



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens

ELT Methods and Practices

Unit 1: Teaching English to Young Learners

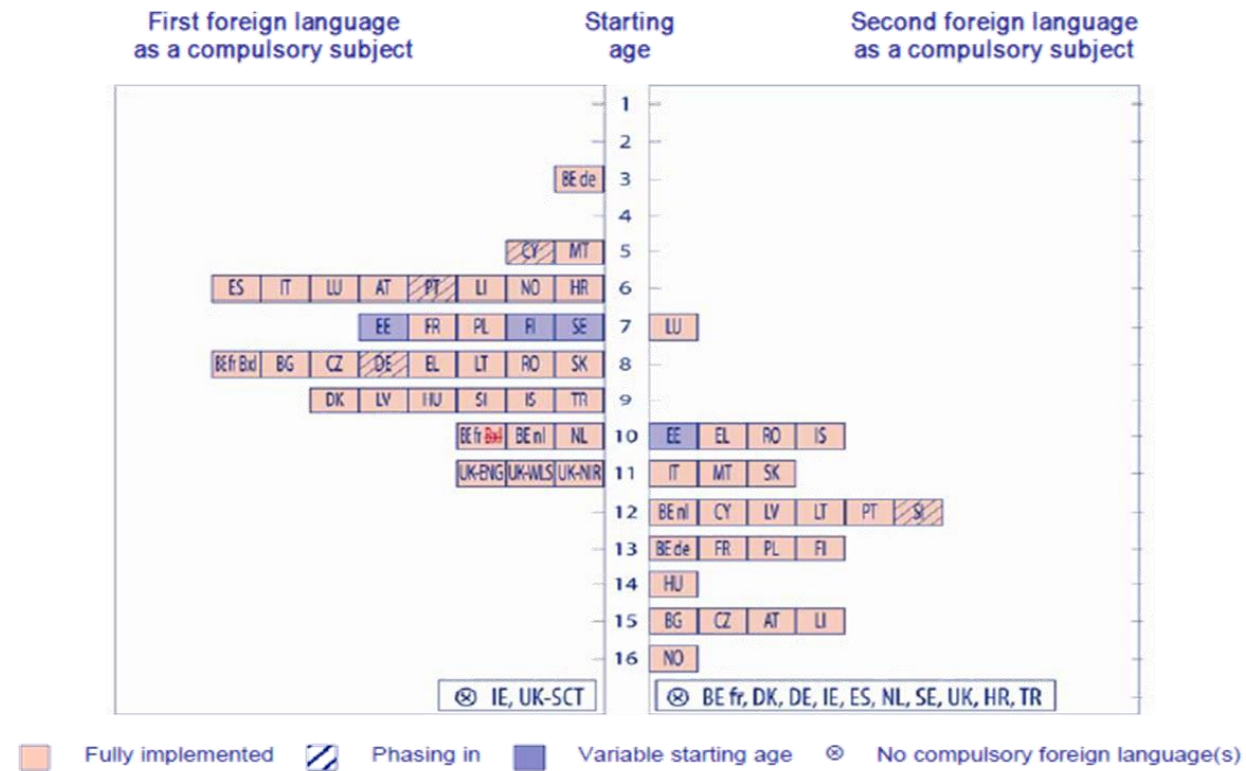
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The E.U. context for TEYL

Starting ages for the first and second foreign languages as compulsory subjects for all students in pre-primary, primary and/or general secondary education, 2010/11



Why teach children a foreign language?

- The earlier the onset of FLL, the greater the chances for language proficiency.
- Native-like pronunciation.
- Improved overall school performance and superior problem-solving skills.
- Enhancement of knowledge of native language.
- Development of lifelong ability to communicate with more people.
- Better understanding of other cultures.
- Competitive advantage in the work force by opening up additional job opportunities.



Young Learners have characteristics which distinguish them from teenagers and adults (1/2)

Young Learners:

- have a short attention span.
- are very active (kinesthetic).
- are egocentric.
- love praise and reward.
- are less shy than older learners.
- enjoy imitating and are skilful in listening accurately.



Young Learners have characteristics which distinguish them from teenagers and adults (2/2)

- enjoy learning through playing, acting, making and doing.
- are imaginative.
- understand language as units not separate words.
- interpret meaning without necessarily understanding the individual word.
- learn indirectly rather than directly.
- develop physically, mentally and conceptually.



Motivation is a key factor in second language acquisition success

In the YLs' classroom motivation can be triggered by:

- taking under consideration their age and their level of language competence in L1 and L2.
- adopting activities that are within their interests.
- designing meaningful tasks.
- integrating fun, play and imagination in your teaching program.
- being prepared to act.
- keeping the affective filter low .



Keep the affective filter low through caretaker talk

Teachers who adopt the caretaker's role:

- speak English in class all the time.
- keep children's attention by asking them questions.
- react positively to what children say even if words are not complete or perfectly pronounced.
- repeat phrases said earlier.
- add to or improve what children say.
- with very young learners facilitate understanding of instructions and tasks through use of L1.
- treat errors tacitly.



Priority areas in TEYL

source: Cameron, L., 2001, Teaching languages to Young Learners.

Learning a Foreign language

oral skills

the written language

vocabulary discourse

conversation

extended talk

grammar



Oracy skills first

Language learning should begin with listening.

- This is the first skill children practice in L1, so it is natural to begin with listening especially with very young learners.
- Lower age group: teacher talk, songs, rhymes, stories.
- Upper age group: the above and listening comprehension activities to develop strategies.



Why is listening important for children?

- Rich source of data to begin to build an idea of how language works.
- Safe space for learners who are not ready to speak the language / talk.
- Chances to focus on the language used and demonstrate has been understood.
- Opportunities for non-verbal support (e.g. Pictures) - essential for learners who cannot read,
- Rich source for language forms to repeat or imitate,



How is repetition facilitated in EYL practice?

Songs:

- Ten green bottles hanging on the wall”

Rhymes:

- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday – Hop!
- Thursday Friday Saturday – Shop!
- Sunday – take a rest and – Flop!

Word Games:

- Bingo.
- I went to market and bought an apple.

Stories:

- traditional stories,
- Fables.



By the age of 5 children: (1/2)

- have developed a series of language skills and capacities in speaking, which can be transferred to FL learning:
 - a vocabulary span which covers several thousand words.
 - basic grammatical forms.
 - adult-like pronunciation.
- can talk for a number of purposes (some of them high order ones like hypothesising, speculating, predicting).



By the age of 5 children: (2/2)

- engage in role play and experiment with different interactional identities.
- enjoy playing with and through language.
- have developed a sense of genres of talk (jokes, stories, news etc.)



Stories in the FL classroom

Stories :

- relate to children's nature and way of understanding the world.
- involve a number of aspects which facilitate memorisation and repetition.
- motivate imagination and creativity.



While story-telling the teacher:

- Uses realia to help relate words and concepts to existing knowledge, to remember, to motivate.
- Avoids overt translation.
- Speaks slowly and clearly.
- Uses body language.
- Changes pitch of voice.
- Offers opportunities for joining in the story.
- Asks comprehension questions.
- Encourages guessing and repetition.



While listening to the story children develop or learn to:

- Discriminate between different sounds.
- Understand intonation changes.
- Recognise chunks of meaning.
- Recognise the function of a piece of speech.
- Follow narratives.
- Use the context to understand and to predict.
- Use background knowledge to understand something new.



While participating in story telling children:

- Use language to express thoughts, ideas, feelings etc.
- Become aware of the use of language in context.
- Experiment on language use.
- Try assumptions about how language works.
- Use drills - repetitive chunks of language which help:
 - focus on the form of language.
 - remember and play with language.



Errors in Speaking

- Through errors children revise the L1 rule system to approximate the rule system of L2.
- Children tend to overgeneralise while using the language. With more exposure to language children revise their rule formation to incorporate the correct rule or exception. Thus, they make errors as they build their concept of how language works (interlanguage).



Literacy and the Young Learners

- Literacy skills development is supported by oracy skills.
- For literacy skills development, teaching should focus on helping children:
 - learn that meaning is embedded in written texts.
 - learn how to decode individual words.
 - work with complete texts such as stories or poems.
 - gradually develop writing and written production.



Practical ideas for promoting reading (1/2)

- Word and phrase recognition:
 - printed material in the classroom (e.g. flashcards with directions),
 - pelmanism.
- Making the connection between familiar sounds and the written:
 - words or phrases,
 - bingo with words and/or pictures.



Practical ideas for promoting reading (2/2)

- Naming the letters of the alphabet:
 - spelling names,
 - i spy with my little eye,
 - hangman.
- Predicting the pronunciation of a written word:
 - reading aloud.



Practical ideas for promoting writing (1/3)

- Handwriting:
 - Tracing over dot letters.
 - Palm-writing to feel the shape and tell the letter.
 - Back writing to feel the shape and write the letter.
- From speaking to writing:
 - Making picture poems/stories.
 - Making quizzes.
 - Question and answer.



Practical ideas for promoting writing (2/2)

- Making quizzes:
 - Question and answer.
 - From reading to writing.
 - Making lists.
 - Writing notes/cards /letters.



The Teacher as Materials Developer: The Teacher's Kit (1/2)

Teaching young learners requires teachers to collect and create their own materials, but at the same time, to have a number of handy items for the crafts activities they conduct in the classroom.

- Teacher's kit items:
 - safety scissors, paper tape, glue stick, blu tack, crayons, markers, pencils, sharpener, stapler, hole-puncher, wrapping paper, construction paper, crepe paper, CDs with songs and relaxation music, flash cards, and mascot puppet.



The Teacher as Materials Developer: The Teacher's Kit (2/2)

- visuals.
- a collection of realia: small animals, fruit, everyday objects etc.
- picture cards and seasonal material.
- Puppets.

Other than the Class Mascot, which could be voted upon by the learners or brought to class by the teacher and introduced to them, there should be 2 - 3 stock puppets.



Practical Ideas for fresh teachers (1/2)

- Starting the lesson:
 - Introduce yourself when in a new class.
 - Plan something simple to start the lesson.
 - Use a special name card.
 - Prepare a routine that the children like.
- Ending the lesson:
 - Make a list of phrases for closing the lesson.



Practical Ideas for fresh teachers (2/2)

- Organising the classroom:
 - Make a list of everyday instructions.
 - Make a list of classroom language for each activity and prepare to use it during the day.
 - Use wall charts or posters to help children remember that you are doing English.
 - Encourage children to use English for routine classroom requests by praising any effort they make.



End of Unit

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Notes

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