

Nastavni materijali za kolegij *Engleski jezik u predškolskom odgoju*

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Theory and Views on Foreign Language Instruction

Nowadays it is not uncommon to start learning foreign languages at a very young age, even in kindergarten. There is a strong "folk" belief that young children learn languages better and more easily than older children (Brewster; Ellis, Girard, 2004: 3). There has been a growing trend for using English as a world language and English is learnt by children in many countries of the world. Incentives for learning English at an early age have often come from parents, who believe that being fluent in English will help their children in many areas, especially in economic, cultural and educational areas (Brewster; Ellis; Girard, 2004: 3).

Characteristics of young children

Compared to learning a foreign language at an adult age, when people usually have a long-term goal (a wish to get a job where bilingual skills are important, a wish to study in the country of the target language), learning a foreign language at a young age has its specificities, the most important being the fact that young children are not in control of their lives and are thus "motivated" to learn a foreign language by their parents. Following are the characteristics of young children (Brewster; Ellis; Girard, 2004: 10):

- have a lot of physical energy
- are emotionally excitable
- are developing conceptually
- get impatient easily
- are developing literacy in their first language
- are excellent mimics
- tend to be self - oriented and preoccupied with their own world
- are developing conceptually and at an early stage of their schooling
- can stay concentrated for a long time if interested
- can be easily distracted and also very enthusiastic

Scott and Ytreberg (1997: 2) state more features:

- they can use logical reasoning
- they can use their vivid imaginations
- they can use a wide range of intonation patterns in their mother tongue
- their own understanding comes through hands, eyes and ears. The physical world is dominant at all times

Views on L1 and L2 Acquisition

Brewster, Ellis and Girard give a brief overview of the main theoretical views on L1 and L2 acquisition (2004: 16 - 19), i.e. *behaviorist, innatist, cognitive – developmental and social – interactionist views*.

Behaviorist views had a strong influence on the audio-lingual approach. Behaviorists put emphasis on repetition in form of drills, accuracy and avoidance of errors and base their work on Leonard Skinner's work "Verbal Behaviour" (1957). Language is learnt by imitation, practice and habit formation. Correct learning behaviour is rewarded by praise.

One of the biggest disadvantages of these views is the fact that they do not explain children's creativity in language. They neglect the fact that children play with similar sounds and compare patterns and meanings recognized from other words (ex. experimenting with the word undressed: on dressed, off dressed, etc.).

Innatist views originate from the 17th and 18th century theories which advocated the notion that there are universal characteristics of the mind. These ideas revived in the 1950s by Noam Chomsky, who suggested an internal (innate) Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which led to Universal Grammar in 1959. Chomsky supports the notion that children process the language they hear and produce own meaningful utterances. However, one disadvantage of this view is that it neglects social aspects of communication.

Nativists think that both L1 and L2 acquisition require the learner to use past experience to structure new experience. According to this view the child uses the language they hear selectively by building upon what they already know.

Cognitive – developmental views see language development as an aspect of general cognitive growth. They believe thinking skills mature before a framework for early language development is created. R. Lenneberg supported the notion of Critical Period Hypothesis, which advocated the idea that there is a specific and limited time for language acquisition.

The main disadvantage of these views is emphasizing age too much at the expense on other factors such as motivation and learning conditions. Cognitivists believe there are significant differences between L1 and L2 acquisition. In their view an L2 learner is more cognitively developed than an L1 learner .

Social – interactionist views emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s, when developmental psychologists emphasized the importance of social factors and

adult – child relationships in learning. They opine that language is modified to suit the level of the learner. Jerome Bruner introduced the idea of Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) and stressed the role of scaffolding (providing a structure framework by the person giving support to the learner). A few decades earlier Lev Vygotsky suggested the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD), stating that children can do much more with the help of someone more knowledgeable/skilled than they would do if studying alone.

However, social – interactionists do not stress enough children’s creativity. They emphasize that the social context varies significantly in terms of the types and amount of the input provided/output produced as well as the purpose for which the language is used. Thus they see L1 acquisition as highly contextualized with the learner being highly motivated, whereas L2 acquisition is more decontextualized and the learner is usually not so highly motivated.

6/03/2017

- Approaches and Methods of Foreign Language Instruction : The Grammar-Translation Approach, the Direct Approach

Before the 20th century language teaching methodology “ vacillated between two types of approaches to foreign language teaching: getting learners use a language (speak and understand it) and getting learners to analyse a language (learn its grammatical rules)“, as stated by Celce- Murcia, Brinton and Snow (2014: 4). During classical Greek and medieval Latin periods the emphasis was on teaching people to learn languages. Greek and Latin were used as *linguas francas* (means of communication) amongst peoples speaking different languages. The educated elite became fluent speakers of these two languages. Tutors presumably used informal and direct approaches to convey the form and meaning of the target language.

During the Renaissance the study of grammars of Greek and Latin was popular due to the invention of printing. It was discovered that the Latin in classical texts was different from Latin used as a *lingua franca* (vulgate Latin, the Latin of the common people). The Renaissance grammars became the object of instruction in schools, while Latin was abandoned as a *lingua franca*, as a result of the strengthening of vernacular languages, ex. French or German. People began to realise it is useful to learn a language of another country. The most famous language teacher of the period (17th century) was Johann (Jan) Comenius, a Czech scholar, who published books about his teaching techniques: Here are some techniques that Comenius mentions (Celce- Murcia, Brinton and Snow (2014: 4):

- Use imitation instead of rules to teach a language.
- Have your students repeat after you.
- Use a limited vocabulary initially.
- Help your students practice reading and speaking.
- Teach language through pictures to make it meaningful.

Comenius advocated an inductive approach to teaching (exposure to target language in use rather than through rules). The aim was to teach the use rather than to analyse the language being taught.

Comenius’s ideas had taken a hold in the 19th century, with grammar- translation approach prevailing as a way to teach both Latin and vernaculars. This approach was in particular advocated by the German scholar Karl Ploetz (1810-1881).

The Grammar Translation Approach

This is an old method of instruction. It has had diverse names and was at one point called the Classical Method because it was first used in the teaching of classical languages, Latin and Greek (Larsen- Freeman, 2000: 11).

The main goals of this method:

- 1) To help students appreciate foreign language literature
- 2) To help students become more familiar with the grammar of their native language; to help students write and speak their language better
- 3) To help students grow intellectually

Skills and language areas emphasised

The ability to communicate in a foreign language was, therefore, not a goal. The language skills that were in focus were reading and writing. Written language was superior to spoken language. There was little interaction between the teacher and the pupils. The main method of teaching was *ex cathedra*, where the teacher held lectures and the students participated only if they were asked a question.

The main language areas are vocabulary and grammar, while pronunciation receives little attention. Vocabulary is learnt through memorising word lists. The language used in the classroom is the students' native language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 16 -18)

The form of the target language was more important than the content. Grammar was taught deductively, which means that first the grammatical rules were presented and these were not related to the context. Students should be conscious of grammatical paradigms and after memorising the rules, pupils applied them in exercises which contained that particular grammatical category.

The techniques:

- 1) Translation of a literary passage
- 2) Reading comprehension questions: understanding of the reading (usually literary) passage: 1st set of questions: information contained in the passage, 2nd set of questions: making inferences, 3rd set of questions: relating the passage to students' experience
- 3) Antonyms and synonyms

- 4) Memorisation (list of vocabulary words, grammatical rules and grammatical paradigms)
- 5) Fill-in the blanks
- 6) Use words in sentences
- 7) Composition (related to an aspect of the reading passage)
- 8) Cognates (based on similarities and differences)

The Direct Method

The main aim of the Direct Method was to help students communicate in a foreign language. The method is quite old, with F. Gouin, the French scholar, who published his work on this method in 1880. In the early 20th century the method was popularised by Emile de Saussure, Gouin's disciple (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Snow (2014: 5): .

The basic rule, therefore, is that no translation is allowed in the foreign language classroom. The teacher should demonstrate, i.e. use the realia or pictures, but not translate. There should be a direct association between the target language and the meaning and *students should learn to think in the target language* as soon as possible. The name of this method is derived from the fact that meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids (Larsen – Freeman, 2000: 23).

Skills and language areas emphasised

All four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are taught from the very beginning of language instruction. All four skills are equally important. Reading and writing exercises are based on what students practice orally first. Pronunciation receives attention from the very beginning (Larsen- Freeman, 2000: 24-25).

Vocabulary is acquired more naturally if students use it in full sentences, rather than memorise word lists. It is considered that language is primarily speech. Grammar is taught inductively: students are first offered examples of a grammatical category, while rules are deduced from examples. There may never be an explicit grammatical rule given. Besides vocabulary and grammar, students also learn culture and geography related to the foreign language they learn.

Communication is the main goal (including asking questions). A lot of conversational activities are introduced in order to stimulate communication in different situations (units are divided according to topics and /or situations). Everyday speech is studied and not the literary language, like in GTM.

The techniques:

- 1) Reading aloud (passage, play, dialogue)
- 2) Question and answer exercises
- 3) self-correction of students
- 4) conversation practice
- 5) fill-in –the blank
- 6) dictation
- 7) map drawing
- 8) paragraph writing

The Audio- Lingual Method

This is an oral- based approach, like the Direct Method. The method has a strong base in linguistics and psychology. It is also known as the "Michigan Method" because Charles Fries of the University of Michigan paved the path for this method in 1945 by applying principles from structural linguistics (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 36). It was a result of the need to teach US army foreign languages quickly and efficiently during the Second World War (Celce- Murcia, Brinton, Snow, 2014: 7). A decade later principles from behavioural psychology (Leonard Skinner) were included.

The emphasis is on the drill of grammatical sentence patterns rather than on vocabulary acquisition. One of the main postulates of this theory is that the target and the source languages have separate systems and that they should be kept apart. Students should be able to mime the model of the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 43). This method advocates the idea that language learning is a process of *habit formation*: the more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit.

Skills and language areas emphasised

Speech is more important than written language; the natural order of acquisition of language skills is listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is very important to prevent mistakes: prevention from making mistakes in grammar and vocabulary leads to the formation of *good working habits*. Students should be taught to learn automatically. Grammatical rules *are induced* from examples (Larsen- Freeman, 2000: 42-45).

The purpose of this method is to teach learners to learn automatically. By learning parts of speech through many examples students identify their places in a sentence, which helps them acquire basic principles of English syntax.

One of the main characteristics of this method is that it enables learners to effectively communicate in a foreign language. Most interaction is initiated by the teacher, while students' participation is limited. Language and culture are not separated but are learnt alongside (Larsen – Freeman, 2000: 45-47).

The techniques:

- 1) Dialogue memorisation
- 2) Repetition drill
- 3) Chain drill
- 4) Substitution drill (single-slot and multiple-slot)
- 5) Transformation drill
- 6) Question and answer drill
- 7) Use of minimal pairs
- 8) Completion of dialogues
- 9) Grammar games

13/03/2017

The Total Physical Response (TPR) Method

It was named the “Comprehension Approach“ because it pays much attention to listening comprehension. Unlike the Audio-lingual and Direct methods, students are not expected to speak the target language straight away. Instead the proponents of this method, which was founded in the 1970s, opined that learning should start first with understanding and later proceed to production. After the learner internalizes how the target language works, speaking should appear *spontaneously*. The mechanisms of foreign language acquisition are compared to the mechanisms of mother tongue acquisition: a baby spends many months listening to the people around it before it ever says a word. Thus the child *chooses to speak when it is ready* (Larsen-Freeman, 2000: 107-109).

Skills and language areas emphasised:

Spoken language is emphasised over written language. Making errors is tolerated by teachers and working on fine details is postponed until students have become somewhat proficient. Movement is very important for young children since they cannot sit in one place for a long period of time and is thus *incorporated* in the method. Vocabulary and grammatical structures are not emphasised over other language areas: the *imperatives are single words and chunks of language*.

Tpr is introduced in the learners' native language, but is rarely used thereafter; meaning is made clear through *body movements*.

Phases of language acquisition

The teacher directs students' behaviour. Students learn through observing actions and through performing actions themselves. As stated before, mistakes are tolerated and correction is carried out in an unobtrusive manner. Following are the phases of acquiring language:

- 1) Modelling: the instructor issues commands to few students, then performs the actions with them
- 2) The same students demonstrate that they can understand the commands by performing them alone (the observers have an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding)
- 3) Recombination of commands (the students develop flexibility in understanding unfamiliar utterances)

- 4) After responding to some oral commands, the students learn to read and write them, when they are ready to speak, they become the ones that issue the commands
- 5) After students begin speaking, activities expand to include skits and games

The techniques:

- 1) directed movement about the classroom
- 2) free movement about the classroom
- 3) songs
- 4) games
- 5) dramatisation
- 6) role reversal
- 7) action sequence (connected commands)

20/03/2017

PHASES OF L1 AND L2 ACQUISITION

Recent studies have indicated that babies might become familiar with aspects of their future mother tongue already in the womb. Babies are even able to imitate their parents' intonation by cooing similar intonation patterns and waggle their hands in time to the parents' use of stressed syllables.

While acquiring their mother tongue children undergo several phases. Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2004: 14) identify six stages of mother language acquisition:

- 1) **Babbling** (from birth to about eight months): babies can hear and produce a wide array of noises and sounds. Some of these sounds will be rejected at a later stage.
- 2) **The first "word"** (about eleven months): children name objects in their surrounding in their own ways. During the second year random vocalizations begin to resemble genuine communication, thus some sound combinations such as *dada* and *mama*, tend to be rewarded positively, although they are produced by chance.
- 3) **Two words** (18 months to two years): children enter a syntactic phase by putting two words together (*there, look, want, more, all, gone*) to create a new meaning (*look Daddy, Mummy gone, there, doggy*)
- 4) **Phonological, syntactic and lexical norms** (age 3 and 4): grammatical structures resemble adults' structures, the phonological system is acquired although children might have a few problems with individual sounds and consonants (*thrill, school, ship, church*), children use a vocabulary of several thousand words.
- 5) **Syntactic and lexical complexity and richness** (between six and twelve): children continue to expand their reading vocabulary and improve their understanding of words; they are able to give more abstract and less self-oriented definitions of words; they like learning poems, song lyrics, tongue twisters and often create secret languages and codes.
- 6) **Conversational skills** (12 onwards): do not hesitate to ask for clarifications, try to identify the problem, suggest an alternative, more able to take another person's perspective, better at using persuasive arguments to get what they want.

The authors (2004:15) opine that most learners undergo four phases during the process of acquisition of L1 (source language, mother tongue) and L2 (target language, foreign language):

1. Working out rules about how the language works

2. Generalizing the rules through a group of similar examples
3. Overgeneralising (using rules where they are appropriate, ex. Simple Past *goed* and *putted* instead of *went* and *put*)
4. Using language items correctly

The acquisition of grammar

Vasta, Haith and Miller (1998: 425) point out that acquisition of grammar encompasses the acquisition of syntax (word order), inflection (conjugations, declensions) and intonation (stress). They distinguish following stages of L1 grammar acquisition:

- 1) Opting for the symbol which they believe will be of greatest use to them in learning the linguistic structure of their mother tongue, selecting the symbols that are most accessible (Engl. word order in a sentence)
- 2) Focusing on the most reliable symbols (those explaining the structure of grammar in the most consistent way)
- 3) Noticing the symbols that are in collision, subsequently choosing those symbols that best reflect the structure of language

Lynne Cameron emphasises that children create their own “inner“ grammars, which they acquire individually, i.e. every individual acquires grammar in his/her own specific way. Inner grammar is sometimes referred to as *interlanguage* or linguistic competence. She distinguishes three stages of L2 grammar acquisition (Cameron, 2001:108):

1. *Noticing*: noticing structures and the connections between form and meaning, children often notice chunks of language (phrases they acquire and use later in speech, ex. *I don't know*, *Come on*).
2. *Structuring*: children freely manipulate with a foreign language (expressions can be splintered and combined with other linguistic elements: ex. *We don't know. I don't know his name*), grammatical mistakes are often made: children apply the acquired rules in new situations: *maked*, *taked*.
3. *Proceduralising*: automatization of the use of most grammatical rules takes place; teacher's role is very important at this stage

Vidović and Drakulić (2011: 948) outline similarities in the acquisition of L1 and L2 English grammar. They point out that mistakes mostly occur in the use of the same grammatical categories (ex. plural of nouns such as *mouse-mouses* and the Simple Past of irregular verbs such as *go-goed*).

Mistakes mostly occur in a similar manner, i.e. excessive generalisation; the inconsistent use of regular and irregular word forms, i.e. the same child may sometimes use the correct form, i.e. *teeth* or a wrong form such as *tooths* (Vasta; Haith; Miller, 1998: 498).

27/03/2017

THE IDEAL AGE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Mother – cat took her kittens for a walk on a nice sunny day. Suddenly a huge dog appeared in front of them and started barking. The kittens were terrified and started miaowing in panic. Mother - cat, however, plucked up her courage and started barking at the dog. The dog was astonished and disappeared. The cat said to her kittens: "You see, children, how important it is to speak foreign languages!"

Foreign language acquisition is a unique process, although it shares certain mechanisms with the acquisition of mother tongue, as said in the previous lecture. There has been a trend in Croatia (it is also a global trend) to sign children into foreign language programmes at a very young age. Thus it is not uncommon when a parent enrolls his/her 3- year - old son /daughter in a kindergarten which runs an English course. We can pose a question: What is the ideal age for a child to start learning a foreign language?

There is no straightforward answer to this question. Research was conducted in several European countries in the 1960s and 1970s, the aim of which was to determine optimal conditions related to the introduction of a foreign language in primary schools. The project ETML, which was conducted in The United Kingdom during the 1970s, did not explicitly indicate that younger children learn French faster and more easily than older children. The main drawbacks of this project were a huge number of students who participated in it and, related to this issue, the inappropriateness of some variables for systematic control and checkup (Vilke, 1991: 143). France in turn conducted an experiment to determine how far primary foreign language learning might be successful (Brewster; Ellis; Girard, 2004: 3). Thus a report by Girard provided a detailed overview of several European FLL projects. These projects emphasized the optimal or best conditions for teaching languages including: 1) appropriately trained teachers, 2) proper schedule with appropriate timing, 3) appropriate methodology, 4) liaison with secondary schools, provision of suitable resources and integrated monitoring and evaluation (Brewster; Ellis, Girard, 2004: 3). The findings of these projects suggested that there is no theoretical optimum to start teaching. The commencing age seems to depend upon the linguistic situation in a particular country, although at that time the age of nine was often chosen as the ideal age for starting to learn a foreign language.

It was also concluded that *time* is of essence, i.e. the more time a child is exposed to a foreign language, the better the results. It was determined that it is more beneficial for younger children to have regular short slots during the week rather than longer more concentrated slots.

Different views on the ideal age to start learning a foreign language

Most research in this field has been conducted in the areas of neuroscience and developmental psycholinguistics. Research as well included the studies of the linguistic situation of children who acquired a second language in the countries where this second language is spoken as the first language as well as the studies which were conducted in students' homelands and included institutionalized learning of foreign languages. The latter research will be addressed with more detail during the following lecture.

Lenneberg's research from 1960s indicated that the end of the *lateralization* process, which takes place around puberty, marks the domination of the left hemisphere in the brain. This process is accompanied by a loss in brain plasticity. Thus in cases of aphasia (which result from brain damage) that take place before the critical period, i.e. before lateralization, the linguistic capability can be restored. In that way children who are exposed to a foreign language during this period of their lives can acquire a foreign language without an accent. Lenneberg's hypotheses were refuted by S. Krashen, who highlighted that the process of lateralization starts before a baby is born and finishes around the age of 5 (Vilke, 1991: 145). Cases like the 13,5 – year – old girl Genie (the girl was found completely neglected, confined in a basement by her brother and father) indicate, however, that linguistic development is erratic and incomplete if started after the age of 6.

According to Piaget, the ideal age for foreign language acquisition seems to be the stage of concrete operations, i.e. the age between seven and eleven. He distinguishes two different concepts of language acquisition: *spontaneous* concepts, which a child acquires with his own mental efforts and *non-spontaneous* concepts, which a child obtains with the help of others. Foreign language acquisition belongs to the second category, while mother tongue acquisition belongs to the first. During the stage of concrete operations a child commences to socialize with other children, can be concentrated on an activity for a longer period of time and behaves responsibly towards people surrounding him/ her (Vilke, 1991: 148).

L. Vygotsky points out that the development of spontaneous and non-spontaneous concepts are strongly interrelated: the success in foreign language acquisition depends upon the level of maturity a child has reached in his / her mother tongue and the other way round, i.e. a foreign language facilitates the acquisition of higher, more complex forms of mother tongue (Vilke, 1991:150).

Vilke (1991: 148) points out that a child of ten is not yet linguistically, cognitively and emotionally developed, therefore one should be careful in selecting appropriate contents and forms to teach. The author as well emphasizes the fact that children acquire some structures in their first language around the age of 10 (ex. some forms of demonstrative pronouns). It is therefore wrong, opines Vilke, to insist upon the acquisition of foreign language structures which a child has not acquired in his /her first language.

Andreja Silić, however, points out that more and more experts from the area of linguistics think that a child should start learning a foreign language as soon as possible, preferably before the age of 6, since this age in a child's life is characterised by a facility to imitate nicely the intonation and pronunciation of a native speaker (Silić, 2007: 40). Thus younger children acquire pronunciation and intonation of a foreign language faster and better than older students, while older students seem to acquire grammar more efficiently than younger learners, since they are already familiar with equivalent grammatical structures in their mother tongue.

3/04/2017

DOES YOUNGER AUTOMATICALLY MEAN BETTER?; MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

The Zagreb Project

The research undertaken at the University of Zagreb focused on (dis)approval of Lenneberg's theses on the neuroplasticity in language acquisition and, related to this phenomenon, puberty as the period in a person's life during which appear blocs in the language acquisition process. Thus, Lenneberg claims, language is best learned by the age of 12 (Lenneberg, 1967: 36).

The first phase of the study, which lasted from 1973 to 1985, was conducted at the Department of English of the Faculty of Arts in Zagreb which examined sixty nine- year- old beginners and sixty beginners aged between 17 and nineteen. The examinees were exposed to approximately same language materials, similar methodologies and techniques were applied and the studied period was identical. The project was led by Dr. Mirjana Vilke. The findings were following: most significant differences appeared in the area of pronunciation: the younger group demonstrated a very high level of pronunciation and used authentic English sounds and intonation while the older group used Croatian sounds that are the closest to the equivalent English sounds (*mader/mazer* instead of *maðə*).

In the area of grammar there were as well considerable differences: the younger group tended to provide the shortest possible answer (ex. Is the dining room upstairs? *Yes/No.*), which is in accordance with the strategies young children utilize in their mother tongue, whereas the older group provided complete short answers (*Yes, it is./No it isn't*). The older group had acquired the singular and plural forms of demonstrative pronouns, while the younger group hadn't (They provided different answers to the question *What are these?: This is apples; That is apples; That are apple; That're apples; That is apple*). This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that pronominal relations are not completely acquired in mother tongue either by the age of ten or eleven (Vilke, 1991: 152).

The acquisition of lexical material depended to a large extent on understanding the concept in the source language. Thus the noun *bedroom* was easily acquired, while the nouns *drawing –room* and *dining room* were a problem because the children were not familiar with the concepts these words represented

(this is due to the fact that children mostly lived in two – bedroom flats which did not encompass dining rooms and drawing rooms).

The findings of the first phase of the Zagreb project indicated that correct pronunciation and intonation is best acquired during the pre- puberty period in a child's life, while older students achieve more modest results in this area. On the other hand, older students understand the mechanisms of functioning of a foreign language better because they have already acquired mechanisms of their mother tongue. Moreover, they are at a higher level of intellectual and cognitive development. Differences in acquisition of grammar and lexis were significant but not crucial (Vilke, 1991: 153). The examiners' conclusion was that children should start learning foreign languages early enough to develop a sense of self - confidence characteristic of a person who is aware of his correct pronunciation and fluency in speaking a foreign language.

The second phase of the project focused on determining an ideal age for foreign language acquisition. The starting point was Piaget's stage of concrete operations (which corresponds to the age between seven and eleven). The posed question was: *If there is an ideal age for learning a foreign language, would it be between seven and eleven?* The second phase of the project started in 1975. It was envisaged as systematic observation of seventy children between the ages of six and nine. The children learnt English on courses of the *Institut za strane jezike Narodnog sveučilišta grada Zagreba* (today *Škola za strane jezike*). The children were interviewed in order to find out which were the most relevant motivating factors for learning English. These turned out to be a wish to communicate with people from other countries due to the fact that English was one of the most important global languages, a wish to communicate in English during school holidays, a wish to understand films in English and a wish to be able to get by when travelling abroad (Vilke, 1991: 154). It was obvious that these were the parents' wishes, who transferred their positive attitudes to learning English onto their children. Another significant factor of motivation was the students' relationship with their English teachers. Learning English was viewed as fun, interesting, the children felt well and relaxed in class. English teachers were described as friendly and helpful. These findings indicated the importance of motivation in learning foreign languages at an early age.

Jayne Moon classifies various motivating factors which influence attitudes to learning a foreign language (Moon, 2004: 15 – 17). For younger, pre- puberty children these include: parents' opinions, the methods used in class, appropriate

learning materials, planning interesting learning activities and creating a positive learning environment. Moreover, the intrinsic motivating factors include personal preferences, a wish to play computer games and to socialize with friends. Older students, however, seem to be influenced by their peers rather than by their parents (they do not want to look foolish in front of their friends) and are more aware of the usefulness of learning English (working and studying abroad, being able to find a better job, to use the computer, etc.).

Let us answer the question posed at the beginning of the lecture: *Does younger automatically mean better?* Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada (1993) opine that learners who start learning a foreign language slightly later (between the ages of 10 and 12) catch up with those who start earlier (at the age of seven or below). They emphasize that young age itself does not seem to be the sufficient factor for success at learning a foreign language, other factors include levels of motivation and confidence, personality, aptitude and others. Rod Ellis (1994) suggested a compromise: the critical age for native – speaker- like pronunciation is six, while for learning grammar the critical age appears to be puberty onwards (Brewster; Ellis; Girard, 2004: 36): Lightbown and Spada point out that shorter slots are likely to be more effective with younger children, with preferably more than two periods a week.

Jayne Moon emphasizes that not only in-school, but also out- of – school influences play a role in motivation. Apart from already mentioned in – school influences (teacher, teaching methods, the learning process, school culture, teaching materials), out- of –school influences are as well of importance. These include: parents´influence, peer influence, the media and local youth culture, with the last three affecting mainly the puberty + students (Moon, 2004: 17).

10/04/2017

USE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

There are considerable differences amongst teachers when it comes to the use of first language while teaching English to young learners. As emphasized by Moon, there is a discrepancy between what teachers would ideally like to do and the reality (Moon, 2005: 62). Using English to teach English to young learners has numerous advantages:

- a) it increases the amount of students' exposure to English
- b) It develops pupils' confidence in language
- c) It gives students real reasons for using English to communicate (ex. to give instructions, get information from pupils, etc.)
- d) The repetitive pattern of classroom language in the form of , for example, instructions, can be easily picked up by pupils, without them being aware of the fact that they are actually learning a foreign language
- e) It can motivate pupils to learn
- f) It develops greater fluency due to the fact that pupils are encouraged to think in English at an early stage.

Moon as well states the disadvantages of using English to teach English:

- g) Explaining things can last long, resulting in possible loss in interest or concentration
- h) Weaker or slower pupils may feel put off English since they may lose confidence
- i) Teachers with limited English or inappropriate foreign language education may provide incorrect models to their students.
- j) It may be difficult to do reflection on learning or discuss pupils' opinions about their learning in English because of students' limited English
- k) For students who are not motivated it may involve a lot of effort to understand.

- 1) It may take longer to cover the syllabus.

Generally speaking, it appears to be the best solution to use English for teaching English since students are more exposed to English. The factors that should be considered when reflecting upon using English or the students' first language include students' age, their motivation and previous experience with the foreign language, the teacher's own confidence in using English, etc.

There are some situations, asserts Moon, when it is appropriate to use the L1. These include the situations when (Moon, 2005: 66):

- a) the child is upset – by using L1 the teacher soothes the child and demonstrates his/her sympathy and closeness for the child.
- b) The child knows the answer to a question in his/her mother tongue but not in English – some teachers insist on their students providing an answer in English, which might result in negative attitudes to either L1 or L2
- c) The child wants to share an experience /real information with the teacher/pupils in an English lesson but has limited English – the reason for using L1 is to communicate a message to friends or the teacher
- d) The teacher or the child wants to tell a joke – the reason for telling a joke in L1 is in most cases to develop rapport/ closeness with teacher/pupils
- e) Teacher wants to introduce a new game which has complicated rules – the reasons for using L1 in this situation is to save time needed for explaining the rules of the game and to help communication of a message
- f) Teacher does not know if children have understood – the reason for using L1 is to check if children have really understood
- g) Teacher wants to get children to think about the reasons for learning English or to be aware of strategies to help learning – the reason for using L1 in this situation is to aid in language learning when students do not have sufficient levels of language to discuss through the L2.

Ad e) Vrhovac emphasizes the amount of time teachers use to explain, correct, warn and evaluate his / her students, which may result in dedicating more time to the stated functions than to discussing the topic of instruction (Vrhovac, 2001: 59).

Ad 2) Moon opines that it is advisable for teachers to accept an answer in L1 from their young learners and to parallelly introduce the answer in English. In this way, claims the author, the teacher lets her students know that she has accepted the meaning of her students' answer, but at the same time introduces the English form. By acknowledging that the meaning of the answer in L1 is correct and by rephrasing an answer in English gives students confidence to respond to their

teacher' s questions in the future and helps form positive attitudes to learning English.

24/04/2017

Are They the Same? Working with Children with Different Abilities

Working in a playgroup full of children with different abilities certainly poses a challenge for a foreign language teacher. Jane Moon distinguishes almost a dozen differences amongst learners related to foreign language acquisition. Thus children may differ in following (Moon, 2005: 26):

- perception of language
- relationship with the teacher
- family background
- types of intelligence
- interests
- gender
- attitude ana motivation for learning English
- experience of the world

Apart from children with different interests and characteristics, foreign language teachers will have had experience with dealing with differences in abilities. Moon names possible strategies of dealing with children of different abilities (2004: 28):

1. Planning differentiated activities (it is a good idea to collaborate with other teachers in order to develop a materials bank)
2. Giving enough time to different groups (it makes learners more independent and relieves the teacher of the need of constant attention to the whole class, which enables him/her to spend time with individuals/groups who need extra help)
3. Catering for all the different needs (this can be done in several ways: by preparing a bank of self-access materials in particular problem areas at different levels, by getting children to help in making practice activities, by pairing them off with their buddies in order to practice a particular skill or a problem area)
4. Aiming the lesson at the right level (initially this can be done with the whole class so that the teacher demonstrates what is required involving pupils in the demonstration and giving them time with observing the procedures and working out what they have to do)

5. Catering for children's lack of interest or ability (lack of interest is usually an indicator that a child has a problem in a particular skill/ aspect of language, thus it is important to first find out why the pupil is not interested and eventually adapt activities to his/her level or provide more support and create more time with that particular learner)

The Teacher's Expectation of Learners

Teachers tend to label children according to their abilities and this categorisation tends to accompany them throughout their schooling. Moon emphasises that children should be given a chance to show that their skills and abilities vary according to situation, topic and activity (Moon, 2004: 30).

The author points out that middle-range children are hardest to describe because we tend to notice the extremes (the ones who always answer and the naughty ones) because they affect our teaching more. In that way we tend to neglect children in the middle range or quieter children.

It is very important to approach children with an open mind and expect the best from them, which will in turn help them raise their expectations of themselves. Barbara Steel, a primary teacher in America, conducted an experiment with her class, which consisted of 35 12-year old students. There were a number of "problem" children, who were not interested in school, were underachieving and came from difficult home backgrounds. Barbara let children choose what they wanted to learn, thus giving them a greater responsibility for their own learning. She helped children draw up their work contracts for each day. At first it was difficult for some children to work without being directed, but at the end most children in her class were able to work independently. This experiment showed that success strongly influences children's ideas about themselves. The "problem" children had built up low opinions of themselves through years of failing or being blamed for misbehaviour. In Barbara's programme these children got a new chance to show that they could be successful, which in turn changed their self-image and their behaviour.

Strategies for responding to different needs

Moon suggests three different strategies to deal with this problem (Moon, 2004: 32):

1. differentiating by support
2. peer tutoring
3. group teaching

1. Children with high abilities do not need to get as much support as children of low or middle-range abilities. In the context of learning a foreign language, an exercise in which children have to match different parts of sentence is certainly less demanding than a task in which students have to create sentences themselves. One of the disadvantages of this strategy is that slower children may not get a chance to deal with more complex activities due to the pressure that the class should move on to a new unit (according to the curriculum). The advantage of this strategy is that slower children can progress at their own pace and complete activities which are similar to the rest of the class and be successful in doing that.
2. Slower or weaker learners can be paired with a stronger partner for doing some language activities in class. The teacher should pair learners based on her/his knowledge of learners. As the time goes by, learners may express their preferences or the teacher may feel the need to make changes if she/he feels that the “buddies“ are not working well together. Some advantages of this strategy (Moon; 2005. 37): it involves learners in helping each other, learners become more involved in the learning process, learners are learning to become more independent and are given an opportunity to be “buddies“ for areas where they have particular strengths. The disadvantages include the difficulty to pair learners appropriately, stronger learners may feel less challenged and may not necessarily be very good at helping their peers, while the strategy may reinforce a lower status for weaker learners, some learners try to dominate their buddies, it is time-consuming in the sense that it takes time to train learners to work effectively as buddies.

8/05/2017

TPR GAMES FOR DEVELOPING LANGUAGE SKILLS

All described games develop at least one language skill, most of them more than one. They have been classified according to the skill that is practised the most.

Games for developing listening skills:

CHINESE WHISPERS

The pupils compete in two or more teams by standing in lines. The teacher whispers a simple sentence to the first child in the line who then whispers it to the next child standing behind him/her. The last child in the line says the sentence aloud. The teacher can whisper a different sentence to each team.

SIMON SAYS

It is a good idea to revise all the actions that the teacher wants to practise. If the teacher says *Simon says: Jump!*, the children *perform* the command. If the teacher says just *Jump!*, the children should not move. The children who perform the command although the teacher did not say *Simon says*, drop out. The winner is the last child to remain in the game.

FRUIT SALAD

The students take a chair to sit and make a circle. The teacher occupies the central position in the circle and assigns different kinds of fruit to children: *a banana, a cherry, an apple, an orange, a strawberry...* Thus there will be a few bananas, apples, etc. When the teacher says *Bananas!*, all the bananas stand up and change seats. The teacher does not have a chair and tries to sit on an empty chair. The child who did not get a chair on time stays in the circle and calls out another fruit. If the teacher wants all the children to change seats, (s)he says *Fruit salad!* Instead of fruits, the teacher can assign the names of animals to children. If (s)he wants the children to change seats, (s)he says *Zoo!*

BACK TO BACK

With this game parts of the body can be revised. The teacher pairs off the children and says a command: *Back to back!* The children touch with their backs. If the teacher commands *Forehead to forehead!*, the children touch with their foreheads. The children can be encouraged to give the commands themselves.

WHAT'S THE TIME, MR. WOLF?

The children stand in the back of the classroom. The teacher turns his/her back to them. The children ask: *What's the time, Mr. Wolf?* The teacher says: *Five steps forward, turn around!* and turns around fast. The children who get caught moving, drop out of the game. The winner is the first child who touches the teacher.

Games for developing speaking skills:

SAY IT WITH FEELING

The teacher prepares flashcards with different feelings (ex. happy, sad, hot, cold, etc.). The teacher shows a card with a (for ex. happy) feeling and children repeat the words if they are happy.

GUESS MY WORD

The class is divided in two teams. The teacher describes an animal on a flashcard (e.g. *A horse- It is big and beautiful. It lives on a farm. It eats grass.*). When children guess the animal, the teacher puts the corresponding flashcard on the board. When the board is full of flashcards put under two columns, the teacher asks the children to repeat as many things about animals as they can remember. The teacher puts a tick for each correct sentence next to the corresponding flashcard. The team that has the most ticks wins.

WHO HAS MORE CARDS?

The class is divided into two teams. The flashcards with the vocabulary that the teacher wants to revise are in a box. The teams take turns to draw flashcards and say the corresponding word. If they say the word correctly, they can keep the flashcard. The team who wins the largest number of cards is the winner

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE

The board is full of flashcards or word cards. The teacher says: *I spy with my little eye something sweet and brown.* The children answer: *Chocolate.* The children can eventually assume the role of the teacher and ask questions of their own.

Games for developing reading skills:

CHARADES

The teacher writes a sentence that the children have to mime on a piece of paper. A child approaches the teacher, reads the sentence and mimes it to the rest of the class, who have to guess it (e.g. *I'm reading a book.*)

TEACHER STOP!

The teacher writes words onto word cards. (S)he shows the word cards and children nod their head if they recognize the words they have learnt in their written form. If they do not recognize the word, they say: *Teacher stop!* The teacher reads the word, and the children repeat after the teacher.

CHINESE WHISPERS

The teacher can put flashcards or word cards on the board and whisper a word to the first child in the line. The last child in the line approaches the board and takes down the corresponding flashcard or word card.

SIMON SAYS

Instead of saying the command, the teacher can show pupils word cards with commands written on them. The children read the word card and perform the command written on it.

Games for developing writing skills:

The first two described games develop writing as much as reading skills.

RUNNING DICTATION

The teacher writes some words/simple sentences on slips of paper. (S)he sticks the papers around the classroom. The teacher divides the class into two teams. Each team chooses a runner. The runner runs towards one of the papers, reads what is written on it, runs back to her/his team and dictates the words/sentences to the children in his team. The winner is the team with the fewest spelling mistakes.

FALSE DICTATION

The teacher writes the sentences (s)he wants to dictate all over a big sheet of paper/on the board in random order. The (s)he dictates the words from the sentences, points to them one at a time on the board/sheet. Children look at the

board and write complete sentences by remembering the order in which (s)he showed and dictated the words.

FLASHING DICTATION

The teacher chooses word cards with simple spelling (*cat, dog*). (S)he flashes the card, but not too quickly. Children write the word in their notebooks. Upon finishing the dictation, the teacher puts the word cards on the board and checks for mistakes. The children can also swap notebooks and check each other' s mistakes.

WHO HAS MORE CARDS ?

The rules of the game are the same as when it is played with flashcards. Instead of flashcards, the teacher can use word cards.

22/05/2017

Can We Do „Poker Face“ Again, Miss? Creating, Adapting and Evaluating Activities for Language Learning

Creating and adapting materials

The most common reason for creating own materials amongst foreign language teachers is that textbooks do not cater for all learners' needs, in which case the teacher has to provide her students with more supplementary materials. It is also possible to adapt activities from textbooks so that they meet learners' needs better. This may get difficult in situations when teachers have to follow one prescribed textbook.

Foreign language teachers' interests and experience are as well relevant. Younger teachers do not have much expertise in preparing teaching materials and activities for learning. In such cases it is a good idea to try activities from textbooks and adapt them gradually. Teachers' handbooks can be of great help here. Young teachers can consult teachers with more experience, either those working at the same preschool institution or in a teachers' group or professional organisation.

Evaluating activities

According to Moon (2005, 88-89) a language learning activity is characterised by:

- a) a clear language - teaching goal
- b) has a clear and meaningful goal or purpose for learners
- c) has a clear outcome(s) for the learners
- d) involves learners in work or activity which requires the use of L2
- e) facilitates language learning

Goal: teacher's purpose in using the activity. It refers to what the teacher wants to achieve through the activity and the children's purpose in carrying out the activity

Outcome: children's production as the result of an activity. The product can be *product outcomes*, i.e. tangible (set of answers, a completed crossword) or *process outcomes*, i.e. skills, attitudes, etc., which develop during the learning process (increased confidence, ability to work together).

Selecting activities for learning

When reflecting upon how to select activities for language learning, it is beneficial that the teacher asks herself the following questions (Moon, 2005:91):

How long does it take? Does it take a lot of preparation? Is the language suitable for the level? Will it be difficult for children to carry out?
Will my learners like it? Which skills does it practice? Does it develop children's imagination?

Moon recommends following points when selecting activities:

1. Providing a clear and meaningful purpose, with emphasis on activities that capitalise on learners' desire to communicate (those involving a game, getting missing information)
2. Challenging learners to make them think in order to process language more deeply
3. Providing activities that are enjoyable and interesting and make the children continue the activity (ex. guessing, games with a prize, etc.). These should have a clear language- learning purpose.
4. Providing activities that create a need or pressure for children to use English. This increases their exposure to English and their use of it.
5. Providing activities which allow children to be creative with the language and experiment with it.

29/5/2017

How Can I Be a Better Language Learner?

Even young children can learn how to learn. The teacher usually first notices outgoing children, who are not necessarily the most successful learners. Quiet children can also be successful. Active learners who say a lot draw the teacher's and the peers' attention, thus other learners can notice that there are different ways of learning.

The quality that distinguishes successful learners from others is their *ability to manage their own learning flexibly* (Moon, 2005: 164). Teachers usually consider successful children who:

- are prepared to take risks
- are motivated to learn English
- are creative
-
- are well-organised
- have concentration
- pay attention
- are curious
- are confident
- do not give up
- are keen to communicate
- participate actively
- correct own mistakes
- take every opportunity to use English
- are willing to plan and review work

Learners' views on ways one can become more successful in learning languages (Spanish research of 2004, children aged 6-7- included):

- games and songs
- books
- tales
- playing
- paper
- teacher
- writing
- reading
- video
- TV

While younger children relate foreign language – learning experiences to classrooms and the personality of the teacher, older children realise this is not always the case. Older children tend to link their language-learning with travelling, watching films, listening to songs (p. 166).

As mentioned earlier, in the unit dealing with working with children of different abilities, the foreign language teacher should approach her/his students with an open mind and expect best from them. Such an approach, namely raised expectations on the side of the teacher, can encourage children to make more effort, which in turn can lead to improved performance. This can be achieved by:

- 1) Differentiating by support (providing more support to slower learners by giving more pictures, visuals to make the meaning clearer, giving clues, etc.)
- 2) Peer tutoring (buddies)

3) Group teaching

- 4) The foreign language teacher can provide support to her learners by adjusting her language (Moon, 2005: 75):
 - a) Repeating pupils' answers, which confirms the answer and gives reinforcement
 - b) Rephrasing answers (ex. by adding missing parts such as articles)
 - c) Prompting through a rise in intonation
 - d) Framing sentences and using movements in order to encourage learners to finish sentences (T: While they were walking, Yanni saw a big...Learners: ...elephant)

Additional support can be given by choosing contexts which are familiar to the learners (ex. visit to the zoo), providing clues to the meaning of the language, beginning with the concrete and moving onto the more abstract (ex. from a dialogue acted out orally with visuals onto a written dialogue on the board).

When giving support to children, it is important to use appropriate language. Moon states several things foreign language teachers should have in mind when talking to learners (Moon, 2005: 79):

- 1) Using language at children's level, i.e. words and structures they can understand
- 2) Adjusting the language to help children understand by repeating, rephrasing, extending what a child wants to express
- 3) Adjusting speed and volume and using pause in order to give children enough time to think
- 4) Using gestures, actions (ex. elevating your hand in order to show that something is high, nodding for "Yes", facial expressions, making noises, etc.)

5.6.2017.

Looking Forwards

As J. Moon emphasises, every day's teaching is a new experience, but also the same day's teaching repeated many times (2005: 177). New knowledge is built upon old knowledge, and the foreign language teacher should make use of the things in the language classroom that contribute to making things predictable, safe and routine.

How to move forwards?

Moon gives clues on upgrading work of a foreign language teacher. This could be done by:

- 1) Observing children in general (ex. by asking a child in a friend's house what he is doing)
- 2) Observing others' classes (by taking notes on interesting things going on in the class, describing activities and judging them as good or bad, talking to the children observed and getting their opinion on what they are doing and why)
- 3) Observing your own class (tape recording, taking notes)
- 4) Peer observation (take notes in a colleague's class and the other way round, comparing notes, asking the learners' opinion)

It is not just that children learn from teachers, it is also that teachers learn from children. Teachers can learn a lot from children by observing them, talking to them not just as learners but also as people. All this can influence a foreign language teacher in an exciting way and promote innovativeness in his/her work.

In order to make one's job involving, satisfying and worthwhile, a foreign language teacher should escape from routine and the mechanical and develop creative activities to move forward.

Instructions for the final exam: Revise the last 7 units and the photocopied materials with examples from practice (Chunks of language, examples with TPR activities in kindergartens, motivating factors for learning a foreign language, activities for working with learners of different abilities)

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