR	37 (35.9%)	27 (73%)	10 (27%)
SOUS	22 (21.4%)	14 (64%)	8 (36%)
DANS	22 (21.4%)	19 (86%)	3 (14%)
DERRIERE	9 (8.7%)	6 (67%)	3 (33%)
A COTE	7 (6.8%)	7 (100%)	-
DEVANT	6 (5.8%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)

GERMAN   13 learners

Total number of times of the 5 most frequently used prepositions -36

AUF	19 (52.8%)	16 (84%)	3 (16%)
UNTER	10 (27.8%)	10 (100%)	
IN	4 (11.1%)	4 (100%)	
NEBEN	2 (5.5%)	2 (100%)	
HINTER	1 (2.8%)	1 (100%)	

On in English, *auf* in German and *sur* in French are the most frequently used prepositions, followed by *in* in English, *dans* in French and *unter* in German.

On and its equivalent in other languages is definitely the most frequently used preposition. The meaning of the prepositions that follow does not conform to a regularity among the languages. We can always say, of course, that it is dependent on the amount of practice different teachers allowed for different prepositions, but it seems to me that the reason is more conceptual than linguistic or pedagogical. Eleanor Rosh (1978), who proposed the Prototype theory, argues that people always consider some members of a category more typical than other members. So, for example, they consider robins and sparrows typical birds, but not chickens and penguins. Such prototypical members enter more easily into cognitive operations, such as constructing new sentences, than do peripheral members. For our young learners *on* and *in* and their translational equivalents are prototypical prepositions as opposed to *in front of*, *devant* or *hinter*.

The Prototype theory could become a valuable tool in searching for explanation why certain lexical items are much more difficult for children to remember and use in cases when neither linguistic nor affective factors seem logical. So, for example, *brown* is always a colour that young children would not use if they had a choice. Moreover, it is much more difficult to remember than *violet*, for example. Is it because of its lack of "colourness" and consequently its peripheral status, or because of its low affective value? (Children simply do not like brown!).

The Prototype theory is not in contradiction with the theory of markedness (Fergusson, 1984), which has been carried over into syntax and semantics by several scholars. Slobin (1985) claimed, for example, that due to the structure of the human perceptual and cognitive apparatus, certain morphological and syntactic patterns are more natural or less marked than others and that these patterns emerge first in the child's language. He states (ibid, p. 1160), "([s]emantic and formal) entities are arrayed in an accessibility hierarchy according to which some notions and forms are likely to emerge earlier (…) than others."

Although it may seem a purely academic issue, it could have a very serious bearing on the selection and contents of the teaching materials for young children. What I mean is that one should identify prototypical (or unmarked) elements of language and give them priority in the language syllabus prepared for young children.

Research of this type is extremely demanding and time consuming but we plan to conduct more of it through doctoral and master's theses of young people interested in the field. It is our firm belief that, in the long run, the more insight we have into the cognitive and other processes at work in the course of acquiring a foreign language the more successful the work in class will be.

To sum up

The work on the Project so far has shown once again that children of 6+ can learn foreign languages even in a school environment provided teaching is shaped according to the psychomotoric and intellectual requirements of this complex age.

The foreign language can become an integral part of the learner's work in school, hopefully, the most enjoyable part with the teacher's adequate attitude towards it and with the positive attitudes of all concerned, that is, the class teacher, parents and principal. The mass media, especially TV and video, will do their part of the job to help the teacher. Integration into the primary curriculum will be part of a natural process. Some subjects such as maths, drawing, physical training, etc., lend themselves ideally to a start in a different language. A relatively large number of contact hours should offer ample opportunities for all basic language skills to be used. The order of intro-

ducing them should – according to our Project's experience – remain traditional. Listening to the language input first, responding orally when the children are ready for it, next reading and finally writing, which corresponds to the process of a child becoming literate in Croatian. No strict prescriptions concerning the time of introducing reading and writing should be given and it will have to be left to the discretion of the teacher as children differ significantly regarding their maturity. If children are exposed to efforts they are not yet ready to accept, their motivation may suffer dangerously. It is essential that the entire process of learning be based on receptive learning rather than defensive – to use Curran's terms, that is, free from anxiety and stress, so often present in traditional school activities.

The entire adventure of introducing English into the first form of primary school should lead to one goal – to make the child accept it as an alternative medium of communication through a natural and enjoyable process. This is much easier said than done and will require a lot of hard work on the part of many people, but it seems that the results achieved so far show that we are on the right track.

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ATTITUDES OF YOUNG FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY

The popular belief that young children are the best foreign language learners has been put to test in numerous studies but the findings have been far from conclusive. The researchers who take the view that there is at least some potential advantage to an early start still do not agree on the precise nature of such an advantage. The causes of such an advantage are a matter of dispute as well.

Carroll (1969:63) claims that "the amount of competence one achieves is largely a matter of time spent in learning, rather than the actual age of starting". In his rejection of the sensitive period in favour of the concept of cognitive maturation, Vogel (1991) concludes that older learners are superior to younger ones. Dabene (1991) states that, while it is generally accepted that younger children are better at learning languages, the learner's age is only one of many factors involved.

It is interesting to note that in spite of the findings of even such studies as the Nuffield French in the Primary School (Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen & Hargreaves, 1974) that early starters had definitely more favourable attitudes to the foreign language and culture, the cultural and educational value of meeting a new language during an early age and the high motivation that was shown by most pupils and teachers are often ignored. Lennon (1993) stresses that the young learner is far more open to new cultural and linguistic influences because his cognitive, attitudinal, social and psychological development is not completed. Considering an early start a good chance to promote positive attitudes to language learning because the young learner is still at a highly impressionable age, Johnstone also stresses the opportunity for "experiential forms of learning based on the kinds of project-work, creative activity, song, dance, drama and practical tasks (....) What has been assimilated intuitively and experientially may then be reprocessed in more analytical, cognitive ways when children are somewhat older." (1993:2) Several authors point out that it is in circumstances where the individual feels unthreatened and unchallanged that the affective filter is most likely to be lowered and ego permeability increased.

If one accepts the concept of the "critical" or "sensitive" period for learning a language, in this case a foreign language, one may also consider the possibility of there being multiple sensitive periods for various aspects of language learning, thus a sensitive period for the development of the affective aspects of this process.

Aim

After learning about the attitudes of 7-year-old beginners in English, French and German within the Zagreb Project 1991 (see Mihaljević Djigunović, 1993) in the follow-up study we were interested in seeing the development of these initial attitudes after almost three years of learning the foreign language in question. Our interest particularly focused on whether the young beginners viewed their foreign language classes differently now, whether their attitudes towards the native speakers of the language they were learning changed and whether their self-rating of foreign language skills changed.

Instruments

The same interview that was used in the initial year of the Project (1991/1992 school year; see earlier chapter on attitudes and motivation in this volume) was applied at the end of the third year of learning.

The 22 questions included in the interview probed the following attitude objects: the foreign language, native speakers of the foreign language, the purpose of learning the foreign language, the optimal age to start foreign language learning, foreign language lessons in school and the learner's attainment in the foreign language. The learners were also questioned on whether they had known a bit of the foreign language before starting school as well as which members in the family spoke foreign languages.

Sample

At the end of the third year of learning 281 young learners were examined. The sample included 146 male and 135 female learners.

There were 87 learners of English, 86 learners of French and 108 learners of German as a foreign language. Since this first generation of young learners had no first-grade (7 years of age) beginners of Italian, learners of Italian were not included in this particular study of attitudes and motivation.

The young learners in this study were now all third-graders and in their third year of learning the foreign language in question. Four classes of learners from four different schools in Zagreb were included for each of the three foreign languages.

Methodology

Each young learner was interviewed by the interviewer individually out of class in a separate room. The interviewer followed the instructions that apply to oral interviews with such young interviewees. Answers given by the children were noted down

on the spot and additional comments were written after the child had left the room. Most interviewees were very cooperative and, on the whole, the interviews went very smoothly.

Results and discussion

The statistical results to be presented in this section will be grouped according to the object of the attitude investigated. Comparisons will be made with the results of the first interview (Mihaljević Djigunović, 1993).

Item 1: What is your favourite school subject?

The learners were asked about their favourite school subject. The aim was to find out how many would name the foreign language as the favourite subject in school.

The following percentages of the young learners stated that the foreign language was their favourite subject:

English	29.9 %
French	29.1 %
German	15.7 %

Compared to the results of the interview two years earlier it seems that English was mentioned as the most favourite subject significantly more frequently (12.0% - 29.9%). The other two languages did not differ much in the frequency of appearing as the favourite school subject.

The importance of these answers is downplayed by the fact that, as noticed in earlier studies (e.g., Vilke, 1976), a large number of learners do not think of the foreign language as a school subject but as a nicely spent time in school. This is supported by the answers to *Items 2 & 3*.

Item 2: Do you like the foreign language you are learning?

Item 3: Do you enjoy your foreign language classes?

The results were almost identical to those from the first interview.

Item 2:

	English	French	German
YES	98.9 %	97.7 %	97.2 %

Item 3:

	English	French	German
YES	98.9 %	98.8 %	96.2%

At the end of the third year of learning our early starters still liked both the foreign language they were learning and the foreign language classes.

Item 4: What do you do in your foreign language classes?

The purpose of this item was to find out what perceptions the young learners had of what went on in their foreign language classes.

The answers were classified according to whether they referred to activities that imply teaching/learning elements (e.g., learning words) or game elements (e.g., singing). Thus three groups were formed:

	English	French	German
Teaching	29.3 %	29.1 %	33.0 %
Playing	11.0 %	24.4 %	6.6 %
Both	59.8 %	46.5 %	60.4 %

In all the three foreign language groups the percentage of learners who described activities in class as learning increased significantly. Except for the learners of French, the percentage of learners who saw their foreign language classes as playing dropped.

It is essential that young foreign language learners view their learning as pleasant. Unless their experience is positive it may result in antipathy towards the language and culture they are learning and demotivation for subsequent learning.

Several authors (e.g., Schumann, 1978) stress the role of the psychological distance, which is defined as the learner's degree of ease or unease with the foreign language and culture as well as of the learner's personal motivation and permeability of ego. Curran (1961) claims that children on the whole may feel less threatened by the new sounds and are willing to depend on others for support in learning as opposed to adults and this makes them acquire more easily. Stengel (1939) believes that giving a child a new language is giving him a new method of play; the child has no fear of talking nonsense (it may even be a source of pleasure for the child) or pretence.

We can see that at age 9 fewer children saw foreign language learning as play than at age 7.

Item 5: What do like most in your foreign language classes?

Item 6: What do you dislike most in your foreign language classes?

The same classification criterion was used to analyze the results of these two items.

Item 5

	English	French	German
Teaching	25.3 %	48.8 %	31.8%
Playing	70.1 %	47.7 %	59.8 %
Both	4.5 %	3.5 %	8.4 %

Except for the learners of German, where the results do not significantly differ from those of two years earlier, in most other cases more learners stated learning/teaching activities as their favourite. On the one hand, it is possible that they were now capable of perceiving learning elements more easily (this is, in fact, supported by the results in Item 4!) but, on the other, it is also likely that the learners started getting more pleasure out of learning and a sense of achievement.

Item 6

	English	French	German
Teaching	29.3 %	29.1 %	48.5 %
Playing	11.0 %	24.4 %	26.2 %
Nothing	59.8 %	46.5 %	25.2 %

Teaching/learning activities had dropped in the frequency of being disliked by the young learners, the change being less drastic with the learners of German. The same decline can be observed with playing activities (a drastic one in the case of learners of French!). The changes in the percentages may be ascribed to the new group of answers that appeared here: "I like everything that goes on in the classroom."

It is encouraging that the initial positive attitudes of the young beginners in the Project spread to most of the classroom events in the two years that passed since the first interview.

Item 7: Would you like to continue learning the foreign language next year too?

Item 12: Would you be sorry if your parents hadn't enrolled you in this programme?

An important aspect of motivation is the wish to continue the activity one is engaged in and these two items aimed at finding out about this in our beginners.

Item 7:

	English	French	German
YES	100 %	95.3 %	98.1 %

An overwhelming number of the young beginners still wanted to go on learning the foreign language after three years of learning. The wish they had expressed two years earlier did not vanish. This may be ascribed to the fact that the learners enjoyed their foreign language lessons and had a feeling they had achieved a lot of knowledge and skill.

Item 12

	English	French	German
YES	95.4 %	91.8 %	94.4 %

Again, the vast majority were happy that their parents had enrolled them in the experimental class. Although the differences are not statistically significant, one may note again the slightly higher percentage of the learners of French who would not be too unhappy about not being in the Project.

Item 8: Which mark would you assign yourself for the foreign language you are learning?

The learners were asked to evaluate their knowledge of the foreign language on a 1-5 scale (1-insufficient, 5-excellent).

Item 8

	English	French	German
excellent	58.6 %	39.5 %	29.9 %
very good	35.6 %	54.7 %	51.4 %
good	3.4 %	5.8 %	15.9 %
fair	0 %	0 %	1.9 %
insufficient	0%	0 %	.9 %

The average mark that the learners assigned themselves differs significantly from the grade they stated two years earlier. It dropped from 4.6 to 4.3 for all the three groups of learners. In the case of learners of English the drop was not significant, while the greatest drop in the average grade was found with the learners of German (from 4.6 to 4.0).

Although the young learners still thought highly of their learning achievements, they seemed to be more objective and realistic when evaluating their proficiency in terms of marks. There may be two explanations for this: they were not only more mature now but had also had feedback from the foreign language teacher on their learning achievements. They were also more aware of teaching going on in class and may have started evaluating themselves according to concrete learning results.

Item 9: Is it good to know the foreign language you are learning?

Item 10: Why is it good to know the foreign language you are learning?

Item 11: Why is it good for you to know this foreign language?

The purpose of the three items was to find out what benefits the learners saw in knowing the foreign language they were learning and whether these changed over the two-year period.

Item 9

	English	French	German
YES	98.1 %	100 %	100%

Again, the overwhelming majority believe it was good to know the foreign language they were learning.

Item 10

	English	French	German
Communication/ Travel	61.6 %	76.5%	72.0 %
Language features	16.3 %	9.4 %	6.5 %
General knowledge	14.0 %	10.6 %	11.2 %
Education/job opportunities	5.8 %	2.4 %	7.5 %
Don't know	2.3 %	1.2 %	2.8 %

The answers lent themselves to five groups. Some answers referred to practical benefits of the knowledge, some were connected with the linguistic or cultural and educational value.

The same classification of answers was possible with answers to Item 11.

Item 11

	English	French	German
Communication/ Travel	86.2 %	77.9 %	78.5 %
Language features	1.1 %	0 %	.9 %
General knowledege	3.4 %	4.7 %	4.7 %
Education/job opportunities	3.4 %	16.3 %	13.1 %
Don't know	5.7 %	1.2 %	2.8 %

The second interview showed that in the third grade young learners could distinguish between general and personal benefits. It is interesting to note that in the first interview a certain number of young beginners did not know whether it was good to know a foreign language but could still provide an answer about the benefits of the knowledge of the foreign language they were learning. In the second interview the situation is the opposite: no learner said he did not know whether knowing the foreign language was good but when it came to explaining why the "don't know" answers appeared.

The analysis of the answers shows that as far as the communication/travel benefit is concerned, the learners of English mentioned it less frequently now than two years earlier in contrast with the learners of German. Language features (e.g., ease of learning, usefulness) were more often stressed now with the learners of English and less often with the learners of German than in the first interview. Increasing one's general knowledge went up in all the groups but especially with the learners of English. Educational and job opportunities as a general benefit appeared now less often in the English and German groups but its frequency went up with the learners of French.

As far as personal benefits of knowing the foreign language in question are concerned the communication/travel benefits increased in the English group, decreased in the French group and remained at the same frequency level in the German group. Language features remained at the same level in the English group as well as in the French group (where the frequency was again 0!) and increased a bit in the German group. General knowledge as a personal benefit increased in the German group. It is interesting to note that better opportunities for schooling and work in future appeared more frequently now only in the French and German groups and not in the English group. It seems that our young learners of the three foreign languages were instrumentally oriented and that they tended to see vocational rather than cultural value (Singleton, 1989) in knowing the foreign language they were learning.

Item 13: What do you think is the best time to start learning a foreign language?

We were interested in what, according to the young learners, the optimal age for starting foreign language learning was.

Item 13

	English	French	German
Pre-school	46.0 %	38.4 %	38.3%
7 years	50.6 %	48.8 %	58.9 %
8 years	2.3 %	5.8 %	.9 %
9 years	0 %	1.2 %	0 %
10 years	0 %	2.3 %	1.9 %
later	1.1 %	3.5 %	0 %

As in the first interview, the majority of learners in all the groups believed that the first grade of primary school was the optimal time to start learning a foreign language. In contrast to the results in the first interview, larger percentages now opted for the pre-school period as the optimal age. Pre-school learning of foreign languages (in kindergartens) is not a new phenomenon in Croatia and has been popular for quite some time now.

Item14: Who speaks the foreign language you are learning?

Item 15: What are they like?

The purpose of the items was to find out whether the young learners in the Project related the foreign language they were learning to its native speakers and to see what kind of idea they had of the native speakers.

The same criteria as in the first interview were used in grouping the answers: correctness of the answer, content reference and evaluation.

Item 14

	English	French	German
Correct	81.6 %	95.5 %	95.4 %
Incorrect	17.3 %	3.5 %	1.8 %
Don't know	1.2 %	0 %	2.8 %

The results show that the frequency of correct answers had significantly increased – obviously through the teaching/learning process the young learners became aware of

the fact that the foreign language is connected to the native speakers and culture. The fact that in the English group the percentage of incorrect answers did not drop but even increased maybe reflects the present reality of the English language as a language for international communication: therefore it might be more difficult for the young learners to relate it to the native speaker groups. An interesting phenomenon can be observed in the German group: the number of "don't know" answers rose. One may possibly connect this with the fact that a lot of Croatian children have access to satellite TV and watch German channels where foreign programmes are dubbed so that even well-known American etc. characters (e.g., Alf) "speak" German.

Item 15

	English	French	German
Character	45.3 %	51.8 %	66.7 %
Physical appearan.	1.2 %	0 %	3.8 %
Cultural charact.	3.5 %	18.8 %	5.7 %
Don't know	22.1 %	9.4 %	12.4 %
Unclassifiable	27.9 %	20.0 %	11.4 %

	English	French	German
Positive	62.5 %	65.9 %	68.7 %
Neutral	36.1 %	31.8 %	30.3 %
Negative	1.4 %	2.4 %	1.0 %

The analysis of these results points to several interesting observations. In the German and English groups of learners a considerable drop in character descriptions can be noted, while the frequency of charaterizing the native speakers in terms of character remained the same in the French group. Except for the German group, the young learners seemed to have stopped thinkng of the native speakers in terms of their physical appearance too. As far as the cultural characteristics are concerned, a significant increase in the percentage in the French group can be noticed. It is only in the French group again that the drastic drop of "don't know" answers can be noticed too. What seems a little surprising is the appearance of considerable percentages of specific answers (termed 'Unclassifiable' in the table above) in all the three groups. One may suppose that, perhaps, the young learners had developed their own ideas and images of the native speakers that are rather idiosyncratic and dependent on child imagination.

As far as the evaluational aspect is concerned, the general observation is that very few beginners had negative attitudes towards the native speakers: in fact the major-

ity (between 60 and 70 per cent) held positive views about them. The conspicuous changes refer to high increases in the positive evaluation in the English and French groups, while the rise in the German group was not significant. A drop in the neutral views can also be noted in the French and English groups. We may conclude that during the period of the two years since the first interview the young beginners developed further the positive attitudes about the native speakers that they started the foreign language learnig process with.

Our results differ from those in Lambert and Klineberg (1967) who, on the basis of a cross-national study of children's views of foreign peoples, conclude that the age of ten or so is the most beneficial for introducing cultural differences. They maintain that after this age as well as before it children tend to associate "different" with "bad". Our research shows that even at the age of 7 children are likely to view foreign people as different but at the same time interesting.

Item 16: Do your parents speak the foreign language you are learning?

Item 17: Do your parents speak any other foreign language?

Item 18: Do any of your relatives or friends speak the foreign language you are learning?

The learners' linguistic environment was questioned too. One may think of the environment as supportive if key figures in the child's life speak the foreign language he is learning in school.

Item 16

	English	French	German
Father only	11.5 %	10.5 %	26.2 %
Mother only	18.4 %	11.6 %	24.3 %
Both	36.8 %	7.0 %	16.8 %
Neither	33.3 %	70.9 %	32.7 %

Item 17

	English	French	German
Father only	16.1 %	14.0 %	24.3 %
Mother only	14.9 %	9.3 %	21.5 %
Both	36.8 %	73.3 %	43.9 %
Neither	32.2 %	3.5 %	10.3 %

	English	French	German
None	9.2 %	25.9 %	24.3 %
Relative	12.6 %	30.6 %	25.2 %
Friend	26.4 %	24.7 %	14.0 %
Both	51.7 %	18.8 %	36.4 %

These results show that our young learners, languagewise, lived in supportive environments. They also show that in their third year of learning a foreign language they were more aware of who speaks which foreign language in the family or among relatives and friends. In a way, a kind of consciousness-raising takes place in the young learner, who becomes aware that foreign languages exist in other people's lives as well.

Item 19: Did you know the foreign language before you started school?

Item 20: What did you know in this foreign language?

Item 21: Where did you learn it?

The possible pre-knowledge of the foreign language was looked into.

Item 19

	English	French	German
YES	64.0 %	27.9 %	38.3 %

The results differ a little from those of two years earlier. The young learners may have now got a different idea about what "knowing a language" means. The percentages realistically reflect the pre-school learning situation in the country.

Item 20

	English	French	German
Words	85.7 %	90.6 %	84.6 %
Sentences	14.3 %	9.4 %	15.4 %

Except for the German group, most learners remember having known words in the foreign language before starting school in contrast to their statements two years earlier, when much higher percentages claimed they had known sentences as well. This may be connected with the developing cognitive maturity and language awareness.

	English	French	German
Kindergarten	28.6 %	15.2 %	9.6 %
Parents	12.5 %	21.2 %	36.5 %
Siblings	14.3 %	9.1 %	3.8 %
FL course	14.3 %	0 %	11.5 %
Grandparents	1.8 %	3.0 %	15.4 %
Relatives, friends	17.9 %	21.2 %	15.4 %
Other	10.7 %	30.3 %	7.7 %

These results also differ from the results of two years earlier. Again, one might say that the second interview revealed more realistic data. The results point to several trends in foreign language learning in Croatia. English is the foreign language that is most frequently learned in kindergartens, most grandparents and parents know German because that was the language that was most often taught in school at the time, among the siblings the most frequently learned foreign language is English.

Item 22: What do your parents think about you learning this foreign language?

This item aims at finding out about the learners' perception of the parents' attitude towards their learning of the foreign language.

Item 22

	English	French	German
Like it	97.8 %	95.3 %	90.7 %
Don't care	0 %	2.3 %	1.9 %
Don't like it	0 %	1.2 %	0 %
Don't know	1.2 %	1.2 %	7.5 %

The results show that after almost three years of their children learning the foreign language in question more parents were happy with this fact. We may assume that the highly positive attitudes of the children as well as their enthusiasm influenced the parents' attitudes. This is in accordance with an earlier study of the change in parents' attitudes (Vilke, 1988).

Conclusion

Our follow-up study of the young learners' attitudes and motivation for learning foreign languages has found several interesting things.

At the end of their third year of learning the young beginners of English, French and German as a foreign language still liked the foreign language they were learning and enjoyed their foreign language classes. Their initial positive attitudes to activities that had game elements now spread to most classroom events. At the age of 9, the young learners more often perceived what went on in class as learning and not only play, and they more often stated learning activities as their favourites. An overwhelming majority was still happy they were in the Project class and wanted to continue learning the foreign language. As far as their proficiency in the foreign language is concerned, the young learners were now more realistic and objective.

Being now more able to distinguish between general and personal benefits of knowing the foreign language in question, our young beginners saw increasing one's general knowledge as a benefit for all but they personally saw vocational rather than cultural value in such knowledge.

Having had some experience in learning a foreign language, the majority of young learners thought that age 7 was optimal but an increasing number of them opted for the pre-school period too.

Having been in touch with the new language for three years, a significantly larger number of learners knew who the native speakers are. The attitudes towards the native speakers became even more positive, which contrasts with the Lambert and Klineberg's (1967) finding that before the age of 10 children connect "different" with "bad".

According to their reports, the young learners lived in supportive environments languagewise. They were also more aware of who in their environment spoke foreign languages. They also looked more realistically at their past leanguage learning achievements.

As far as the parents are concerned more learners reported positive parental attitudes to their learning of the foreign language.

All these results lead to the conclusion that the affective variables of the young beginners show positive trends and desirable characteristics that may be viewed as conducive to successful foreign language learning.

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