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English in Primary Education

Concepts, Research, Practice

edited by Theresa Summer and Heiner Böttger

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The idea for this volume emerged out of the great demand for the professional development of pre-service primary school English educators at German universities. A TEFL lecture series titled *English in Primary Education: Concepts, Research, Practice* was brought to life during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2021 at the University of Bamberg, Germany. Guest speakers from around the world including Norway, Switzerland, and the United States presented key issues related to the teaching of English at primary schools. University students taking part in a seminar on the same topic interviewed the guests after their presentations to initiate a professional exchange and start a virtual networking process. This volume brings together pre-service teachers' newly gained insights. Researchers, teacher educators, and teachers involved in primary English language education discuss key issues related to the teaching of English to young learners.

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Theresa Summer & Heiner Böttger, December 2022

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Essentials: Teaching English to Young Learners in Primary School

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Abstract

This contribution is about selected key issues related to the teaching of English to young learners (TEYL). Focusing particularly on primary school education, it reflects upon central theories and evidence-based research related to how young learners acquire and learn English. After an outline of central teaching principles, we develop the notion of a principled mindset. This provides the basis for a discussion of competence development and the integration of materials – focusing particularly on the role of authentic materials, scaffolding, classroom phrases, and the importance of literary texts. A basic introduction into how to plan competence-based lessons or lesson sequences follows. Throughout this contribution, examples aim to highlight the importance of a theoretical grounding for teaching practice.

Keywords: teaching English to young learners (TEYL), primary education, teaching principles, theories, competences, literature, storytelling / picturebooks, scaffolding, classroom phrases, lesson planning

1. Introduction

When we speak of the teaching of English to young learners (TEYL), this typically and mainly refers to the age group of three to twelve-year-olds (Bland, 2015). This phase includes pre-school and school education. Historically, the teaching of English to this age group is a rather new phenomenon. In Germany, all federal states introduced English as a subject in primary schools in the third grade starting in the school year of 2004/2005 (Pienemann et al., 2006, p. 7). Over the years, the German school landscape has diversified extraordinarily with regard to the subject of primary school English (Böttger, 2021). Most commonly today, children

in Germany receive their first institutionalised English instruction in the third grade at the age of approximately eight. The introduction of English lessons varies across the German federal states, however, and some federal states such as Hamburg and Rhineland Palatinate start English lessons in the first grade – although the latter offers a choice of either introducing French or English as the first foreign language (for a current overview of the teaching of English in primary schools see Böttger, 2021, p. 40). Globally speaking, as Pinter rightly observes, "[p]rimary education is very different in various parts of the world" (2017, p. 1). Very often and regrettably thereby, primary language education is at the mercy of educational policy interests rather than the result of the implementation of scientific knowledge.

The objective of this contribution is to provide an overview of key issues relevant and constituent for TEYL by focusing on primary English language education (ELE), mostly starting in the third grade. Two main goals are in focus: First, this contribution aims to equip future English teachers with essential subject-specific knowledge and competences necessary for their future profession. This includes their ability to critically analyse teaching materials (e.g. textbooks and digital materials) and to develop tasks and lesson sequences. Second, this contribution aims to help pre-service teachers relate theory and practice so that they can reflect upon the English lessons they observe (e.g. during internships) and make principled decisions for practice.

According to Elsner (2021), sound theoretical knowledge and the development of TEFL-related competences among (pre-service) English teachers subsumes four key areas: 1) language competence (*Sprachkompetenz*), professional knowledge (*Fachwissen*), 'didactic' knowledge (*fachdidaktisches Wissen*), and reflective and research competence (*Reflexions- und Forschungskompetenz*) (pp. 106–11). Crucially, the development of professional knowledge and competences can equip teachers with the necessary tools to become good teachers. Additionally, this helps them justify and reflect on their own teaching. This complies with the concept of the "reflective practitioner" (see Grund et al. in this volume), which refers to teachers engaging in "meaningful reflection and awareness-raising" (Viebrock, 2018, p. 48). By identifying, naming and

defining problems and challenges, as well as potential solutions, reflective practitioners can develop sustainable didactic and methodological solutions to achieve professional teaching competence.

Starting with an outline of characteristics related to the learning of foreign languages among young learners, this contribution moves on to discussing key principles of TEYL, followed by an outline of English-related competences, materials and scaffolding, and basics of lesson planning – all of which are relevant for teaching in primary schools.

2. How young learners acquire and learn languages

To address the question of how young learners acquire or learn English, let us begin with a look at the following tickling rhyme well known by children in the English-speaking world:

Number one, tickle your tum
Number one, tickle your tum. Number two, just say 'Boo!' Number three, touch your knee. Number four, touch the floor. Number five, do a dive. Number six, wriggle your hips. Number seven, jump to heaven. Number eight, stand up straight. Number nine, walk in a line. Number ten, do it all again! [Repeat]

Table 1: Example of a tickling rhyme

Children acquiring English as their first language (or one of their 'first' languages) might encounter this rhyme or a similar example and thereby engage with its playfulness and repetitive structure. The playful looping in of words, structures, and setting helps children memorize these and gain a first linguistic basis of experience. Rather than consciously learning the numbers and action verbs, they will identify the meaning of words from the given context combined with the physical actions. In other

words, they will subconsciously and implicitly acquire the lexical and grammatical items. Cognitive aspects like explanations are not necessary during this first language encounter. Initially starting with babbling, moving on to the first word, two words, and on to more complex syntactic structures, children start to develop conversational skills progressively when learning their first language(s) (Brewster et al., 2002, pp. 14–16).

From the age of three, children also begin to ask questions about the use of language (Böttger, 2016, p. 76). From this time on, mistakes and errors play a crucial role in language acquisition. As linguistic hypotheses, they mark the turning point from language acquisition to language learning. While the former is childlike, easy, and largely unconscious, learning means a rather strenuous, more conscious process. Table 2 provides an overview of key terms and highlights the differences between learning and acquiring a language.

Learning a language	**Acquiring a language**
explicitly & consciously	implicitly & widely subconsciously
in formal teaching situations	in informal, natural situations
mostly institutionalized	mostly non-institutionalized
dependent on attitude, e.g. motivation, dedication, etc.	dependent on aptitude, e.g. skills, competencies, talent, etc.
planned, mostly artificial and linear progression	non-linear progression from simple to complex

Table 2: Basic terminology: Learning vs. acquiring a language

The learning of a second (or third etc.) language, which frequently takes place in institutionalised settings, differs in several ways from first language(s) acquisition. In terms of the setting, learners at school evidently receive a lot less input in the target language than they would, for instance, if they grew up in an English-speaking country or if a family member spoke English at home. Therefore, the time available for learning English is limited. The opportunities for learning at school, however, are promising because learners in an EFL classroom are surrounded by peers of a similar age and potentially similar interests, and are often highly

motivated to learn English (Böttger, 2020b, p. 135). Moreover, a teacher is present, who should be able to make the most out of the approximately two or three hours of English instruction available per week. In these English lessons, it is important to address the cognitive as well as the non-cognitive capacities of the children in order to create the most natural language-learning environment possible. So, how can pupils in the classroom acquire or learn English? In other words, what can teachers do to foster learners' English language proficiency?

3. Teaching young learners: A theoretical and empirical perspective

To answer the questions raised in the previous section, we need to deal with some of the most relevant theories and research in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) relevant to young learners. Given the great variety of theories of SLA and research in different contexts (e.g. see Ortega, 2013 or Elsner, 2010, pp. 29–35 for an overview of central theories and hypotheses in the context of TEYL), this section focuses on some of the most important SLA theories and evidence – without any claim of completeness. We will draw on the recent overview of evidence-based SLA research (although not aimed at TEYL specifically, see Lethaby et al., 2021, pp. 59–86) and then provide a short insight into a neurobiological perspective (cf. Böttger, 2020c, pp. 32–36).

Before examining research into SLA and its implications for primary education, it is crucial to consider the factor of age. According to Piaget's outline of children's stages of development, learners aged seven to eleven years of age find themselves in the concrete operational stage. Within this stage, children learn to apply logical reasoning, yet without being able to generalise their understanding or achieving formal logic (cf. Pinter, 2017, p. 7). Only in the final (fourth) formal operational stage, from the age of 11 years onwards, are children able to think beyond the immediate context in more abstract ways and carry out deductive reasoning systematically (Pinter, 2017, p. 7). This is, among other reasons, why learners profit from increasingly more complex tasks as they get older. Despite some criticism of Piaget's stages (Pinter, 2017, pp. 8–10), which notes that the proposed stages are "less rigid and perhaps less deterministic" (Pinter, 2017, p. 9), teachers need to develop an awareness of the fact that age is a determining

factor in the teaching of English. Against this background, the role of input within the context of SLA provides a suitable starting point for exploring influential SLA theories.

Generally speaking, SLA theories and research largely revolve around the role of input, output and interaction, the use of different forms of practice, chunks, and explicit teaching (cf. Lethaby et al., 2021, p. 60–62). Crucially, learners do not only need rich and comprehensible input, but they must also be given opportunities to produce language and interact – arguments situated within the output hypothesis and the interaction hypothesis (cf. Lethaby et al., 2021, p. 60–62). Due to learners' young age in primary schools, input (in the form of oral or written language) plays an especially significant role (cf. Shin et al., 2021, pp. 48–51). The need to expose learners to comprehensible and rich input is not only a common claim today but also a substantial component of SLA theories supported by research (Lethaby et al., 2021, 59–60). One of the most influential hypotheses developed for SLA worldwide are Stephen Krashen's (1982) five hypotheses; these are as follows:

1. **Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis:** There are two ways of developing competence in a foreign language: 1) acquisition, a subconscious process, which is identical to a child's acquisition of the mother tongue, and 2) learning, a conscious process, is based on the existence of language knowledge. Thus, the conscious consideration of rules is the difference between first and second language acquisition.
2. **Natural Order Hypothesis:** The acquisition of language rules occurs in a natural way (natural order), as in the case of children acquiring their L1, but not in the order prescribed by structured curricula.
3. **Monitor Hypothesis:** Learning rules (explicit learning) does not foster language acquisition but only helps speakers to monitor their language production.
4. **Input Hypothesis:** The acquisition of a language depends on the linguistic input (non-/comprehensible input). Speaking is a consequence of acquisition and not its cause. If there is enough input and it is understood (expressed in the formula 'input + 1', i.e. containing structures slightly above the acquirer's current level), the

grammatical rules are acquired independently. Accordingly, languages cannot be taught directly.

5. **Affective Filter Hypothesis:** Certain attitudinal variables (e.g. related to motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety) act as barriers or filters that can prevent input from language acquisition. Depending on the intensity of the filters (high or low), speech processing is possible or impossible.

Concerning the Natural Order Hypothesis (see above), Pienemann's teachability hypothesis offers an insight into the order in which learners acquire certain grammatical items. This, for instance, applies to the ways in which learners acquire the structure of questions. Starting with one-word responses, learners move through a sequence of stages until they are able to say more complex sentences, such as questions in the simple past (Pienemann et al., 2006, p. 36). The "teachability" of language elements therefore plays a key role in the teaching of foreign languages. As Lethaby et al. (2021) sum up, "teaching certain forms only works if learners are ready" (p. 66). For primary school teachers, an awareness of the teachability hypothesis can thus help them understand SLA processes better and be patient with their learners.

Despite the prominence and influence of Krashen's hypotheses, these have also been subject to criticism. Whereas the importance of creating a pleasant atmosphere, for instance, has been further empirically confirmed (cf. Gudjons, 2006), it is acknowledged today that input alone in an institutionalised EFL setting is insufficient and that learners not only acquire a language subconsciously but "they also consciously memorize and reflect on language" (Grimm et al., 2015, p. 45). A knowledge gap remains between the linguistic input, the reception of language as a pattern for further processing, and the conscious production of language, the output. Also, determining the individual real speech reception and processing, the intake, is a challenge for SLA research. As such, Krashen's hypotheses must be supplemented by further findings (Böttger, 2020c, pp. 23–24).

Interlanguage theories and the interlanguage hypothesis (cf. Selinker, 1972) also play a major role in primary ELE. The term *interlanguage* refers

to a linguistic system used and developed by learners in the process of learning a foreign language – thus often involving the incorporation of aspects from learners' 'native' or first language(s). Hence the interlanguage is transitional and individually different among learners. The achieved state of 'near-nativeness' forms the greatest possible language acquisition success. In a learner language analysis, it is mainly competence errors that indicate the status of the interlanguage, not performance errors, i.e. mistakes. Examples of such competence errors are approximations (e.g. he go*ed home), fossilizations (e.g. *handy), overgeneralizations (e.g. children*s), interferences (e.g. the woman *became twins) and simplifications of language in order to avoid mistakes (Böttger, 2020b, pp. 44–46). According to Selinker (1972), successful second language acquisition, also on the primary level, mainly consists of reorganizing the linguistic material of the interlanguage in order to take it closer to the target language. Such an approximation requires permanent (positive) feedback about the status of the interlanguage so that the approximation hypothesis can be checked by the learners themselves and by their teachers. For teaching practice, this therefore highlights the need for continuously assessing learners' competence levels, for instance, through diagnostic (self-)assessment grids offered by the Common European Framework of References (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 26–27). Setting up and testing hypotheses – like children do while acquiring their mother tongue – is a central, predominantly unconscious process of second language acquisition.

A further theory that plays a role when focussing on TEYL is connectionism (cf. Böttger, 2020b, pp. 18–19). Connectionism tries to explain language acquisition, especially SLA, with mental representations and information processing in neural networks. Such connections are strengthened as linguistic experiences and their repetitions are processed. The well-proven plasticity of the neuronal connectome, the brain, especially during first language acquisition, which is also still present at the beginning of foreign language acquisition and beyond, remains throughout the whole life span. In contrast to the linearity of behaviourism, connectionism assumes that some mental processes, such as language acquisition, can take place in parallel or simultaneously, but not hierarchically, and that linguistic knowledge is distributed across the

different neural connections. This, for example, means that the development of a linear (foreign) language structure, i.e. a fixed sequence of grammatical structures, is not realistic in primary school. At a young age, language tends to develop in a network-like connective manner, for example, in wordwebs or thematically dense contexts. An example would be the mental storage of the words *cow* and *hen* in the context of the topic “farm animals”, or *brother* and *uncle* in the word field “me and my family and friends” (cf. Böttger, 2016, p. 101).

In addition to the selected theoretical positions discussed above, various factors have an impact on the development of foreign language proficiency. Psychological prerequisites for learning can be listed as follows: age (as discussed above), the group of learners and the learning atmosphere, memory, motivation, personality traits, learner types, language aptitude, language awareness, and multilingualism (Böttger, 2020b, pp. 22–31). These aspects determine the heterogeneity of a learner group and can have a great impact on how learners acquire and learn a foreign language.

Judging by their preconditions, young learners can learn multiple languages and they seem to do so rather well. As children acquire their first (second, third, etc.) language(s) while growing up at home and in institutionalised care such as kindergartens, they are well equipped with a basic competence of cognitive control (Böttger, 2016, p. 74), which manifests itself in several areas of cognitive potential (cf. Festman, 2022, pp. 74–91). In short, this means that they are indeed able to formulate sentences freely and correct themselves at the age of roughly eight – the age around which learners typically start to learn English in German primary schools.

Whereas children living outside of English-speaking countries will probably have encountered the English language as a lingua franca or different varieties of Global Englishes in pop culture and on the Internet – for example, while singing along to their favourite song or while surfing online or playing (video) games, most young children will probably not have had much practice using the English language. The structured EFL lessons at school can therefore offer learners opportunities to develop

basic competences. The advantages of English instruction at school are that language learning materials are pre-selected, structured, and designed to develop specific competencies, which can help learners integrate newly acquired items (Böttger, 2020a, p. 11).

Children within the same age group can show several similar traits. Various researchers have looked into the differences between the characteristics of younger and older learners. Based on such outlines (Pinter, 2017, p. 3; Brewster et al., 2002, pp. 27–34), Table 3 provides an overview of a few basic key differences between younger and older learners.

Younger learners	Older learners
They enjoy	
• fantasy, imagination, movement, topics related to their lives	• topics related to their lives and influenced by pop/media culture
They are good at	
• implicit learning (without conscious awareness)	• explicit learning (with conscious awareness)
They need	
• a lot of comprehensible input, including semi-authentic and authentic input • stories and tales, picturebooks, audio input • a great variety of different activities, including movement-based, playful, and creative activities	• comprehensible and increasingly more complex 'authentic' input • increasingly more complex multimodal input (or more complex tasks) • a variety of different activities, including movement-based, creative, increasingly complex and problem-solving tasks

Table 3: Key differences between younger and older learners

Evidently, this is a simplified generalisation, however, and we must consider that, as Pinter (2017, p. 2) notes, "every child is unique, and even

in the same context, there are often significant differences between children within the same age range." Nonetheless, Table 3 indicates some specific needs of younger as opposed to older learners that future English teachers should be aware of so that they can adapt their teaching accordingly. This does not mean, however, that certain activities or texts are only suitable for younger learners. As concerns the use of picturebooks (as one example of 'authentic' multimodal texts), for example, this text format offers various learning opportunities for older learners as well (Alter & Merse, in press).

4. Teaching young learners: A neuroscientific perspective

The basic structure of the brain is built over time, starting before birth and continuing into adulthood. Early positive as well as negative experiences can affect the quality of that structure. Therefore, positive language experiences, for instance, almost automatically lead to the development of positive language mindsets and language predispositions. The young brain's ability to change and adapt as a result of experience is called neuroplasticity, also known as brain plasticity. During the first few years of life, over a million new neural connections are made each second. Connections proliferate and prune in, with later, more complex brain circuits built upon earlier, simpler circuits. They scaffold the next stage of development, as shown in Figure 1, which proceeds as follows:

(1) sensory neural pathways (vision and hearing),
(2) early language skills (listening comprehension and speaking), and
(3) high cognitive functions (deciding, evaluating, planning, also literacy).

The neural connections then steadily decrease in number and speed of the connection. Importantly, the various language-related capacities of the brain are interrelated. They are the building blocks of human language development.

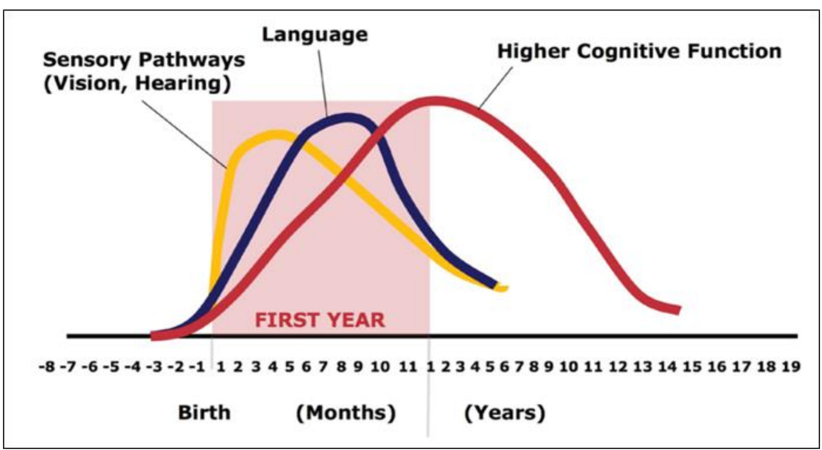

Figure 1: Early brain development: Neural connections for different functions (Nelson, 2000)

As the brain ages, it becomes more specialized in its tasks. Depending on the relevance of the tasks and the frequency of usage, the motto 'use it or lose it' prevails. This also includes cognitive functions, which makes the brain less able to adapt to new situations and changes. Early in life, parts of the brain that handle sounds become specialized for a particular language. At the same time, it loses its ability to identify different sounds in other languages. Although the windows for language learning and improving language skills remain open, these circuits become harder to alter over time. These circumstances clearly speak for learning a language as early as possible, at best even in pre-school age.

When children start school at the age of five or six, their brains are well prepared for language acquisition and processing. At this time, the child's brain has normally had many language experiences already, mostly in its mother tongue and possibly further languages and related varieties or dialects, and can draw on them.

A further crucial aspect is the interconnection between teacher and young (language) learner: This specific relationship during the early stages of foreign language learning in primary schools is a key factor for successful language development, for kids naturally reach for interaction through

their mouths and facial expressions. The absence of these expressions and responses during the early stages of development can – worst scenario – lead to disparities in language learning (Böttger, 2016, p. 63). In addition to considering the special capacity of children's brains for (foreign) language learning in primary school, further principles of TEYL can help make the experience of English language learning as motivating and as effective as possible – as outlined below.

5. From principles of TEYL to a principled mindset

Principles for teaching generally aim to support teachers in becoming professional practitioners and ensuring that teaching practices follow a sound theoretical, ideally also empirically validated, basis. This section provides an overview of two sets of principles developed by different researchers: 1) an outline of six core principles for exemplary teaching of English learners developed by a group of researchers from the international association TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Language, Shin et al., 2021) and 2) nine principles put forward by Daniela Elsner for primary school education that are widely known across Germany (Elsner, 2020). An examination of these principles then leads to an outline of what we call "a principled mindset". This complies with the current understanding of the postmethod concept, which is "willing to explore alternatives to method rather than taking the failed path of finding alternative methods" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 214). In other words, the postmethod condition supports educators in making informed and principled choices for teaching practices – for which we suggest a principled mindset as the fundamental basis for TEYL.

The six core principles developed by an international team of language teaching experts take into account the importance of high-quality teaching by professionals (see Table 4). According to Shin et al. (2021), teachers need to make well-informed decisions in practice and foster foreign language proficiency development appropriately and effectively.

Core principles	Explanation
1) Know your learners	Teachers learn basic information about their learners (family, linguistic/cultural background, etc.).
2) Create conditions for language learning	Teachers create a positive classroom atmosphere and culture, making sure learners feel welcome.
3) Design high-quality lessons for language development	Teachers develop meaningful and goal-oriented lessons that promote the development of foreign language proficiency, learning strategies and critical thinking.
4) Adapt lesson delivery as needed	Teachers assess as they teach and reflect on learners' responses, and continuously adjust their lessons.
5) Monitor & assess student language development	Teachers monitor and assess learners' development in order to advance their learning efficiently.
6) Engage & collaborate within a community of practice	Teachers collaborate with others and support each other and their learners; they continue their professional learning.

Table 4: Six principles for exemplary teaching of English (adapted from Shin et al. 2021, p. 6)

What is more, their core principles, which are research-based, "are grounded on a strong commitment to children living in our multilingual, multimodal world where English continues to be a global language of opportunity for the future of our young learners" (Shin et al., 2021, p. 6). Accordingly, the six principles (see Table 4) rest on four foundations:

1) commitment to children,
2) recognition of English as a global language,
3) commitment to a multilingual world, and
4) integration of multiliteracies (Shin et al., 2021, p. 7).

A well-known list of principles in Germany is Elsner's list of nine principles. By taking into consideration how young learners learn English, these principles offer a valuable guideline for English educators at primary school (see Table 5).

Principles	Explanation
1) Active learning and a focus on tasks	Learners should get actively involved in the learning process. Tasks should be integrated that are meaningful, goal-oriented, interactive, and provide room for creativity.
2) Playful learning	Language practice should include playful elements (e.g. in the warm-up phase) with a clear goal.
3) Collaborative and cooperative learning	Learners should be encouraged to act in a team so that they can create an outcome in a group in which every group member is given a specific role (e.g. Think – Pair – Share).
4) Functional monolingualism	English lessons should take place in English right from the start by establishing routines. The L1 should be used in certain situations (e.g. to explain complex task instructions, to talk about rules and mistakes, in reflection phases).
5) Cautious error correction	The creation of a pleasant learning atmosphere is crucial, and rather than correcting errors right away, teachers should draw conclusions about learners' stage of learning.
6) Repetition	Teachers should provide many opportunities for learners to repeat language in new contexts.
7) Authenticity	Teachers should use authentic texts (e.g. songs, stories, blogs, chat messages). Teachers should foster authentic language use by creating authentic communicative situations.
8) Learner-orientation	Teachers should offer a variety of different activities, tasks, and learning arrangements and consider gender-specific interests.
9) Inclusion	Differentiated instruction is essential as well as the provision of visualisation.

Table 5: Principles of primary ELE (adapted from Elsner, 2020, pp. 18–37)

Synthesising the two sets of principles outlined above, we suggest four basic components of a principled mindset for (novice) primary school English teachers as well as teachers of young learners in general (see Table 6). These four components primarily aim to support pre-service and

novice teachers in the establishment of a mental network that encourages them to relate theory and research while developing making goal-oriented and principled decisions for teaching practice.

Principle	Explanation
1) Rituals & repetitions	Teachers establish a set of English-speaking routines in the classroom and provide opportunities for plenty of repetitions.
2) Cultures & authenticity	Teachers develop tasks and lesson plans in authentic contexts to provide opportunities for inter- and transcultural learning.
3) Cooperation and collaboration	Teachers initiate cooperative learning in the classroom (e.g. through pair/group work) and cooperate or collaborate with colleagues within the school and beyond – for the purpose of professional development.
4) Playing & experimenting	Teachers provide opportunities for goal-oriented playful language engagement and use while also experimenting with new ways of teaching and learning and offering (corrective) feedback.

Table 6: TEYL: A principled mindset

Thus, it can be seen as a first impulse for, using Shin et al.'s words, "exemplary teaching" (2021, p. 6). The first principle underlying the principled mindset is especially crucial because it can help classroom management also in terms of managing a class of young learners who are only just beginning to learn English as a foreign language.

In addition to establishing a set of routines, also outside regular English lessons (see Meyer in this volume), repetitions are crucial. This, however, does not imply decontextualized drilling but rather refers to the importance of recycling language in meaningful tasks and using repetitive literary texts.

Julia Donaldson's rhythmical, engaging and (partly) repetitive writing is famous in that regard; and it is highly likely that learners will have encountered *The Gruffalo* (Donaldson & Scheffler, 1999) in their native

language(s) in kindergarten, to give but one well-known example. Recognising the importance of providing learners with texts and tasks that offer opportunities for intercultural (or transcultural) learning is the second feature of a principles mindset. Brunsmeier's (2016; 2017) study on the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in primary education provides a starting point for this. Her outline of guiding questions offers a systematic approach for developing tasks that aim to foster ICC (cf. Brunsmeier, 2016, pp. 318–325). An example of the domain attitudes is "Do the tasks enable learners to deal with their own and other cultures (i.e. cultural practices) from different perspectives?" (Brunsmeier, 2016, p. 318, own translation). Third, cooperation is crucial: among learners in the classroom who may work cooperatively on a task to further various competences (see section 6) and among teachers who may engage in reflective practice while observing each other in action. The latter is highlighted by Shin et al., who suggest a (self- or peer) reflection by considering three questions: (1) What did my colleague (or I) do?, (2) How did it go?, and (3) What did we both (I) learn? (Shin et al., 2021, p. 78). Finally, the playful engagement with language use of young learners is crucial, as is teachers' willingness and openness to experiment with a wide variety of teaching methods and activities. In different steps of a lesson, the warm-up, for instance, teachers can promote language practice through brainstorming, talking about pictures or videos, Think-Pair-Share, and playing games like hangman or charades (cf. Shin et al., 2021, p. 55).

Overall, a principled mindset, in which English teachers establish routines and repeat language items within culturally 'authentic' settings while offering opportunities for cooperation and collaboration, provides a basis for initiating competence development in English lessons, as outlined below.

6. Competence development

6.1 Competence domains of ELE

The main objective of English language teachers is the development of various competences. In Germany, educational standards comprise three main competence domains: functional communicative, intercultural, and methodological competences (KMK, 2004; also in Böttger, 2020b, p. 61). The former subsumes communicative skills and language elements, as shown in Figure 2. Consequently, teaching practices should foster these competences. A further way of describing skills or competences is presented by the Council of Europe (2018) in their *Companion Volume with New Descriptors*. Four modes of communication are listed, i.e. reception, production, interaction, and mediation – thus used as umbrella terms and moving away from a description of the traditional skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). In current curricular guidelines in Germany, however, these descriptors are not (yet) integrated.

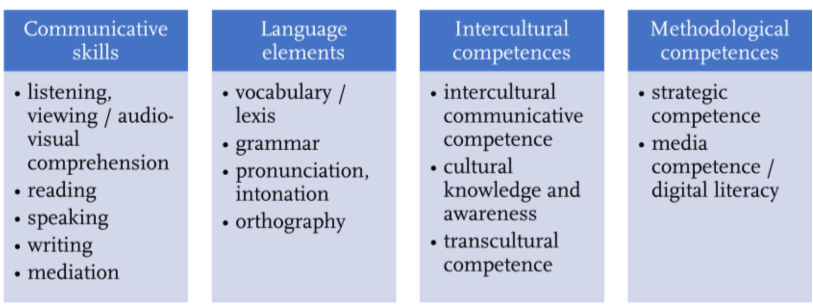

Figure 2: Competence domains of ELT (based on KMK, 2004)

Moreover, a crucial competence domain today is the development of media literacy and digital competence. In a world that is becoming increasingly digitalized, learners need to become digitally competent so that they can, for instance, successfully take part in digital communication practices, critically reflect on the content of digital texts, and (re-)design digital content. Such skills are listed in Shin and Crandall's outline of "21st Century Skills" (in reference to the U.S. educational organisation that developed the "P21", i.e. "The Partnership for 21st Century Skills" in

2011), and they comprise three sets of skills: (1) learning and innovation skills, (2) digital literacy skills, and (3) career and life skills (Shin & Crandall, 2014, p. 327). A more prominent framework today that offers a detailed description of digital competence for education across Europe is the *European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens* (also referred to as DigComp). It includes five main competence areas: (1) information and data literacy, (2) digital communication and collaboration, (3) digital content creation, (4) safety, and (5) problem solving (Vuorikari et al., 2016, pp. 8–9; adapted for German educational guidelines, see KMK, 2016). The development of digital competence also plays a key role for teachers. As Dausend (2021) highlights, for example, if teachers develop an awareness of the opportunities and limitations of digital media, lessons can offer a greater variety of learning formats (p. 170).

Among young learners, the development of digital competence can take all sorts of forms and, most importantly, it can be integrated into everyday English language lessons. To enable learners to engage in digital communication and collaboration (domain 2 of the DigComp), for instance, teachers can make video calls with a class in another country, have basic conversations or sing songs together (Shin & Crandall, 2014, p. 341); learners could engage in dialogic interaction with an expert from an English-speaking country when dealing with a specific topic (Dausend, 2021, p. 177); further options are blogging and collaborative writing projects in which learners interact with a class abroad (Kolb, 2018).

In addition to the language-based competence domains and digital competence, general educational goals also play a key role in TEYL. These relate to cross-curricular and interdisciplinary aims, which include the area of education for sustainable development (ESD). ESD aims to stimulate "critical and systemic thinking, collaborative decision-making, and taking responsibility for present and future generations" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 12). Through transforming themselves and the society they live in, learners should be empowered to become "global citizens" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 12). Although the complexity of critical issues related to ESD, such as climate change may at first glance pose challenges for integrating general educational goals into TEYL, interdisciplinary measures and digital picturebooks or audio-visual texts (Summer, 2022) can provide

opportunities for combining the development of language-based and general educational goals (see Zirkel in this volume).

Whereas a description and discussion of each competence domain would go beyond the scope of this contribution, it is important to comment on the role of primary education in fostering language-based competencies. First, not only receptive skills such as listening and audio-visual comprehension play a key role, but also productive skills such as speaking and writing can be integrated into primary classrooms (see Reckermann and Ritter in this volume). The development of communicative competence requires extensive and continuous exposure to language, a variety of tasks, opportunities for imitation (e.g. through songs and stories), and opportunities for physical movement for young learners (Krkgöz, 2018, pp. 174–175). Importantly, reading and writing are dynamic and interactive processes that learners do not acquire naturally and thus require skills and strategies so that learners can make meaning from printed texts (Shin & Crandall, 2018, p. 188). That is why, for reading, Shin & Crandall recommend the To/With/By approach in which the teacher first reads "To" students (e.g. read-alouds), then "With" students (e.g. by sharing a big book), and then "By" students (e.g. in collaborative projects) (Shin & Crandall, 2018, p. 199).

The development of language systems – especially the learning of important chunks (cf. Lethaby et al., 2021, pp. 67–69) – plays a key role in TEYL. Defined as multi-word items such as in "to ride a bike" or "to take a picture", chunks are vital for building functional vocabulary among young learners so that they can use "ready-made phrases [...] to express meaning" (Haestræet, 2018, p. 224), thus helping them become more fluent speakers of English. Providing learners with many opportunities for listening to, noticing, or playfully practising chunks, can thus be a good starting point for fostering competence development. Importantly, a focus on chunks in TEYL can also allow teachers to feel more relaxed about including grammatical structures that are not (yet) intended to be taught in primary school but potentially necessary for certain communicative situations. If, for instance, learners wish to tell their teacher in English about their birthday party, "had a party" can be taught

as a chunk without having to discuss the formation of irregular verb forms or explicitly introducing the simple past.

The development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) subsumes knowledge, skills (of interpreting and discovering the foreign culture as well as interacting with it), attitudes (relativizing oneself and valuing others), and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). Real-life products and artefacts from other cultures, such as picturebooks and films, can tell stories from the worlds of others and introduce learners to new perspectives on everyday life issues such as daily routines, the food we eat, what we do in our spare time, and how we interact with our family and friends. A challenge for teaching practice in primary schools, however, is the lack of materials and straight-forward concepts that help teachers put ICC into practice. In her study investigating teachers' understanding of ICC in primary school teaching through teacher interviews, Brunsmeier found that "they [teachers] were not sure about what ICC involved and that they did not share a common understanding of what ICC was" (2017, p. 148). She furthermore identified that ICC is "not consistently put into practice" (Brunsmeier, 2017, p. 152). This is but one example that illustrates the complexities involved in putting theory into practice – especially concerning the development of ICC in primary education.

In recent years, there has been a shift in scholarly discussions from inter- to transcultural competence (e.g. Delanoy, 2013). The underlying concept of transcultural learning promotes an understanding of culture that goes beyond fixed categories of cultures – for instance, the Germans vs. the Americans, and is characterised by cultural overlaps and interconnections focusing on cultural hybridity at the level of individuals (Kreft, 2020, p. 30). For teaching practice, teachers' knowledge of these two concepts is essential so that they can deal with the cultural heterogeneity of their class effectively and teach them to embrace all cultures while, at the same time, enabling learners to become aware of cultural stereotypes, certain (cultural) differences, and similarities. This can be done by exploring communicative topics and identifying individual aspects that may (or may not) be grounded in cultural differences. One of the great advantages of primary school English teachers is their didactical and pedagogical

freedom in terms of the topics they choose for their lessons, for most curricula provide exactly that. As such, teachers can choose from a great variety of topics that, as Elsner (2020, p. 16) emphasises, should be child-friendly and focus on content such as animals, food and drink, school, my home, family and friends, shopping, daily and yearly events, and learners' interests. Combining elements of inter- and transcultural learning while dealing with such topics in learner-centred tasks is a valuable option for engaging teaching practice.

6.2 Practical example: A picturebook for transcultural learning

To give an example of transcultural learning, this section focuses on a picturebook suggested by Kreft (2020) in primary ELE titled *The Wall in the Middle of the Book* by the American writer and illustrator Jon Agee (2018). The story presents a young knight who is protecting his side of the wall from dangers shown on the other side: a rhino and a tiger, a monkey and a mouse, and, eventually, an ogre – all of which successively enter the 'other' side of the wall shown on the double-page spread. Describing how the knight is convinced that the high wall in the middle protects him from the dangers on the other side, he overlooks the fact that the dangers on his side are increasing due to flooding and wild animals that start to appear. The book excerpt (see Figure 3) shows his bewilderment when he turns around and realises that he might be about to drown as the water continues to rise. Luckily, the ogre on the other side of the wall seems to realise what is going on and rescues the knight by reaching his hand over the wall and pulling him out of the water. When the ogre saves him, the knight exclaims "OH NO! I'm on the other side of the book", stating that he thinks the ogre will eat him up, who then responds: "Haw-haw-haw! I'm actually a nice ogre. And this side of the book is fantastic!" (Agee, 2018). The ogre then shows him around (while the animals on the knight's side of the wall eat each other up), and the knight eventually realises that his fears were unjustified or, in fact, prejudices. A (mostly) happy ending is presented, showing the knight riding on the rhino with (almost) everyone united and looking very cheerful; except for the mouse: It is shown on the final double page all alone.

Kreft (2018) considers this picturebook especially suitable for developing transcultural competence because it focuses on overarching aspects such as overcoming prejudices and developing trust rather than focusing on categories of nation, religion, and gender. As such, rather than dealing with cultural differences and stereotypical depictions of different nations or people, picturebooks such as these provide an opportunity for learners to establish common values such as helping each other (rather than excluding one another) and embracing diversity – thus, for instance, seeing physical differences such as size and abilities as resources rather than as potential dangers. Thanks to the ogre's size, he was able to reach across the wall and quickly save the knight. At the same time, teachers can encourage learners to relate to the perspectives of others in this book when telling the story by asking questions related to the story: 'How does X (the knight, the ogre, the mouse) feel?' (e.g. happy, sad, scared) – thus combining language work with developing transcultural competence. Additionally, the picturebook is available on YouTube as an animated 1-minute book trailer (Penguin Kids, 2018) as well as several read-alouds – opening up opportunities for fostering digital competence.

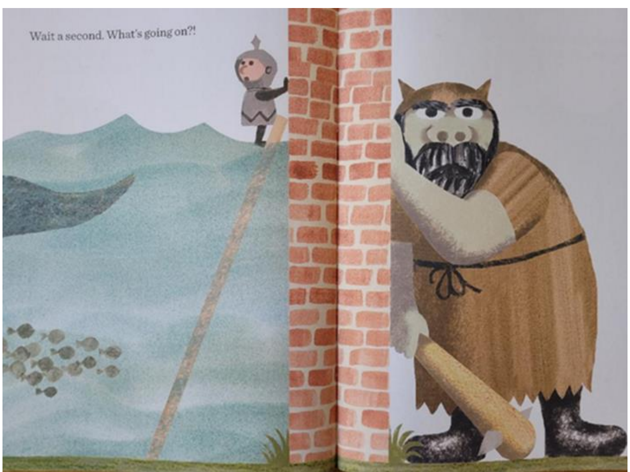

Figure 3: Excerpt: *The Wall in the Middle of the Book* by Jon Agee (2018)

Keeping in mind the importance of goal-oriented TEYL in which various competence domains receive attention, the following section presents an

overview of central teaching materials for TEYL while focusing on the importance of authentic texts, scaffolding, and literary texts.

7. Working with materials in primary education

7.1 The importance of 'authentic' texts and scaffolding

Teaching materials play a key role in TEYL – both in task development and providing learners with high-quality and comprehensible input. As concerns terminology, there is a fine line between the term *materials* and *media*. The term *media* commonly refers to a specific mode of delivery, such as audio-visual media (e.g. films) or digital media (e.g. edu-apps). The term *materials* subsumes different resources such as worksheets, flashcards, etc. A textbook, for instance, could be described in terms of its mode of delivery (a print medium or a digital medium), and it could also be considered a resource, i.e. teaching material. Teaching materials, generally speaking, thus include any sort of text (in the broad sense) or activity that supports the development of foreign language proficiency. Course materials include (print or digital) textbooks and other textbook-accompanying items like workbooks, the teacher's book, and additional digital and audio-visual media such as films and interactive activities. Authentic materials, for instance, include nursery rhymes, YouTube shorts, poems, picturebooks, songs, chat messages, blog posts, podcasts, and story apps. The issue of authenticity, however, is more complex than it may initially seem, and features of the verbal and visual text can determine a text's degree of authenticity; and what also matters is how learners authenticate a text (e.g. see the "acts of authenticity" approach by Moody, 2021). What is more, authenticity by itself is not a valid selection criterion for texts suitable for TEYL.

As concerns the feature of authenticity, this plays a key role due to the importance of dealing with examples of authentic and comprehensible language use in an authentic cultural context. An important aspect is the creation of authentic communicative situations in which learners can engage in meaningful discourse by exploring topics relevant to their lives (e.g. family, hobbies, pets, holidays) (Elsner, 2010, p. 68–69). Against this background, the job of English primary school teachers today is not only

the development of motivating, engaging, and goal-oriented materials. Considering the fact that English teachers have various other tasks to fulfil, it is advisable for teachers to use resources from publishers designed specifically for their school type and curricular guidelines. At the same time, however, it is important for educators to critically analyse the quality of texts and activities (Legutke et al., 2014, pp. 114–120). In that way, teachers can tweak, modify, and supplement content in textbooks. In addition, using engaging materials such as short clips or songs throughout a school year is advisable not only because of their high motivational capacity but also because of the different perspectives authentic sources can provide for learners of English (Summer, in prep). To give an example, "ABC" by The Jackson 5 (1970) provides opportunities for teaching the *abc* and numbers while training selective listening for basic chunks (e.g. "sit down", "get up", "shake it"). Furthermore, several current pop stars, such as the Australian singer-songwriter Lenka or the American Bruno Mars, have released songs whose English is comprehensible – potentially also for younger learners.

In addition to authentic or non-pedagogic materials, published ELT resources such as textbooks and workbooks evidently play a key role because they can greatly support the teaching and learning process. Teachers' use of textbooks significantly differs, ranging from those that "painstakingly do all the texts, activities, tasks, and exercises" to those who rely on authentic materials and activities they collected or designed themselves (Legutke et al., 2014, p. 113). For future teachers of English, it seems advisable to take on a balanced approach and use published materials, develop task sequences on current topics, and collaborate with colleagues to continuously extend one's teaching materials.

One central element of materials and task development for TEYL is scaffolding. Providing learners with *scaffolds* or *scaffolding* is important to give young learners the support necessary to complete an activity and engage in basic communication. Scaffolding refers to the provision of help in a systematic manner – "an instructional strategy which ensures that the child can gain confidence and take control of the task [...] as soon as they are willing and able to" (Pinter, 2017, p. 11). In the TEYL context, the following examples of scaffolding techniques can be useful: Routines

can provide a form of scaffolding by helping learners acquire basic communicative competence (e.g. saying the date in English, for further examples, see Meyer in this volume); also, from the perspective of teaching methodology, routines can act as a form of process scaffolding by teaching learners how to carry out a specific activity. Classroom phrases also play a key role here and can act as important scaffolds in TEYL, as discussed below.

7.2 The importance of classroom phrases

The ability to monitor a group of children is a prerequisite for classroom management and teaching. In foreign language education, this is especially important because the time for learning English in primary school, usually no more than roughly two hours of instruction per week, is short, and teachers need to be creative and find many opportunities for engaging learners in English language use during their school time so that no time is wasted on the unpopular phrase "In English, please!" or "Could you say that in English, please?". Furthermore, as children are usually "ruled by their own immediate needs and desires, which usually do not include learning a foreign language" (Shin & Crandall, 2014, p. 289), classroom management is crucial. Creating an environment in which English is spoken is absolutely essential, and this, as Elsner also highlights, must not cause teachers to switch to German when dealing with organisational issues or managing the class (Elsner, 2021, p. 99). As such, managing the language use in the classroom is crucial, and for this, classroom phrases can provide excellent scaffolding for learners.

Classroom discourse, described as the language of teaching and learning in English (Böttger, 2020b, p. 149), is central to establishing an appropriate focus on the target language. To help teachers and learners engage with the target language in the classroom, it is advisable to introduce and practise classroom phrases in the classroom from the very start. There are various ways in which classroom talk can be categorised (see, for instance, Doms, 2014, p. 21) and practising teachers have provided useful lists of classroom phrases for teachers (for a list developed mostly for secondary teaching, see King, 2020). Figure 4 provides an

overview of some basic classroom phrases – both for learners and teachers in a TEYL setting.

If learners are familiar with classroom phrases and basic dialogues, have practised these and can use them in context, teachers and the class can profit from this enormously as it facilitates classroom management and encourages learners to speak the target language. This cannot only help the transition to secondary school in which the use of English in the EFL classroom is highly important (see Bastkowski in this volume). What is more, it is a prerequisite for introducing and dealing with literary texts in the classroom.

Phrases for learners:

General feelings
- How are you feeling? → I'm feeling...
- Can I open the window?

Understanding things
- Excuse me, what's ... in English?
- I need your help, please.
- I don't understand this.
- What's this?

Actions
- Can I get up, please?
- Can I have a(n) ... please?

Cooperating
- Let's start.
- It's your turn.

Phrases for teachers:

Instructions
- Listen to ...
- Repeat after me ...
- Say ...
- Practice ...
- Work alone/with a partner.

Helping out
- Almost.
- You're on the right track.
- Try this again, please.

Checking
- Have you finished?
- Do you have any questions?
- Do you need more time?

Positive feedback
- Well done. / Great job!
- That's better/right.

Figure 4: Classroom phrases for primary education

7.3 The importance of literature

Learners' failures at secondary school level and beyond, particularly with regard to language development, can frequently be traced back to failures at primary school when focusing on writing and reading, especially when learning tasks and learning materials increasingly change from "learning to read" (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2008, p. 1330) towards "reading to learn". Reading difficulties are typically linked to poor visual processing or perception skills. A variety of factors can be the cause, such as poor eye coordination and teaming, visual tracking and focusing, for instance, on letters. The gaze span development also plays a role (cf. Böttger, 2016, p. 134): The unread areas become larger with systematic practice and can then be deduced from the word context and the reading and language experience. This is a precondition for a smooth reading process. What is more, there is a largely ignored gender gap: The early different neuronal myelination in girls and boys with different margins in the literacy development of up to three years highlights the absolute necessity of targeted differentiation concerning literacy development (cf. Böttger, 2016, p. 100).

As a result, early intervention is necessary. Writing and reading courses, as well as dealing with literature in general in native and foreign languages – if at all available on primary level – must therefore be reconsidered and restructured. As such, in her paper "More Teacher Education and More Children's Literature!" (2019), Bland rightly makes a case for integrating high-quality input into young learner classrooms, developing teacher expertise in dealing with literary texts, and including broader educational goals into lesson plans that go beyond the learning of colours or basic nouns. By sharing stories from different cultural backgrounds, fostering inter- and transcultural competences as well as initiating critical thinking, numerous benefits of working with literary texts can be outsourced in practice. The affordances of using picturebooks (often also referred to as storybooks), thereby, are far-reaching. Picturebooks can contribute to young learners' cognitive and cultural as well as their aesthetic and emotional development (Mourão, 2015). Not only are they motivating and enjoyable, but they can also "act as a

springboard for a wide variety of related language and learning activities" (Ellis & Brewster, 2014, p. 6).

In TEYL, picturebooks offer manifold opportunities for competence development: Learners can listen to a story read aloud by the teacher in a reading circle, they can respond with short sentences and thus develop speaking competence, and get creative in a post-reading phase (see Zirkel in this volume). What is more, not only print picturebooks, but also digital picturebooks such as storyapps can foster language-related competences as well as media literacy (Brunsmeier & Kolb, 2017). This can include the effective use, reflection, and creation of media (Kolb, 2021). A positive development for TEYL is that digital picturebooks are becoming increasingly available for free online. Free eBooks (digital picturebooks) are available on Oxford Owl (https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/) by Oxford University Press through which teachers and students can register free of charge and easily access digital texts. Also, YouTube offers various read-aloud videos that can be dealt with in the classroom or watched by learners at home. What is more, the PEPELT website (https://pepelt21.com) is a highly valuable resource for teachers by suggesting specific picturebooks and practical ideas.

8. Lesson planning

Teachers can plan English lessons or lesson sequences according to a range of different models. For competence-based teaching, a basic threefold structure can be a helpful tool for developing English lessons or lesson sequences among novice teachers. Focusing primarily on GTO – an acronym that stands for (1) goals, (2) topic, and (3) outcome, this structure provides a good starting point for competence-based English lessons, illustrated with some examples in Table 7.

G	1. Goals/ competences	What are the goals of my lesson or lesson sequence? Which competences are in focus? → e.g. speaking → can-do-statements such as *Learners can say short sentences about their families with the help of given chunks.*
T	2. Topic	Which topic is suitable for fostering the specific competence(s) in focus? → e.g. *families across the world*
O	3. Outcome	What is the visible result/product at the end of a lesson or lesson sequence? → e.g. *mini-presentations about families with the help of a lapbook*

Table 7: Basic competence-based lesson planning

After a consideration of GTO, which derives from the more detailed model of competence-based instruction (e.g. Hallet, 2012, p. 14), teachers can focus on more specific and more detailed components of the lesson or a lesson sequence. These include the required language systems (grammar, lexis, pronunciation and intonation, orthography), suitable tasks, input texts and media, interaction forms, time, means of differentiation, and options for documenting or assessing learner achievement. Such aspects are also commonly listed in navigation models for competence-based teaching (e.g. Elsner, 2020, p. 133). A systematic consideration of these aspects can help teachers to plan their English lessons according to a competence-based syllabus.

One key principle of lesson planning is differentiation. As children embody various emotional, physical, psychological, and social differences related to their age, sex and gender, learner type, intelligences and abilities, family situation, cultural experiences, attitudes to learning, willingness to learn, and social competencies (Eisenmann, 2019, p. 46), teachers need to take individual learner differences into account. Given the complexity of this requirement, the concept of differentiated instruction (DI) can offer a first guideline for responding to learner differences.

Examples of how to inform DI planning are the following four categories of guiding questions that can aid teachers' DI: (1) instructional strategies (e.g. Can I present material through different audio/visual media?), (2) learning environment (e.g. How do I create a welcoming environment?), (3) curriculum (e.g. Can I find ways to vary content by student interest?), and (4) student products (e.g. assessment, cooperative work, variation by skill level) (Sullivan & Weeks, 2018, p. 128). A consideration of some of these aspects during lesson plans can thus contribute to differentiated teaching and potentially help weaker learners, for instance, by getting additional help or by engaging less interested learners in a lesson sequence that offers a thematic choice when creating an outcome.

In addition to the guiding questions, core practices can help teachers adopt effective DI. Examples of such core practices are engaging students' understanding of key concepts (e.g. by using pictures), capitalising students' interests and knowledge (e.g. through learning strategies), using L1 for support, allowing flexible pacing (e.g. by waiting 10 seconds), incorporating cooperative learning, and providing scaffolding (Sullivan & Weeks, 2018, pp. 131–132). This list exemplifies previously discussed principles of primary ELE while also showcasing the complex nature of a primary English language teacher's job. Teaching English in primary schools is not just about singing rhymes, colouring in, and naming colours and pets in English. A well-structured, differentiated, and effective lesson plan that engages young learners by fostering an authentic interaction with the target language can set the fundamental basis for language proficiency.

9. Conclusion

If English educators at primary school succeed in turning primary ELT into a playful and experimental, therefore memorable and engaging experience – through goal-oriented, authentic, and playful tasks as well as the integration of literary texts such as picturebooks that invite young learners to enter new storyworlds and change their perspectives – children may remember and keep positive memories of their primary school English lessons for a whole lifetime. Furthermore, if their motivation and interest in the English language is maintained throughout secondary

school and a successful transition takes place (see Bastkowski in this volume), learners are more likely to become proficient in the target language and develop additional educational goals.

The principled mindset presented in this contribution aims to offer a sound theoretical basis for practical decision-making. Having discussed competence development, suitable teaching materials for TEYL and the importance of scaffolding – focusing particularly on the importance of establishing classroom phrases and using literary texts, and a basic way of approaching competence-based lesson planning, this contribution aims to help (pre-service) English teachers to further their professional competences so that they are able to design goal-oriented and purposeful tasks on the basis of a sound theoretical and empirically validated groundwork. To conclude, therefore, we would like to end with Elsner's recent and important call for a professional education of future primary school teachers: "It's the teacher who counts, also in elementary school English classes" (Elsner, 2021, p. 115, own translation).

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Reading and Writing in the Primary School EFL Classroom

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Abstract

The use of written language in the primary school English classroom has been subject to a long-standing debate among foreign language teachers as well as researchers. Arguments range from a fear of overtaxing young learners on the con side to the learners' desire and capability of coping with reading and writing on the pro side. Current research shows evidence towards young learners profiting from an early introduction to written English. This chapter outlines the history and current state of reading and writing in the primary school EFL classroom, including an insight into the arguments of the so-called debate on early biliteracy. The need for differentiated English teaching and cohesiveness in the primary-secondary school transition to successfully foster these competences is also discussed.

Keywords: reading, writing, differentiation, transition

1. Introduction

One of the manifold discourses within the field of primary school English language education in Germany has been about the degree to which written competences should be considered. At this point in time, reading and especially writing are – at a curricular level – generally considered as supplementary competences to listening and speaking. The primacy of oral language, that is listening and speaking, is a core characteristic of early language education (Elsner, 2010; Pinter, 2017). However, research conducted over the course of the last decade has shown considerable advantages of challenging younger learners to read and write in the foreign language, for example, to meet the learners' needs or to include a wide range of different tasks. To do so without overtaxing learners is not to rely on "incidental" acquisition, but to create an environment that

enables learners to consciously engage with written language, all while scaffolding and guiding the process. The following sections will first offer a brief definition of important terms, before giving a short overview of the so-called debate on early biliteracy with pro and con arguments for and respectively against an early introduction of reading and writing. This is followed by the current status of written competences in primary school English classrooms. In a next step, ways of differentiating and scaffolding reading and writing tasks will be discussed. An examination of the role that written language can play around the transition to secondary school will close this chapter.

2. About Early Reading and Writing in English

Reading is a complex competence that is mostly understood as reading comprehension. Reading comprehension means that the reader actively engages with a written piece of text in order to decode its content via complex processes of meaning making (Steck, 2009). These processes simultaneously take place at the level of words, sentences and larger units of text and involve the learners' mental lexicon, their previous knowledge (world and text knowledge) as well as the use of reading strategies (see Diehr & Frisch, 2010 and Reckermann, 2018 for details). However, other facets of reading, such as reading aloud, also belong to the competence of reading. Mindt and Schlüter (2007) differentiate between seven stages of reading in the primary school English classroom, ranging from reading single words on word cards to reading short sentences and culminating in reading a short text aloud. In all these stages, silent reading (for comprehension) precedes reading aloud. This allows a focus on reading comprehension before also challenging learners with speaking while reading.

As the productive equivalent to the receptive, yet certainly active, competence of reading, the acquisition of writing competences at primary level can be divided into a reproductive and a productive stage (Mindt & Schlüter, 2007). In the reproductive stages, students either copy given words, sentences and texts or follow oral dictation. Productive writing begins with writing based on a prompt – such as describing a picture – and concludes with independent writing, for example writing a letter.

Böttger (2013) takes a similar view, but further separates the stages prior to free productive writing into (1) learning to write and (re-)construct letters, (2) imitative writing, that is copying from examples, (3) reproductive writing, that is delayed copying such as filling gaps in a known text – and (4) semi-creative writing based on frameworks, that is finishing sentence fragments or reconstructing dialogues.

3. A Glimpse into the History of Early Biliteracy

Over the course of its introduction – starting with promising pilot projects in the late 1970s (Doyé & Lüttge, 1978) and culminating with each federal state offering a foreign language in primary school by 2006/07 (Börner, 2017; Lohmann, 2017; Schmid-Schönbein, 2008) – the primacy of oral language has been a clear and uncontested characteristic of early English language education. In the 1990s, as more concrete implementations of formalized early English (as well as French in some regions along the Rhine area) took place, working with written language slowly gained in importance but still remained a highly contested and discussed issue (Kubanek-German, 1999). The following two decades were shaped by a debate as well as empirical exploration of positive and negative aspects of introducing written competences in early English classes. The next paragraphs will briefly summarize the discourse that became known as the debate on early biliteracy (for an in-depth summary of these arguments see, for example, Reckermann, 2018, pp. 74-78).[1]

One of the primary concerns leveled against early biliteracy was the fear of overtaxing younger learners. Teachers (and researchers) argued that the scant differences in grapheme-phoneme-correspondence between English and German were too complex for learners to understand simultaneously (Legutke et al., 2009). Hence, teachers as well as researchers often argued that reading and writing in the foreign language should only be introduced once a sufficient basis of L1 literacy has been

[1] The term 'early biliteracy' as used in this chapter refers to the explicit use of the written language – receptively as well as productively – in early English teaching while learners are still (more or less advanced in) learning to read and write in their L1/the school language (that is German in Germany).

formed (Piske, 2007). However, empirical findings, for instance provided by the EVENING-Study[2] (Paulick & Groot-Wilken, 2009), did not show any significant indication of young learners being overly taxed by being confronted with written English. On the contrary, learners participating in the EVENING-study outperformed their teachers' as well as the researchers' expectations and results on the learners' English reading and writing competences showed ceiling effects (meaning that test items were not challenging enough for participants and results thus were skewed towards being very positive) (Paulick & Groot-Wilken, 2009).

Rymarczyk and Musall (2010, p. 77) add that "neither early English nor early contact with the English written form has any detrimental effect on poor learners' achievements in German." This has been (and unfortunately partly still is) a matter of great concern: Developing both L1 (i.e., school language = German in Germany) and foreign language reading and writing competences at the same time can lead to negative effects on L1 literacy (Kierepka, 2010). Yet, at this point in time, there is no empirical evidence to prove this assumption right. Instead, studies in immersive English classrooms have shown that simultaneous literacy development in English and German is possible without (long-term) drawbacks in L1 literacy and L1 development (Steinlen, 2021; Wirbatz & Reckermann, 2020; Zaunbauer, 2007).

Another major concern was that the introduction of written elements into the primary school English classroom might lead to these elements superseding oral competences as the primary basis for assessment and school placement in the process of transitioning to secondary school (Bleyhl, 2007; Kierepka, 2010; Legutke et al., 2009). Whereas the other two concerns are related to language learning processes and have been successfully challenged by empirical research, this issue rather stems from the field of teaching practice. It is mirrored in publishers' (and teachers') suggestions for pen-and-paper tests to be used in primary school English classes, which are usually well suited to test reading and writing competences but often struggle to assess oral competences,

[2] Table 1 provides an overview of the EVENING- as well as the BIG-Study, both which are frequently referred to in this chapter.

particularly speaking. Yet, as outlined in the curriculum for English in North-Rhine Westphalia, for instance, oral competences are supposed to lay the basis for assessment while written competences are supposed to play a role, but a minor one (MSB NRW, 2021).

The most prominent argument for the inclusion of written language in early English teaching is the fact that young learners already increasingly come into contact with written English in their everyday lives (Zaunbauer, 2007). More so, they recognize written language as a part of language learning and are motivated to develop and practice their skills with it (Böttger, 2010; Diehr, 2010; Diehr & Rymarczyk, 2010). If left to their own devices, learners are likely to come up with their own ways of spelling English words, usually based on rules for writing in German, referred to as 'invented spelling' (Rymarczyk, 2008). This leads to **penzel* instead of *pencil*, **bateflei* instead of *butterfly* or **maus* instead of *mouse* (for further examples, see BIG-Kreis, 2015 or Rymarczyk, 2007). While mistakes are necessary steps in the acquisition of writing as well as reading competences, students can only move past these if they are introduced to examples of English writing early on (Schmid-Schönbein, 2001) and if a reflection of the differences in grapheme-phoneme correspondence between English and German as well as a more explicit introduction to reading and writing in English take place (Frisch, 2013).

Emerging from these discussions is the current consensus that the advantages of early biliteracy clearly outweigh the disadvantages, meaning that core questions do not revolve around "Why?" or "If?" any longer but instead ask for "How?".

4. The Current State of Reading and Writing

As shown in the preceding section, written English has by now been established as a core part of early English teaching. It is generally agreed upon that encounters with the written language can be used to support the development of oral competences and also contribute to young learners' motivation for language learning (Diehr & Rymarczyk, 2012; Legutke et al., 2009; Mindt & Schlüter, 2007). Additionally, in reviewing current research on early biliteracy, Beinke (2020) identifies that the

introduction of written language is beneficial for developing the following competence domains:

- written language
- language awareness
- autonomy and differentiation
- memory support

All these arguments are excelled by the fact that young learners want to learn how to read and write in English, explicitly ask for written language and will try to develop their own rules based on previous knowledge (e.g., invented spelling) which might eventually lead to a fossilization of mistakes (Diehr & Rymarczyk, 2012; Rymarczyk, 2008). In sum, this exemplifies that the current state of research and experience fundamentally supports the introduction of reading and writing in early English language classrooms.

However, some issues that have been noted by researchers since the advent of early English teaching and the inclusion of written skills still remain unsolved. The lack of national standards and expectations for primary school English in Germany has led to a "scattergun approach" (Diehr, 2010, p. 52), where curricula differ widely between federal states. Whereas Lohmann (2017) still optimistically noticed a national trend towards starting English education in first grade, recent changes, such as going back to starting in Year 3 in North-Rhine-Westphalia or Baden-Wuerttemberg, only contribute to the remarkable differences between states. These differences also become visible in comparing the different states' curricular demands concerning written language, for instance those of Saxony (SfK FS, 2019) and North-Rhine Westphalia (MSB NRW, 2021). In terms of expectations towards writing, most states' curricula refer to the A1 level of the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), while some set the bar lower (Lohmann, 2017).

In taking a step towards national standards, it is crucial to investigate the level of competence in reading and writing young learners can achieve by the end of primary school. Larger scale studies, such as the EVENING- (Groot-Wilken, 2009) and BIG-Study (BIG-Kreis, 2015), could show that learners by the end of Year 4 were able to competently read at a word and

sentence level (see Table 1 for a brief summary). These two studies used almost the same reading test and students' results also increased noticeably (BIG-Kreis, 2015). However, the utilized items proved less challenging than expected, leading to the already mentioned ceiling effects that indicate that students might have been capable of tackling more advanced tasks (BIG-Kreis, 2015; Paulick & Groot-Wilken, 2009).

<table>
<tr><th>Study</th><th colspan="2">Research foci and tasks with regard to written competences</th><th colspan="2">Selected findings</th></tr>
<tr><td>EVENING-Study
(Engel et al., 2009)

Participants: approx. 3,000 primary school learners</td><td>Reading</td><td>• tasks at word and sentence level
• based on the CEFR and German primary EFL curricula</td><td colspan="2">• Results correspond with and even partly exceed curricular demands. (pp. 194-195)
• Researchers and teachers underestimated learners' competences; results show that tasks were too easy to complete and likely skewed the results (ceiling effect). (p. 189)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">BIG-Study
(BIG-Kreis, 2015

Participants: approx. 2,100 learners from 114 classes in 80 primary schools; 98 primary school English teachers)</td><td rowspan="2">Reading</td><td rowspan="2">• adapted instruments from the EVENING-Study
• tasks at word and sentence level</td><td>Learners</td><td>Teachers</td></tr>
<tr><td>• very good student performance (p. 43)
• ceiling effects (see EVENING-Study) still present
(p. 43, 68)</td><td>• tended to underestimate learners' cognitive potential for literacy development
(p. 28)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Writing</td><td rowspan="2">• tasks at word and sentence level
• based on the CEFR and BIG-Standards (2009)</td><td>Learners</td><td>Teachers</td></tr>
<tr><td>• can write familiar words correctly / identifiably without templates
(p. 48)
• actively construct rules based on previous knowledge
(p. 48)</td><td>• use of writing is dependent on teachers' perception of English as a subject, as well as how competent they see themselves
(p. 30)</td></tr>
</table>

Table 1: Overview of the EVENING- and BIG-Studies

Based on findings from the BIG-Study, the BIG-Kreis then reevaluated their 2005 proposal for national standards in 2017, concluding that learners' cognitive potential with regards to reading and writing is underutilized (Börner et al., 2017).

Whereas there is still a need for more research at the level of writing competences that young learners can achieve, there has been a research focus on reading competences in recent years. Concerning reading at text level, studies such as those conducted by Frisch (2013), Kolb (2013) and Reckermann (2018) show promising results. In all these explorative studies, utilizing a guided and scaffolded approach led to students being able to read and understand (authentic) children's books in English. For instance, Frisch (2017), based on such findings, concludes that not only reading at word and sentence level but also reading at text level can and should be used in early English teaching.

Given the current understanding of the value of reading in early English education, the assumptions made regarding the feasibility of fostering writing early are far from unreasonable. While there is as of now little concrete empirical data to support this, the study conducted by Schrader (2021) provides promising initial results. More so, arguments that consider learners' motivation and desire to use written language communicatively at an early level are well-noted and by now also realized in some primary school curricula, e.g., in North-Rhine Westphalia (Windmüller-Jesse, 2021).

Besides the lack of national standards, another issue in teaching written English competences at primary level is that of language teacher education. Research shows that well-trained primary English teachers are one of the main factors for the success of early English education (Porsch & Wilden, 2020). Yet, as shown in the BIG-Study (BIG-Kreis, 2015), teachers who believe themselves to be competent language users also place a higher emphasis on written competences in English than teachers without a university education in teaching English. Young learners of English thus need well-trained teachers of English for them to competently and regularly include written competences in the English classes. As has already been mentioned, leaving learners to figure out

English reading and writing on their own can lead to undesirable effects such as invented spelling or pronunciation, including a danger of fossilization. It clearly is the English teachers' task to raise awareness of the differences between reading and writing in English vs. German and to introduce learners to meaningful reading and writing tasks.

5. Using Challenging Reading and Writing Tasks with Young Learners

Given the previously discussed ceiling effects present in both the BIG- and EVENING-Studies, it is reasonable that young learners' potential for reading and writing is underestimated. Indeed, young learners are able to read and write at word and sentence level without much issue. As illustrated by promising results such as those provided by Frisch (2013), Kolb (2013), Reckermann (2018) and Schrader (2021), young learners are willing and able to both read and write at a level beyond what is currently practiced in most early English classrooms. Taking a look at reading activities used in primary school English classrooms, Kolb (2013) finds that reading activities are mainly constrained to the area of understanding short written task instructions. This observation is supported by the BIG-Study (BIG-Kreis, 2015), which found that teachers rarely use longer coherent texts and instead stick to single words and short sentences. Following these arguments, Reckermann (2018, p. 181) arrives at the conclusion that "learners need challenging but manageable [reading and writing] tasks in order to be able to develop their full potential and advance in their process of acquiring skills and competences."

In recent years, primary school English coursebooks have started introducing more and more written language through, e.g., instructions, picture stories and reading texts. However, such as they are, these written elements are rarely designed towards deliberately fostering reading (and writing) competences, but instead rely on incidental acquisition (Frisch, 2019). The underlying assumption that "primary school children will effortlessly and independently develop the ability to read English writing" (Diehr, 2010, p. 52) is an issue in this context. The same is to be observed for writing competences. To counterbalance this issue, publications such as articles in *Grundschule Englisch* (e.g., issues 68 and 72) or the *Fit for Five-books* now available for most primary school English coursebooks

have started to introduce and publish materials specifically designed for fostering reading and writing competences. Differentiated workbooks as published alongside several coursebooks have also started to include more challenging reading and writing tasks. Yet, while the introduction of such rather optional teaching materials is to be welcomed, reading and writing are fundamental elements of early language teaching and need to be taught to all learners and not as an optional addition to some.

A key to the early and yet successful acquisition of reading and writing competences is to base the teaching thereof on the learners' individual needs and competences, meaning that differentiated and individualized teaching is required. Differentiation is a core demand of any classroom, yet of particular importance in primary school English classrooms, as language learning is a highly individual process (Böttger, 2012). While many teachers already make use of group/partner work, peer teaching, scaffolding, interest-based content, and additional tasks for quicker learners, they seem to not always do this as a deliberate method of differentiation (Böttger, 2012). As the basis for individualized and differentiated early English teaching, Böttger (2012) as well as Reckermann (2017, 2019) call for opening up the classroom and transferring some control of their own learning to the students themselves. This, however, does not mean the absence of support structures and scaffolds. Instead, careful means of support need to be provided that allow each learner to profit from the given task to the best possible extent. Supportive means are planned and guided by the teacher and include, for instance, the preparation of tip cards, the provision of additional resources (e.g., dictionaries), the provision of words and structures needed for the task, as well as designing a learning environment that encourages peer support through cooperative reading and writing activities (see, e.g., Reckermann, 2017 for more concrete suggestions). Similarly, such tasks should also not disregard the previously mentioned progression of reading and writing competences from word-, to sentence- to text level as well as from reception to production.

Reckermann (2017) offers nine characteristics of open tasks for young learners, some of which are also applicable to good English teaching in

general. These mainly concern the use of relevant and interesting materials and/or topics, a focus on meaning, the provision of a solid and manifold supportive system, as well as working with students' previous knowledge. Another core feature is to give the learners as much choice at as many levels as possible.

Examples of such challenging and somewhat open tasks include the creation of posters on which students can, for example, present their favorite football player (Lauströer, 2013). By using authentic and relevant topics, such tasks make use of young learners' motivation to use the target language. Given the amount of autonomy needed to approach such tasks, the use of written language is essential (Elsner, 2017). This way, learners can choose their own reading material or make a more informed choice about which kinds of supportive devices they require (Reckermann, 2018). In the example of presenting a favorite football player, learners can decide freely whether they want to copy single words or chunks form prepared material, or use the English language more productively in forming their own sentences. Such tasks can also be scaffolded by the opportunity to research one's topic on the internet, as well as the use of dictionaries, example texts and word/phrase cards at a so-called helping point (Lauströer, 2013).

While creating a poster is rather concerned with supporting learners' writing competences in English, there are also proposals for more challenging reading tasks, for instance reading authentic English picture books. As shown by both Kolb (2013) and Reckermann (2018), young learners can independently read authentic picture books, given that they are provided with support and given that the teachers' expectations towards the learners' level of reading comprehension are realistic. In working with picture books, it is well-worth mentioning that digital, app-based realizations of such books offer further possibilities for differentiation and individualization (Scheeren, 2019). Such picture book apps also bear great potential for learners' (initial) motivation and can take away the hurdle of approaching a whole text in English, which can be very valuable particularly for beginner and/or weaker readers (Reckermann, 2020).

6. Transition to Secondary School

Another major point that is continuously discussed with regard to written competences in early foreign language teaching is the considerable impact on the primary-secondary school transition (see also Bastkowski in this volume). The limited success of experimental early English classes in Germany in the 1970s and 80s is attributed in part to the inability of secondary school education to continue where primary education had left off (Böttger, 2010). Unfortunately, teachers and researchers are still facing this issue more than 40 years later (Porsch & Wilden, 2020). As, for instance, investigated by the BIG-Kreis, a major complaint brought forth by secondary school teachers concerns students' lack of experience with English writing at the point of transition (BIG-Kreis, 2009). This is but one example of teachers on both sides of the transition process being unaware of teaching approaches, standards, and priorities of the respective "other side" (Dausend, 2017). The PEAK1-Project (Kolb & Legutke, 2019) investigated the consequences of primary to secondary school transition in a setting that was also marked by cooperation and dialogue between both schools. The student and teacher interviews which were conducted in that study, focusing on the transition phase, showed that learners especially regarded their experiences with written English as useful when moving from Year 4 to Year 5 and generally experienced the process as relatively smooth (Brunsmeier, 2019a). While the observations made by secondary school teachers still marked that students' writing competences were deficient in comparison to listening, speaking, and reading, teachers were also able to attribute this to the primacy of oracy in the primary school English classroom (Brunsmeier, 2019b). Results such as these show that a targeted use of written English in the primary English classroom can be conducive to a successful primary to secondary school transition. Yet, primary school English teaching is not supposed to adjust to secondary school teachers' needs and complaints, but primary school English teachers must stick to the (well-grounded) requirements and methodologies of early language teaching. Still, an implementation of (more challenging) reading and writing tasks at primary school level is on the one hand compliant with curricular demands, learners' competences and needs as well as a holistic methodology of teaching English to (young) learners. Yet, on the other hand, it can serve to ease the transition to

secondary school: killing two birds with one stone. An increased focus on reading and writing is also mirrored, for instance, in the new primary school English curriculum in NRW, which was among other aspects designed towards strengthening the continuity of English education through all stages of education and henceforth acknowledges the communicative purpose of reading and writing in addition to them "just" being a useful scaffold (Windmüller-Jesse, 2021).

7. Conclusion and Outlook

As already stated, there is currently little doubt that reading and writing are core parts of the early English classroom. Whereas early debates focused on the question of whether English reading and writing should be included at all, recent discourse has moved on towards developing and exploring the "How?" of teaching these competences. There is a consensus on the primacy of oracy in the early English classroom that stands uncontested in all research studies, in publications that focus on teaching practice and in formal/political documents. The usage of written English does not and should not detract from this focus. Instead, it answers students' needs to explore the foreign language writing system and to be foreign language readers and writers themselves. In such explorations, they encounter differences in writing systems and learn to navigate these supported by their teachers as well as carefully selected teaching materials. Teachers using challenging, differentiated, and well-scaffolded tasks can challenge their learners with interesting and relevant reading and writing activities that can be approached at different levels. Somewhat as icing on the cake, such an approach can also ease the debated transition to secondary school level. However, quite a few aspects remain up to future empirical investigation as well as political action, among them the crucial need for national standards for teaching English at primary level and a larger empirical basis as to how challenging as well as differentiated reading and writing activities can be implemented in primary English classrooms.

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Bilingual Programmes in Primary Schools

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Abstract

Many studies have shown that most pupils attending bilingual programmes develop much higher levels of foreign language proficiency than pupils in regular foreign language lessons. In this paper, we will first illustrate similarities and differences between teaching strategies used in regular English lessons and in bilingual programmes. Then we will summarize the results of studies examining questions that teachers, parents and school administrators are often concerned about. These questions include the following: Do pupils in bilingual programmes show deficits in the development of their native language or in the development of subject knowledge? Are bilingual programmes also suitable for children from migrant backgrounds and for children who are at risk of poor academic achievement? Finally, we will discuss how children who attended a bilingual programme in primary school can be supported in secondary school.

Keywords: bilingual education, primary school, L1 acquisition, L2/foreign language acquisition, subject content

1. Bilingual primary school programmes in Germany

The number of schools adopting a bilingual teaching approach is steadily increasing in Germany. In these schools, content subjects such as maths, science, music, physical education or art are taught in a foreign language (FL). In Germany, bilingual programmes are currently offered by more than 2% of all primary schools (fmks, 2014), and their number is steadily increasing. For example, bilingual programmes starting from grade 1 onwards have been introduced at 27 state primary schools located in the federal state of Bavaria since 2015 (Stiftung Bildungspakt Bayern, n.y.). The general aim of such bilingual programmes is to foster both FL

learning and content learning (including a high level of intercultural competence), without negatively affecting pupils' first language (L1) skills or their subject knowledge (e.g. Coyle et al., 2010; Frisch, 2021; Steinlen, 2021).

1.1 Different CLIL programmes

Throughout Europe, the umbrella term *Content and Language Integrated Learning* or CLIL is nowadays used to refer to "all types of provision in which a second language (a foreign, regional or minority language and/or another official state language) is used to teach certain subjects in the curriculum other than the language lessons themselves" (Eurydice, 2006, p. 8). Although subsumed under the term "CLIL", bilingual programmes differ greatly in terms of their intensity, i.e. the amount of time students are taught content through the medium of a FL, as Figure 1 indicates:

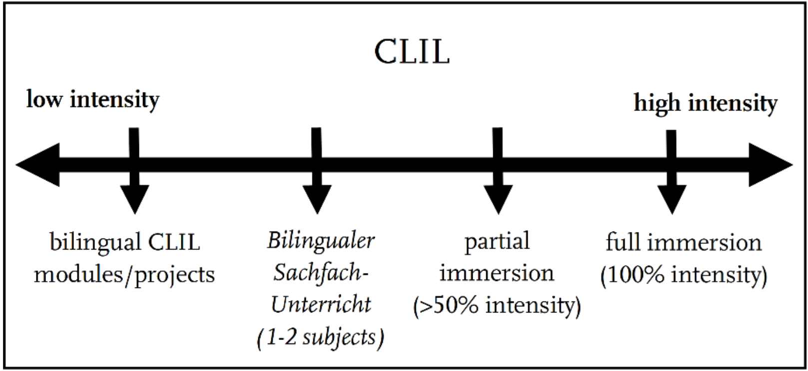

Figure 1: Continuum of FL intensity in bilingual programmes (adapted from Kersten, 2019, p. 40).

Low-intensity bilingual programmes include individual bilingual modules or projects, in which, for example, the topic 'water' is taught in the FL over a limited period of time, usually lasting for only a few days or weeks. In Germany, the term "Bilingualer Sachfachunterricht" usually refers to secondary school programmes in which one to two subjects (for example, history or geography) are taught in the FL for a period of one or more years. High-intensity bilingual programmes are represented by

immersion (IM) programmes, which usually last over a period of several years. In partial IM programmes, at least 50% of the curriculum is taught in the FL, and in full (or total) IM programmes, 100% of the curriculum is taught in the FL. The latter ones may turn into partial IM programmes in later years in order to provide additional teaching in the pupils' L1 (e.g. Genesee, 1987). In Germany, total IM programmes are not possible because, according to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK, 2013), the school subject German must be taught in German. This means that in primary schools in Germany a maximum of 70–80% of the teaching time can be conducted in the target language, which corresponds to the amount of time the FL is used in partial IM programmes (e.g. Steinlen, 2021).

1.2 Four conditions for successful bilingual programmes

In bilingual primary schools, four conditions are met that have been found to be crucial for greater success in FL learning, namely 1) an early start, 2) continuous and intensive exposure to the FL, 3) frequent use of the FL in diverse and motivating contexts, and 4) authentic and enriched FL input provided by teachers with at least almost native-like skills in the FL (e.g. Piske, 2013; Steinlen, 2021).

As far as an early start is concerned, it has repeatedly been assumed that FL learning is more successful when children come into contact with the FL early in life, and consequently, when FL programmes also begin as early as possible. While this is true in many cases, more recent research has not always provided evidence for such a clear link between FL learning and an early starting age (see Piske, 2017 for a review). Pfenninger (2021), for example, compared primary schoolers from Switzerland who attended CLIL programmes differing in terms of intensity and found that the more intensive the programme, the better the FL competences, even when the groups started the CLIL programme at the same early age (see also Steinlen, 2021 and section 4.1 below). In this case, the intensity of the FL programme is more important than age.

Another factor that is essential for successful FL learning is continuous exposure to the FL (e.g. Piske, 2007). Consequently, primary schools

should offer bilingual programmes without any interruption, and in ideal cases, children should be given the chance to attend a bilingual programme before primary school starts and to continue attending a bilingual programme from the beginning until the end of secondary school (Kersten & Rohde, 2013; see section 5 below).

Moreover, the quality of FL input also plays a crucial role. FL learners are more likely to learn to speak a FL well if they receive authentic and enriched input provided by teachers with at least almost native-like skills in the FL. For example, teachers with almost native-like skills use more abstract or superordinate words such as 'pet' or 'furniture' (instead of 'dog' or 'chair') as well as synonyms, antonyms or paraphrases. The pupils should also be exposed to different sentence structures, and the teacher should, therefore, not limit her/his input to main clauses (e.g. short SVO sentences or commands), but s/he should also use subordinate clauses (e.g. relative clauses) or passive constructions. Children can only learn the whole spectrum of linguistic structures of a language (e.g. word order, differentiation of subjects and objects, grammatical congruence of subject and verb, etc.) if these structures are represented in the FL input (e.g. Piske, 2013). If necessary, the teacher should also stress key elements of her/his utterances, and s/he should use a clear articulation, a slower speech rate for certain aspects of the message, varying intonation contours and, most importantly, pauses to help the children segment the incoming stream of sound and to support their recognition of key elements (e.g. Kersten, 2021, p. 46).

Finally, pupils in CLIL programmes should have the opportunity to frequently use, i.e. actively speak and write, the FL in diverse and motivating contexts, ideally in different school subjects, which enables them to monitor their speech production, test their hypotheses about and notice gaps in their interlanguage. Scaffolding (see section 2.3 below and the introduction to this volume) is a helpful way to encourage learners to use the FL as often as possible (e.g. Kersten, 2021, p. 47).

1.3 CLIL lessons – the beginning

Starting school is a new experience for every child, regardless of whether they have already come into contact with their first FL in bilingual preschools or not. Teacher observations on first graders in bilingual classes in Germany confirm the experiences from Canadian immersion projects: It is amazing how little the children are worried by the new language. Any difficulties that the first graders in bilingual classes may have are rather due to school-specific requirements such as sitting still, tidying up, doing homework, etc. than to the FL itself (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 133).

During the first days of school, the children are introduced to everyday school life and to the new language of instruction, using motivational activities that are well known from the regular early FL classroom: Rhymes, songs, games and many total physical response activities. Additionally, fixed routines in the classroom (see Meyer in this volume), such as a daily morning circle with recurring greeting rituals, form a helpful framework that gives structure to the school day and – as far as the FL is concerned – are easy to recognize for the pupils. In order for the lessons to function, the children must also quickly build up (receptive) basic classroom vocabulary. From the very beginning, vocabulary is learnt incidentally in authentic situations that make sense to the children (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 133).

Especially during the first weeks of school, the greatest challenge for CLIL teachers is to present subject content in a FL, and they should use facial expressions and gestures, body language, pictures, photographs and objects in such a vivid way that the child can establish a relationship between language and action (i.e. the teachers should contextualize the language they use). In this respect, acting talent on the part of the teacher is of great benefit. The presentation of or interaction about subject content must be self-explanatory so that it should be possible to understand the content delivered even if words are not used at all (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 134).

During the first half of the school year, conversations in the classroom will indeed most often be bilingual because teachers will try to use the FL

exclusively, whereas the children will answer in their first language because of their limited skills in the FL. The teacher will try to provide ample (but not artificially simplified) input by commenting in English on everything s/he is doing. Experience shows that the pupils produce their first short sentences in English after a few months, and many of their English sentences contain German words or structures (i.e. code-mixing), as in *He is angry denn the dog are falling down mit the glass.* In addition, the pupils' utterances show typical developmental errors such as overgeneralization errors (e.g. *And the dog waked up*). During the first years of school, the teacher usually corrects such errors only indirectly by using correct forms in repetitions of children's utterances (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 135).

Although simultaneous literacy instruction in English and German is possible and efficient, pupils enrolled in German-English bilingual programmes often learn to read and write in German first. However, English writing is present from the first day of school, for instance on worksheets, murals or on the blackboard. Observations have shown that some children in grade 1 do not seem to take any notice of the English words at all during the first half of the school year, whereas others copy words from the board or ask their teachers to read words out to them. From the second half of grade 1 onwards, the process of learning to read in English begins, for example, by asking the children to draw lines from English words to matching pictures on worksheets or to copy words from the blackboard into their notebooks (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 135).

Teachers generally consider reading storybooks to children to be a very effective method for promoting literacy skills. The children can also borrow English reading material from the class library. Many children already make use of this offer in 1st grade. The selection of books either results from the respective subject matter or complements the school activities for (seasonal) festivities. Since there is not enough time for extra activities in the subject lessons, reading often takes place in the regular English-as-subject lessons that may supplement bilingual programmes. Such lessons may also be used to focus on specific areas of English grammar or spelling. When using a picture book about autumn, the spelling of *leaf - leaves*, for example, can be discussed. The teacher can also

address the irregular plural formation of *goose - geese or sheep - sheep* by reading a book about farming. Here attention could, for example, also be drawn to the differences between the initial sounds of *chicken* and *sheep* (Piske & Burmeister, 2008, p. 136).

2. How do bilingual programmes differ from regular foreign language programmes?

In the following, three points will be addressed in order to differentiate CLIL programmes from regular FL programmes, i.e. the curricula adhered to, the functions topics and target language fulfil during the lessons, and tasks used for cognitive activation.

2.1 Subjects and curricula

The most obvious distinction relates to the subjects and the curriculum: In regular FL lessons, the focus is on fostering FL skills which are taught with the help of subject matter. In such a context, the teachers follow the curriculum for the FL (e.g. LehrplanPLUS Grundschule for English-as-a-subject, Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2014). In CLIL programmes, subject matter is taught through the medium of a foreign language, and the curricula for the respective subjects (e.g. mathematics, art, science, music, PE) constitute the basis for these CLIL lessons (e.g. LehrplanPLUS Grundschule, Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2014). Only a few federal states in Germany have published more detailed guidelines for bilingual programmes in primary schools which supplement the FL curricula, i.e. Bavaria (Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2020a, b), Rhineland-Palatinate (Ministerium für Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz, 2018), Saarland (Ministerium für Bildung und Kultur des Saarlandes, 2019), and Schleswig-Holstein (Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur des Landes Schleswig-Holstein, 2021).

2.2 Function of topics

In bilingual and regular FL programmes, similar topics may be introduced to the pupils, for instance, units on animals, on the human body, or cultural topics. The crucial difference between the programmes is due to the different objectives and thus the different functions of

language and subject matter in bilingual and regular FL programmes: For example, in regular FL teaching, the topic 'animals' may be chosen because it is a motivating topic reflecting primary school children's interests. In addition, this topic may be suitable because it will be addressed in the next unit of the textbook anyway, or it may tie in nicely with the fact that the same topic is also addressed in the subject science (which, in regular programmes, is taught in the majority language, in our case German). The main reason for the choice of this topic, however, is that it provides linguistic input, which is used to support children's listening, speaking, reading and possibly also their writing skills in the FL. The topic thus functions as a 'vehicle' for targeted FL practice.

In contrast, the subject 'animals' may be chosen in the CLIL classroom because it is one of the topics included in the curriculum for the subject 'science'. In other words, this topic is part of the curriculum of a non-linguistic subject, and the pupils' commitment to the content, which is taught through the medium of a foreign language, is authentic. In this case, then, the FL acts as a vehicle to transport subject matter, and the topic determines the choice of linguistic material (Burmeister, 2006, p. 201f).

2.3 Cognitive activation

Cognitive activation can be achieved in cognitively stimulating learning environments in which prior knowledge is activated, challenging tasks are used, and content-related discourse is practised (e.g. Kersten, 2021). In regular FL lessons, cognitively stimulating tasks are employed to foster the acquisition of different FL competences such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, mediating, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. In CLIL lessons, on the other hand, challenging tasks have two main aims, namely the explicit acquisition of subject-specific competences and the implicit acquisition of the FL. Thus, in a CLIL context, the cognitive challenges faced by the pupils are even higher than those faced in regular FL lessons because comprehension and appropriate use of subject-specific vocabulary and structures are essential for understanding and learning subject matter (Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2020a, p. 11).

Of course, the pupils' learning process has to be supported when they communicate orally and in writing about rather different topics in the FL. Scaffolding, i.e. temporary contextual support, allows FL learners to comprehend the input or to construct their own output at a level somewhat beyond what they could do on their own. Nonverbal scaffolding, which is particularly successful when there is a clear and unambiguous connection between language and action, relates to the teacher supporting the pupils in understanding what has been said by using facial expressions, gestures, body language and pantomime or by employing films, images and realia (Bayerisches Staatsministerium, 2020a, p. 116). Verbal scaffolding includes the consistent and continuous use of the FL and is used when the teacher notices that the pupils did not understand what was said. S/he does not rush to switch to German then, but tries to repeat what was said, to paraphrase or to use synonyms. Verbal scaffolding may also be output-related, for example, when the teacher offers key vocabulary, sentence starters or pre-formulated sentence chunks, either verbally or on the blackboard, to help pupils create their own messages in the FL. Finally, content scaffolding supports learners to understand content concepts. This may include the activation of previous knowledge, different activities involving hands-on materials or manipulatives, or a review of key vocabulary and key content concepts during lessons, keeping in mind that CLIL learners need more time and opportunities to practice and revise content (e.g. Massler & Ioannou-Georgiou, 2010, pp. 62-64).

3. Learning goals of CLIL lessons

The learning goals of CLIL lessons are often characterized by referring to Bloom's (1956) revised taxonomy of thinking skills (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The six levels (see Figure 2) build on each other and are arranged from lower-order thinking skills (LOTs, i.e. remembering, understanding and applying) to higher-order thinking skills (HOTs, i.e. analyzing, evaluating and creating). According to previous research, there is a tendency for CLIL teachers to focus on LOTs instead of HOTs, which can hinder the development of demanding cognitive tasks and creative learning processes (e.g. Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2020).

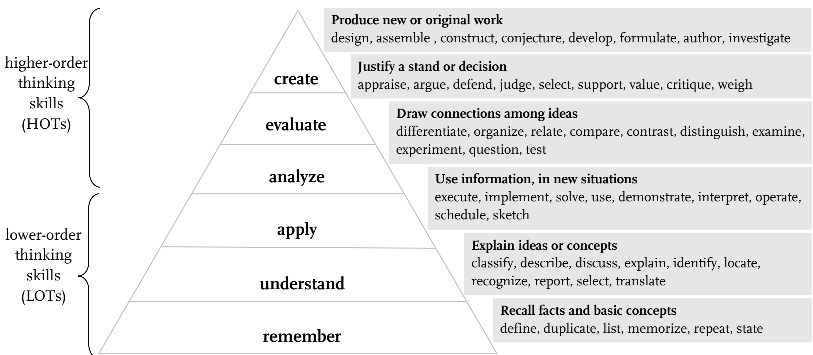

Figure 2: Bloom's taxonomy (adapted from Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

This raises the question as to how HOTs can be fostered in CLIL lessons. In this context, it is, first of all, very important that language and content are not separable. Each subject comprises concepts (i.e. the content of the lessons, subject content), language (e.g. technical terms but also structures such as nominalisations) and procedures (i.e. subject-specific skills, e.g. describing, interpreting, comparing). In an example taken from Ball (2016, see Figure 3), the objective of a CLIL lesson for 12 year-old pupils is to learn about the basic features of the planets in the solar system and eventually (as the principal scientific objective) to differentiate amongst the planets with regard to their relative sizes, distance from the sun and inherent features.

In this lesson, you will *differentiate between the planets in the solar system* by interpreting, transcribing and producing descriptions using adjectives, comparative and superlative forms to express relative distances.

Conceptual focus – content you will learn
Procedural focus – skills you will practise
Linguistic focus – language you will need

Figure 3: Objectives of a CLIL lesson (adapted from Ball, 2016)

According to Ball (2016), the objectives are appropriate for the cognitive age of the pupils in terms of their conceptual weight, and they are based on the curriculum for the subject science. These objectives are also a

useful summary of what CLIL attempts to do because the activity teaches *conceptual content* (“differentiate between the planets in the solar system”) by means of procedural choices (“by interpreting, transcribing and producing descriptions”) and by using specific language derived from the discourse context (“using adjectives, comparative and superlative forms to express relative distances”). CLIL teachers may use these three types of learning dimensions as planning tools for their lessons.

4. How effective are bilingual programmes?

Parents, teachers and school administrators are usually concerned about the following four questions: A) How do bilingual pupils’ foreign language skills develop in the long run?, B) Do bilingual pupils show deficits in the development of their native language?, C) Do bilingual pupils show deficits in the development of subject knowledge?, and D) Are bilingual programmes suitable for all groups of children, including those who are at risk of poor academic achievement? The following sections will attempt to answer these questions.

4.1 Foreign language proficiency

As regards the FL proficiency levels reached by children in FL programmes of different intensity, research has shown that bilingual pupils usually develop much higher levels of FL proficiency than pupils do in regular FL lessons (e.g. Wesche, 2002; Steinlen, 2021). However, it should be noted that the FL proficiency level pupils reach depends on the intensity of the FL programme, as illustrated in Table 1, where the abbreviation EFL refers to regular English-as-subject programmes, Bili-20, Bili-50 and Bili-70 programmes provide 20%, 50% and 70% of the teaching time in the foreign language English, respectively. The figures in grey indicate an assumed level of FL competence because data are either unpublished or not available.

	EFL	Bili-20	Bili-50	Bili-70
Reading	A1	A1/A2	A2/B1	B1
Writing	A1	A1	A2	A2 (B1)
Listening	A1	A1/A2	A2/B1 (unpubl.)	B1 (unpubl.)
Speaking	A1	A1/A2 (no data)	A2/B1 (unpubl.)	B1 (unpubl.)

Table 1: English proficiency levels at the end of grade 4 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2018)

According to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK, 2013), pupils should attain the FL level A1 in all four skills at the end of primary school when attending regular English-as-subject lessons (EFL). As studies that have examined English proficiency levels at the end of grade 4 indicate, most children indeed appear to reach this level (e.g. BIG-Kreis 2015; Steinlen, 2021), provided that the teachers hold relevant qualifications for their subject, i.e. that they were trained to teach English at the primary school level.

Research has also shown that in CLIL programmes with lower FL intensity (e.g. Bili-20 programmes), children may obtain level A1/A2 for reading (Böttger & Müller, 2020; Steinlen, 2021), A1 for writing (Steinlen, 2021) and A1/A2 for listening (Böttger & Müller, 2020). No data are available regarding the proficiency level for speaking, but we assume that 4th graders may also obtain A1/A2 in Bili-20 programmes.

The FL proficiency levels reached by pupils in more intensive (i.e. immersion) contexts are higher: In Bili-50 programmes, for example, the levels A2/B1 may be reached for reading (e.g. Möller et al., 2017; Steinlen, 2021) and A2 for writing (e.g. Steinlen, 2021). Data we collected for listening and speaking have not been published yet but indicate A2/B1 and A2, respectively (Steinlen & Piske, i.prep. a). The FL levels reached in Bili-70 programmes are even higher: 4th graders may obtain B1 for

reading and A2 for writing (Steinlen, 2021), and B1 and A2/B1 are expected for listening and speaking (Steinlen & Piske, i.prep. a). In general, there is only a difference of about 1.5 years between Bili-50 and of 1 year between Bili-70 and monolingual English pupils with regard to English reading comprehension and fluency skills (e.g. Gebauer et al., 2013; Steinlen, 2021; Zaunbauer et al., 2012).

4.2 German skills

One important aim of CLIL programmes is "additive bilingualism", i.e. that the acquisition of the FL does not negatively affect the development of the pupils' L1 (e.g. Piske, 2015), and indeed, age-appropriate results in standardized L1 German reading and writing tests have been reported for different CLIL programmes (e.g. Böttger & Müller, 2020; Gebauer et al. 2012, 2013; Möller et al., 2017; Steinlen, 2021).

The available evidence suggests that deficits may initially occur in very intensive CLIL programmes, particularly regarding pupils' command of morpho-syntax, but these deficits seem to balance out after one or two years (e.g. Genesee, 1987, but see Yadollahi et al., 2020; Zaunbauer & Möller, 2007). Whereas L1 literacy skills appear to develop age-appropriately in all types of bilingual contexts, such evidence is still not available for oral skills.

4.3 Subject-related skills

In primary schools in Germany, effects of bilingual teaching on the development of subject competences have so far only been examined for mathematics and science, but not for art, music or PE. The results of studies employing standardized math tests indicate that pupils in CLIL primary school programmes scored equally well as (or even better than) their peers in regular programmes, despite the fact that the language used in these tests (German) did not correspond to the language of instruction (English, e.g. Böttger & Müller, 2020; Zaunbauer & Möller, 2007, 2010). Similar results have been reported for science (see also Frisch, 2021; Kuska et al., 2010; Möller et al., 2017). Frisch (2021) and Möller et al. (2017) also tested CLIL pupils' FL competence in science at the end of grade 4 with the English version of the TIMSS (Trends in International

Mathematics and Science Study), i.e. the language of instruction corresponded to the language of the test. Not surprisingly, the CLIL pupils performed lower than native English pupils in English-speaking countries (Möller et al., 2017). In addition, the pupils obtained lower scores in the English TIMSS than in the German one, probably because the TIMSS tasks, which require reading and writing skills, largely dispense with contextualizations and visualizations, which are important in CLIL lessons (Frisch, 2021, p. 45). However, as regards the German version of the TIMSS, CLIL pupils outperformed their peers in the regular programmes.

In sum, findings obtained in Germany so far indicate that CLIL pupils are well able to acquire subject knowledge in a FL, and that they are also able to transfer and express knowledge acquired in the FL into their native language.

4.4 “At-risk” pupils

Educators, policy-makers, and parents are often concerned about the suitability and effectiveness of bilingual programmes for pupils who are at risk for low academic performance, for instance, those with a migration background who often speak languages other than German at home, students with reading/writing problems, attention problems, poor L1 ability, or from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. It is often believed that such pupils are likely to struggle even more in a bilingual programme in which they are taught through two languages, than they would in a monolingual programme in which they are taught in their L1 (e.g. Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2021).

The results of a small but growing body of studies indicates that pupils with a minority language background may perform equally well as comparable majority language pupils in bilingual programmes, and this applies to their FL proficiency as well as to their German literacy skills (see e.g. Steinlen, 2021). Similarly, disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds or attention problems may not necessarily jeopardize pupils age-appropriate development in bilingual programmes, and pupils with low levels of intellectual academic ability or with other special education

needs may fare equally well as comparable pupils in monolingual programmes, as long as they are adequately supported inside and outside the classroom according to their needs (e.g. Genesee & Lindholm- Leary, 2021, see also Steinlen & Piske i.prep. b).

5. Pupils from bilingual primary school programmes in secondary schools

It is well known that bilingual education is most effective if children who are enrolled in a bilingual programme in primary school continue to attend a bilingual programme from grade 5 of secondary school onwards (e.g. Kersten & Rohde, 2013). However, in Germany bilingual programmes starting in grade 5 are still scarce in state secondary schools. In Bavaria, for example, there are more than 250 secondary schools offering bilingual programmes (Bayern Bilingual, n.y.), but usually they start only in grade 7 or at the end of grade 6. This means that the majority of the pupils who attend primary school CLIL programmes in Bavaria and the other German federal states will receive regular English-as-subject lessons from grade 5 onwards.

Steinlen et al., (in press) followed 5th graders in secondary schools who had previously attended one of 21 CLIL primary schools in the federal state of Bavaria. The results of the survey suggest that these pupils have very positive attitudes towards the English language in general, and to CLIL lessons at primary school and the regular English lessons at secondary school in particular. Their English teachers in secondary school assessed their linguistic competences (i.e. speaking, listening, vocabulary and pronunciation) to be superior to pupils in their classes who had previously attended regular English lessons in primary school, although this did not apply to grammar and writing.

The English teachers were also asked to identify practices to adequately support former pupils from bilingual primary school classrooms in regular English-as-subject lessons in secondary school. Many teachers used differentiation techniques, e.g. additional materials and tasks. Almost half of the teachers had conducted a language assessment test at the beginning of grade 5. Many teachers also stated that they used pupils who had previously attended a CLIL programme as experts and involved

them in the teaching process when more complex topics were introduced or a quick correct answer to a question was needed. In general, teachers' appreciation of the children's extended level of knowledge is also mentioned as a way of reducing transition problems, especially from bilingual to regular FL programmes (see also Kersten & Rohde, 2013).

6. Conclusions

In sum, pupils attending bilingual programmes usually develop much higher levels of FL proficiency than their peers in regular FL lessons. Depending on the intensity of the bilingual programme, pupils can obtain up to level A2/B1 in terms of their FL listening and reading skills. Differences between regular English lessons and bilingual programmes relate to the curricula (i.e. for English-as-a-subject vs. for mathematics, science, etc.), the relationship between topic and target language (i.e. either a topic is used as a vehicle to practise the FL or the FL acts as a vehicle to convey content), and cognitive activation in tasks, which, in CLIL activities, always involve a conceptual, a procedural and a linguistic focus. In particular, beginning CLIL lessons are characterised by contextualisation, scaffolding and fixed routines that help the pupils to process the authentic and enriched linguistic FL input provided by the teachers. In secondary school, children who attended a bilingual programme in primary school can be supported by differentiation techniques and by teachers who appreciate the children's extended level of FL knowledge.

In conclusion, bilingual primary school programmes are suitable for all children, independent of their background because such programmes offer many opportunities for high-quality inclusive education and enable children to quickly develop a relatively high degree of FL proficiency without negatively affecting their age-appropriate development in the majority language German or subject knowledge. A wider selection of CLIL materials (especially textbooks) that provide an appropriate blending of authenticity and classroom needs for any age group would probably positively motivate more primary schools to implement a bilingual programme.

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The EFL Transition from Primary to Secondary School

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Abstract

For our learners, a change of school and especially a change from primary to secondary is a very exciting, emotional, and important step. They get to know new teachers and classmates, a new school building and many new subjects. With regard to learning English, a further development in reading, writing, vocabulary and especially grammar takes place. In this contribution, we will look at four very specific and practical fields of action in order to successfully manage the transition from primary to secondary schools for learners of English as a foreign language. These include 1) the cooperation between primary and secondary schools, 2) diagnostic procedures, 3) content awareness, and 4) assessment.

Keywords: transition, primary school, secondary school, cooperation, assessment

1. Introduction

The transition from primary to secondary school is an important phase in the lives of our learners. It is our duty as teachers to make that transition as smooth as possible and to engage the learners in EFL education that ties in with their particular proficiency and competence development, and their knowledge of topics and methods.

Primary and secondary levels of education, however, also involve different perspectives and regulations on how and what to teach. Sometimes, questionable prejudices and assumptions are voiced, occasionally based on a lack of knowledge due to non-specialized teaching (Dausend, 2017). The following contribution focuses on different ideas and concepts for successfully managing the transition from primary to secondary school for EFL learners. I apply a practical approach to managing the transitional process by applying four fields of action (see 2.1 to 2.4 and Figure 1) that can be considered as conditions for success as it "is vital that there is

complete trust that wherever you place a student, they will get a satifactory (at least) language learning experience" (McLarty, 2021).

2. How to successfully bridge the gap between primary and secondary schools

In the main part of this contribution, I present different practical concepts, suggestions, and designs of how to successfully establish a smooth transition from primary to secondary school for EFL students. By doing so, all relevant participants such as learners, parents, teachers will be considered.

1. The cooperation between primary and secondary schools

- collegial observations
- open house/day
- mutual staff meetings
- the involvement of parents

2. Diagnostic procedures

- how to start English at a new secondary school
- materials and tests
- skills focus
- the primary pick-up unit

3. Content awareness

- continuity of topics
- continuity of methods and routines

4. Assessment

- assessment tasks
- comparison of assessment tasks on primary and secondary school level

Figure 1: Fields of action for a transition from primary to secondary school

A successful transition involves the following four fields of action: 1) the cooperation between primary and secondary schools, 2) diagnostic procedures, 3) content awareness, and 4) assessment (see Figure 1). These four fields will be described in detail in the following sections.

2.1 Cooperation between primary and secondary schools

Establishing cooperation between primary and secondary schools can be considered as one of the most central and relevant means to successfully bridge the gap. Only if all involved participants (e.g., teachers, principals, etc.) at both school types realize the value of interacting with one another, can a truly expedient transition be established for the learners from primary to secondary school level. In the following, different concepts and ideas will be introduced that include collegial observations, an open house/day, mutual staff meetings, and, finally, the involvement of parents.

2.1.1 Collegial observations

In the reality of everyday school life, it is is extremely challenging to find time and capacity to carry out observations at other schools. Only if the person responsible for the timetable provides space to do so, can a visit to a primary or secondary school take place. However, the benefits of such visits can be enormous (Pohl et al., 2016; Vollmuth, 2012). The reasons for this are manifold, as I will discuss in the following.

First of all, it is helpful if the school that invites other teachers to observe English lessons provides a transparent schedule of the week (see Table 1) that lists all available English lessons. This allows the visiting teachers to get a chance to select a suitable time slot, taking into account their own teaching responsibility at their schools. The exemplary timetable (see Table 1) shows English lessons in a secondary school on four school days and thus provides school teachers with an overview of suitable timeslots for collegial observations. During the subsequent break, a quick exchange about the observed lesson (see further details below) can be carried out.

Secondly, before observing English classes on another school level, teachers should review the intersections within the curricula of 4th and 5th

grade (or 6th and 7th as it is implemented in other German states). On a primary school level, observing secondary school teachers might look at the use of storytelling, movement and visualization. For a visit to a secondary school, it might be interesting for observing primary school teachers to look at the communicative use of grammar or the establishment of the writing cycle in lower-level classes. Either way, the visiting teachers should make up their minds about what they are interested in and what they would like to observe. It is important to mention that joining the lessons of another teacher at another school is a great possibility to experience a different style of teaching, different approaches to classroom management, and a different level of motivation of the learners (Thaler, 2012). Seeing new activities, methodological approaches, and forms of supporting communication in an EFL classroom gives visiting teachers a chance to change their mindset and maybe to adapt new ideas for their own teaching (Pohl et al., 2016).

	Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**
lesson 1			English 5a	English 6c
lesson 2			English 5a	English 6c
break			*quick exchange*	*quick exchange*
lesson 3	English 9f	English 8d		
lesson 4	English 9f	English 8d		
break	*quick exchange*	*quick exchange*		

Table 2: Example of a schedule for colleagues' observation

Thirdly, a post-lesson meeting or quick exchange may be an efficient tool to discuss the different elements of a lesson. On the one hand, the visiting teacher gets a chance to ask questions (e.g., about certain teaching decisions made during the lesson), to compare their own teaching to the observed lesson, and to develop a better understanding of how English is taught at the other school type. On the other hand, the teacher who has taught English can clarify certain decisions made during the lesson (e.g., omitting a phase, changing a social form, revising specific language aspects) and foster their professional development when explaining

typical characteristics of an English lesson on either primary or secondary school levels. For both teachers, such an exchange can deepen the collegial and subject-related relationship.

2.1.2 Open house/day

There is no better opportunity to understand both the primary and secondary school worlds than to mutually visit a school and get to know the setting, the people, and the environment. This is meant for the students, parents, and teachers alike and for both types of school. An excellent occasion to do just that would be an open house/day, where the school demonstrates their achievements, explains the core elements of their school program, and provides a variety of practical activities. Looking at English, this might be especially fruitful for primary school learners who visit a potential future secondary school. They could playfully experience that the new school also offers a varied set of interactive and engaging activities. Some ideas for an open house with a focus on English are illustrated in Figure 2.

The ideas displayed in Figure 2 contain playful activities like doing English quizzes about cultural aspects (e.g., traditions), but also hands-on activities like making English picture buttons of flags and sights, doing easy handicrafts of English placemats and taking fun pictures with a life-size cardboard English celebrity like the Royal Family members or famous media stars. For the latter activity, a poster can be used as well. In addition, the schools can present their achievements (e.g., practical outcomes of the learners like an explainer clip or obtained language certificates), introduce language projects (e.g., nation-wide competitions where learners test their level of competence in test situations), and talk about different projects and language trips (e.g., staying abroad in a British family). “Rather than simply coming to English lessons and talking about language, our young learners need to live some language as well” (Roland, 2022, p. 67).

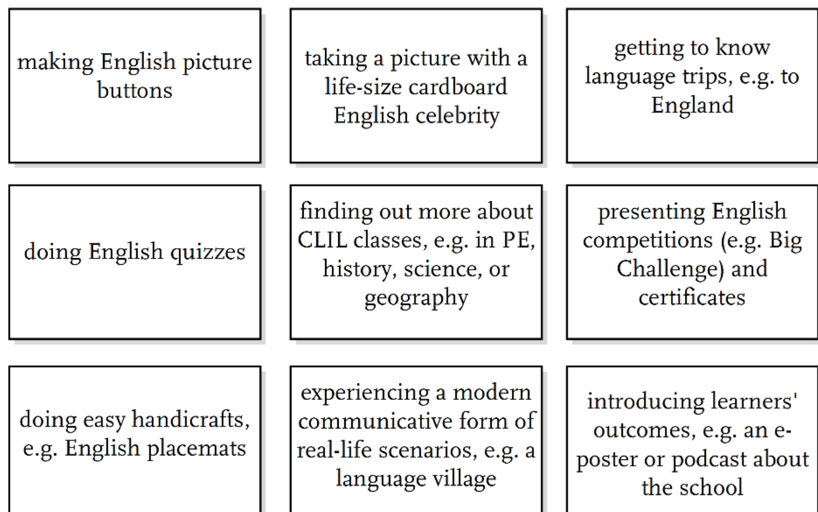

Figure 2: Ideas for the subject English for an open house

Especially language projects increase the motivation to learn a language, for instance a language village (Taylor, 2021a. pp. 13f.). Within a language village, learners master different dialogic speaking stations, embedded in a context, for example stations/places in New York City (see Figure 3). They use the target language for real-life scenarios like ordering tickets, buying a book or going shopping (Bastkowski et al., 2017).

An open house/day contributes to seeing a new school in a different light and, therefore, can reduce the anxiety of young learners before they go through the transition. By applying some ideas mentioned in Figure 2, the Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) – "defined as the extent to which a student enjoys using the target language" (Taylor, 2021a, p. 13) – will noticably increase.

Figure 3: Example station in a language village (Bastkowski et al., 2017, p. 20)

2.1.3 Mutual staff meetings

Assessment, teaching principles, the role of writing and grammar – these are just a few of the many aspects that need to be discussed at each educational level. Mutual staff meetings have been proven to be extremely efficient to address those aspects with primary and secondary school teachers present at the same time (Overlack, 2011; BIG-KREIS, 2009). Furthermore, staff meetings present an opportunity to discuss teaching styles, new language projects and ideas on how to improve the public image of the school in general. “Professional development should work along similar lines, offering a range of activities from which teachers should choose according to what is useful for them as well as accepting general upskilling deemed necessary on an institutional basis” (McLarty, 2021, pp. 24f.). Mutual staff meetings contribute to the upskilling.

For starters, it is helpful when the person responsible for English on a secondary level invites several primary school colleagues for a first meeting. This gesture not only shows appreciation of each other’s work, but it is also an important opportunity for agreeing on an agenda for future meetings. This agenda may include:

1. A transition **checklist** with minimum standards for English on a primary school level that will be reached at the end of year 4. By doing so, secondary school teachers get an insight into the skills and

competences that have already been developed and where to pick up when starting a new teaching unit. In addition, knowing that primary and secondary schools cooperate with each other may comfort parents and learners alike. The transition checklist may include overviews of previously learned lexical items, the use of classroom phrases or references to the training of pronunciation (cf. https://www.lehrplanplus.bayern.de/fachprofil/grundschule/englisch).

2. Planning first arrangements for the **collegial observations** (see 2.1.1).
3. Exchanging information on **diagnostic procedures** (see 2.2).
4. Comparing **curriculum standards** and assessment requirements (see 2.4).
5. Exchanging **materials** to get an insight into how English lessons are carried out on different school levels. In that respect, the role of media and materials (e.g., hand puppets, the use of songs/rhymes/chants etc.) might be very interesting to learn about for secondary school teachers. Similarly, primary school teachers might be curious to learn about the standards of grammar and writing implemented in coursebooks at the very beginning of year 5 (see 2.3). If teachers are well-informed about what happens at both school types, they can better prepare their learners for a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. For instance, if secondary school teachers know about the low importance of writing in primary school, they can start off their lessons with low-threshold activities like copying short sentences or completing sentence starters to make the learners slowly aware of writing. More importantly, this background knowledge leads to a better understanding of our learners.

2.1.4 Involvement of parents

Within a school context, there are many active participants involved including learners, teachers, principals, and, importantly, parents. Parents might worry whether their child will be able to cope in a new school setting, with new teachers, and classmates once they have finished primary school and have to move forward to secondary school (Dausend,

2017). It is quite useful to provide time and space for parents to talk about their previous experiences at primary school, their worries and expectations of the new school, and how to successfully interact with each other. This can take place in a relaxed atmosphere at a first school meeting with class teachers at the new school, during a parents' evening, a digital video conference, or simply a teacher-parents afternoon. The goal is quite simply to actively involve the parents in those before-mentioned sessions and to provide a chance to express their opinion and therefore give a feeling of understanding and being heard.

These occasions may also be used for the new English teachers to transparently show and introduce relevant aspects for English as a subject, for example:

1. mandatory materials needed in class
2. assessment of oral and written performance (criteria, frequency)
3. scaffolding elements (skills folder, word power folder)
4. contact information of teachers
5. forms of feedback for the learners.

Especially in terms of acquiring learning strategies, the elements of the skills and word power folder can be quite helpful. Within a skills folder, the learners place all relevant materials and overviews that are frequently used in English lessons, for example, how to give a presentation or your own opinion, how to describe pictures or how to work in groups with role cards. The word power folder functions as a tool where the learners consciously use vocabulary learning strategies in order to memorize and save lexical items, for instance, by applying pictures, rhyming words, definitions, brainstorming, or features (see Figure 4). In that sense, an isolated and bilingual use of vocabulary learning is prevented or at least reduced.

Figure 4: Learning strategies in a word power folder (Bastkowski, 2018, p. 10)

To put it briefly, parents are an important part of the trinity of a school (learner + teacher + parents). Therefore, not only do their opinions matter, but also their worries and wishes need to be taken into account. Only if all active players get a chance to express their thoughts, will we generate a smooth transition from primary to secondary school.

2.2 Diagnostic procedures

Running diagnostic procedures is an essential tool for creating a smooth transition from primary to secondary school (Thaler, 2012, p. 157). Learners find out what level they are at, and teachers can assess at what level they need to pick up their students (Kolb, 2019; BIG-KREIS, 2009). However, diagnostic procedures should never put pressure on learners in any way and they can also be accomplished within regular teaching lessons by using a variety of activities, materials, the pick-up unit, and a specific skills focus.

2.2.1 How to start EFL teaching at secondary school

All different, all equal

- In groups of three, learners find out two things they all have in common and two aspects only one person can do or did.

Get up game

- One learner sits in front of the board, facing the classmates. The teacher writes down a statement on the board (e.g. Get up if you have a pet at home).
- If the statement is true, the learners in the audience have to get up. The learner sitting in front has to guess what the statement is by just observing the learners who stood up.
- Questions can be asked to the audience, and learners from the audience can give hints.

Jumbled words or sentences

- Learners put jumbled words or letters in the correct order.
  An example for jumbled words would be: mandrotherg = grandmother; an example for a jumbled sentence could be: Times it raining when Square started the got I to = When I got to the Times Square, it started raining.

Jump the line

- On two opposite walls, there is a YES and NO sign.
- The teacher gives a statement and all learners run to one sign, depending on whether they agree (YES) or disagree (NO) with the statement.
- Afterwards, the learners justify their decision.

Molecule game

- The learners walk around the classroom. The teacher gives a number and all learners get into groups according to that number (e.g. groups of three).
- Then, they get a low-threshold topic (e.g. family, shopping, hobbies, etc.) and talk about it for 60 seconds.
- Afterwards, a new round with a new number of group members will start.

Figure 5: Activities for first English lessons (Bastkowski/Koic, 2021)

Usually, primary school learners think of English lessons as a positive experience (Chambers, 2016; Höfener et al., 2019). This is, of course, a favorable status we would like to keep at a secondary school as well. Therefore, the first lessons and teaching units at a new school may make a lasting impression on learners. It is helpful to reduce the degree of anxiety if teachers start with an entertaining and relaxing warm-up (see Figure 5 for some practical suggestions), where all learners can participate and get an encouraging feeling for learning English.

Additionally, all these activities provide an opportunity for teachers to get to know their learners and their knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking competences. The learners will find out new and interesting things about their classmates and see English as communicative and engaging subject which gives space to open discussions of any topic. As a result, students' anxiety can be reduced and the classroom atmosphere will improve.

A great addition would be to do a paper chase about the new school building with the learners. This involves students having to solve different tasks (e.g., Find out the room number where you can do science experiments; Where do you have your PE lessons?; Where can you ask for help? etc.) or riddles that can be solved by walking through the school in small groups. By doing so, English will be seen from a different perspective and the positive feeling will hopefully stay for a while. Furthermore, the learners get to know their new school building very quickly.

2.2.2 Materials and tests

Many major publishers offer books, online tests, magazine issues, and other materials for diagnostic procedures. Depending on the available equipment and the school, it has been shown that it is helpful to start with diagnostic tests after entering a secondary school (Böttger, 2009). "Assessing students for diagnostic purposes is an essential part of teaching English which allows instructors to monitor student progress and adjust teaching strategies." (Taylor, 2021b, p. 44).

The test should involve the main content topics covered during primary school such as name, age, family, hobbies, pets, school, etc. (see 2.2.3 for the focus on skills) to establish the knowledge base of the learners at the start of the school. Task types include matching (e.g., pictures and chunks/phrases), giving feedback (e.g., identifying if learners understand certain listed classroom phrases), and short listening/reading tasks with multiple choice or true/false formats. A focus on written tasks should not be part of the diagnostic procedure. Nowadays, most publishers offer an online test where learners take the test and the teachers quickly receive an evaluation for the whole group, for instance “Diagnose und Fördern” by Cornelsen, “Testen und Fördern” by Klett, and “Online Diagnose” by Westermann.

A motivating addition would be to let the learners present what they have learned so far during their primary school time. They can, for example, show elements of their English folder/Portfolio, present a short song or rhyme, or introduce a game that can be played with the whole class.

2.2.3 Skills focus

Among the five meta-skills of writing, mediation, listening, reading, and speaking, writing has the least relevance during English lessons on a primary school level. Therefore, secondary schools should first focus on receptive skills (listening/reading) and only on speaking as a productive skill when carrying out diagnostic procedures (Dausend, 2017; Böttger, 2009). For starters, the learners assess themselves by, for example, coloring statements in speech bubbles that apply for them.

The following table (see Table 2) provides a selected overview of possible diagnostic statements that can be used for listening, reading, and speaking:

Listening	**Reading**	**Speaking**
I can understand …	**I can understand …**	**I can …**
• questions about myself (name, age, hobbies).	• words in a song, chant, or rhyme.	• name and count numbers, days, and months.
• words in a song, chant, or rhyme.	• short sentences.	• talk about pets and clothes.

• what my teacher says.	• words and signs in my classroom.	• say the English alphabet.
• short stories.	• short postcards or texts.	• name things in my classroom.
• conversations about my family or friends.	• short task instructions on the board.	• talk about myself (name, age, where I live).
• if somebody talks about food.	• short stories.	• ask and answer questions.

Table 3: Diagnostic statements for learners (based on Staatsinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München, 2009 and Bastkowski et al., 2022)

A basic use of mediation should already be established on a primary school level and further developed during EFL-teaching at secondary schools. EFL learners at primary schools can apply mediation for classroom discourse, teacher instructions, storytelling, homework, and in many more situations (Böttger, 2011).

The main intention is not to create disappointment for the learners, but to make them and their teacher aware of what to work on and where to start within the first lessons at a secondary school.

2.2.4 Primary pick-up unit

When planning English lessons, most secondary schools do not work completely independently but use a specific coursebook/textbook in class. The major publishing houses have long realized the need for a so-called primary pick-up unit, i.e. lesson sequences embedded in different activities (see also 2.3.2) at the beginning of coursebooks for secondary EFL instruction (Bastkowski et al., 2022).

The pick-up unit contains easy activities and exercises (short dialogues, welcome songs, making name signs, etc.) and starts on a low-threshold level to involve all learners of all proficiency levels. Some examples can be seen in figure 6 and 7, where the learners get an opportunity to carry out short dialogues combined with movement elements and to listen/act out a song. By doing so, typical elements of EFL teaching on a primary school

level are picked up, such as practicing low-threshold oral production (but also considering the idea of reception before production), the involvement of movement and visualization, a high degree of scaffolding, the use of repetitions, and integrating musical aspects.

The pick-up unit contains a very high degree of content and language scaffolding to make sure all learners can participate. While teaching the pick-up unit, teachers find out very quickly which issues need to be addressed, such as pronunciation, lack of basic vocabulary learned in primary school, difficulties in understanding task instructions, etc. This can be seen as an in-flow diagnostic procedure where no specific test or material is used, but that is carried out during regular English lessons.

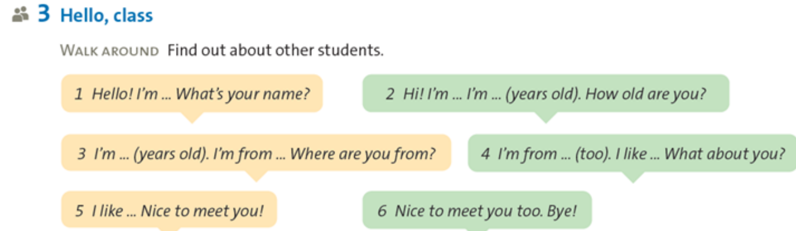

Figure 6: Example task 1 in a pick-up unit (Bastkowski et al., 2022)

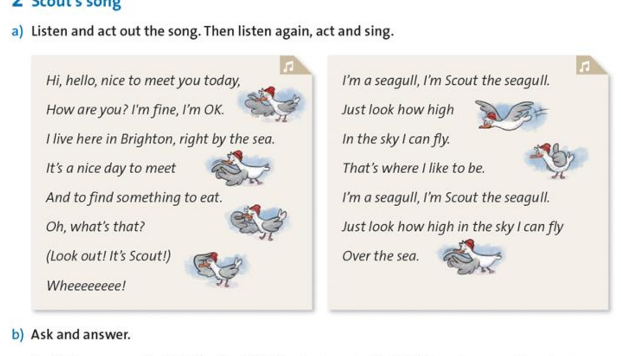

Figure 7: Example task 2 in a pick-up unit (Bastkowski et al., 2022)

2.3 Content awareness

As I have stated several times, one of the most important prerequisites for a smooth transition is to pick up previously learned content from the primary school level. In this section, I review topics, well-known methods, and routines that can be applied to promote a problem-free transition phase.

2.3.1 Topic continuity

In terms of vocabulary and language use, it is vital to revise previously learned materials and to pick up English lessons at the learners' level. This step can successfully be accomplished when familiar topics from primary school levels are used within the first months/years of secondary school level (Biederstädt, 2016). Learners get the opportunity to apply their already acquired competences in a topic-based English learning environment and to improve them step by step with the help of purposeful activities and tasks (Haß, 2017; Böttger, 2009). The following overview (see Figure 8) provides exemplary transitional topics I have used in my lessons in year 5 for the transition from primary to secondary school.

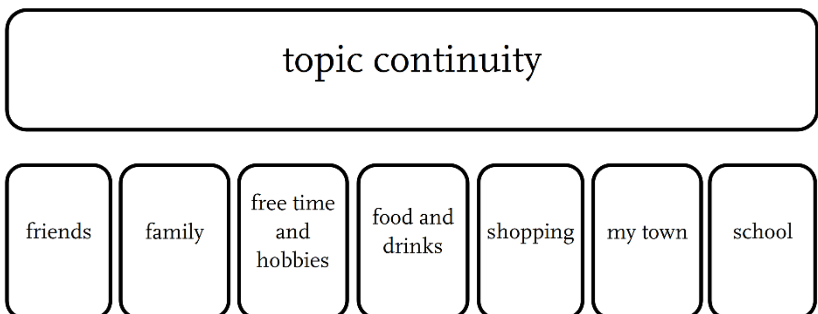

Figure 8: Topic continuity

In contrast, ignoring those familiar topics might probably entail that the learners

1. cannot identify with the subject,
2. find themselves in a position of excessive demands,
3. are not able to apply their competences, and finally

4. might be discouraged from realizing their full potential language competence.

Therefore, the first lessons and units in the secondary school EFL classes should motivate and encourage learners by listening to, reading, and speaking about interesting and personal topics they are already familiar with. Tasks that ensure continuity in terms of topics, language and methods are typically referred to as “bridging tasks” (Kolb et al., 2012).

2.3.2 Continuity of methods and routines

Sometimes, teachers voice questionable prejudices and assumptions such as “they only sing and play at primary schools”. One might wonder what exactly the criticism in that remark is. Is it not exactly the right direction to learn English with joy through a huge variety of methods, topics, and input? After all, most teachers would agree that the goal of mainstream EFL education is to enable the learners to gain communication skills for real-life scenarios in their lives, for example, managing situations in restaurants, stores, and other public places. To get there, teachers aim to gradually develop their competences and hope not to lose their interest along the way. This comes especially into play when a stronger focus on grammar and vocabulary aspects is set and the motivation perhaps slightly diminishes (Höfener et al., 2019).

One way of ensuring a continuity of methods is to pick certain routines (see Meyer in this volume) that have been used during our learners' primary school time (Dausend, 2017; Böttger, 2009), such as

1. opening routines: warm-up, talking about the weather and day, introducing the structure of the lesson;
2. storytelling elements, and
3. circle time: creating a familiar learning setting where short presentations or explanations can be carried out.

As McGabe points out, the “establishment of routines can reduce anxiety and instil a basic level of confidence” (2021, p. 38).

In addition, many primary school learners have already understood how to carry out a variety of methods and activities that support skills development. The following overview (see Figure 9) provides a selection

of interactive activities that are especially useful to pick up again at the beginning of secondary school.

Swap-it cards

- The learners walk around the classroom with a question card. They find a partner to talk to, ask and answer the question on the card and finally swap it to talk to a new partner with a new card.

Talking words

- In pairs, learners talk about a given topic (= talking word) for 30 seconds.

Two truths and one lie

- In pairs, learners tell each other three easy sentences, where two sentences are true and one sentence is a lie.
- The partner always has to identify the lie.

Chat stations

- In groups of four, the learners go one after another to different chat stations.
- At the chat stations, they find an envelope with many questions to answer or sentence starters to complete in their groups.

Speed dating

- All learners face each other in pairs in two lines.
- They get a question or statement from the teacher to talk about for 30 seconds. Afterwards, all learners in the top or bottom line have to move one step to the right, facing a new partner.

Figure 9: Useful activities for a transition (Bastkowski, 2016)

These activities are fun and entertaining as most "…teachers of young children instinctively try to make the learning process enjoyable, and they work hard to foster a positive attitude towards the target language within their students" (Taylor, 2021a, p. 13).

Overall, key elements of a problem-free primary to secondary school transition include the awareness of topics/methods/routines learned in

primary school and the continued use of the same topics/methods/ routines at the start of secondary school (Haß, 2017, pp. 39f.).

2.4 Assessment

Among the different factors that need to be considered for a smooth transition from primary to secondary school, assessment can be seen as the most challenging and controversial one. A stronger focus on writing, the introduction of grammatical forms, and increasingly complex language are new elements learners have to face. In the following, typical assessment tasks for both primary and secondary English lessons will be presented and compared.

2.4.1 Assessment tasks

As stated before (see 2.2.3), the main skills foci for primary school English lessons are listening, basic reading, and speaking (see Reckermann and Ritter in this volume). In order to assess the learners' performance on these skills, many different task formats can be used. The following table (see Table 3) provides an overview of typical assessment tasks on a primary school level.

Listening	Reading	Speaking
• classroom discourse • connecting words and pictures • coloring the picture • drawing or numbering • matching • right/wrong sentences • multiple choice • task instructions by the teacher	• matching the sentences with the pictures • gap-filling • reading and drawing • connecting word and picture • ticking the right word/picture • finding the correct order	• expressing wishes and feelings • describing pictures and things • interviews • songs, chants, rhymes • role-plays • oral exams • short presentations • class survey

Table 4: Assessment tasks on a primary school level (based on Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2018)

Secondary school teachers of English must be aware of those assessment tasks to know how to adjust secondary school assessment tasks to the learners' prior experience and especially to understand what can be expected from their learners (Legutke et al., 2009). In that respect, the first test should only focus on listening and reading and should not involve any elements of writing. In addition, using those familiar assessment tasks as displayed in Table 3 can help learners better identify what is expected from them.

To ease learners into the process of writing and developing their literacy skills further, secondary school teachers can slowly start by letting the learners fill out a crossword, followed by gaps, then making mindmaps (learning strategy activity), and finally beginning to write short familiar texts, such as an email or a postcard.

2.4.2 Comparison of assessment tasks on primary and secondary school level

In the course of English language teaching in the first year of secondary school, some assessment tasks from English primary school lessons (see Table 3) will be replaced with other assessment tasks (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2015, 2018). Looking at the assessment of listening, tasks such as coloring pictures and drawing are not usually part of tests anymore. However, taking notes will be a new assessment type for the learners. All other assessment elements in Table 3 for listening can still be applied.

As for reading, assessment tasks such as reading and drawing or connecting isolated words with pictures are not used. Especially the task of connecting pictures with words becomes more complex as chunks/phrases and additional distractors are provided (e.g., two or more pictures but only one fitting chunk/phrase). Additionally, finding evidence in the text and note-taking are new assessment tasks students need to adapt to.

Interestingly enough, all assessment tasks for speaking on a primary school level can be applied to secondary school as well (see Table 3). Of course, criteria such as intonation, language, and performance will be on

a higher proficiency level, but the task types are identical, for example, short presentations, role-plays, and interviews. A new aspect to consider is the self- and peer-assessment based on specific feedback criteria provided by the teacher. In that sense, the portfolio already established in EFL primary teaching (Legutke et al., 2009, p. 126ff.) as a standardized means of assessment is a tool that should be used in the first years on a secondary school level as well (BIG-KREIS, 2009). The huge advantage of collecting achievements and feedback from and for the learners in a portfolio provides a useful transitional instrument.

All in all, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- It is important to use a variety of assessment tasks for all skills.
- Many assessment tasks are already established in years 3 and 4 of primary education.
- Teachers in year 5 can plan their assessment tasks based on previously learned topics and study skills from years 3 and 4.

3. Conclusion

This contribution looked at very specific and practical elements on how to successfully establish a smooth transition from primary to secondary school EFL classes. It was highlighted that only a trinity of all relevant players (learners, parents, teachers) can lead to an effective outcome. In addition, four main fields of action were introduced to present ideas on how teachers can achieve a problem-free and effective transition: 1) the cooperation between primary and secondary schools, 2) diagnostic procedures, 3) content awareness, and 4) assessment.

It is quite challenging to ensure that adaptations are made with regard to all four concepts. Secondary schools can start with content awareness to pick up familiar topics, routines, and methods for the English lessons. Furthermore, the first steps for diagnostic procedures can be established in small teacher teams by using materials and various teaching sources from the main publishing houses. Both above-mentioned ideas lead to a welcoming atmosphere for the primary school learners and ensure English lessons start at the competence level of the learners at secondary schools.

For teachers – in primary and secondary schools alike – knowing about typical assessment tasks used in both school types is an important step. During staff meetings, those tasks should be introduced and discussed. In that respect, the introduction of new assessment tasks (e.g., giving evidence from the text and taking notes for reading tasks as a new format in secondary school) is vital to address. On the one hand, primary school teachers get aware of what will be expected from their learners on a secondary school level and, on the other hand, secondary school teachers will realize that some formats have never been practiced in EFL lessons on a primary school level before. Most importantly, the design of the first test on secondary school level should reflect the types and structure of assessment tasks used in primary schools.

Last, but not least, cooperation between primary and secondary schools is highly demanding, but all the more necessary. Setting up mutual staff meetings, inviting all learners/parents/teachers to an open day/house, and starting mutual observations may bring considerable value. Finally, it is important to note that both – primary and secondary schools – are responsible for providing their students with an opportunity for a smooth transition.

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The Potential of Picturebooks in Primary ELE: Fostering Language Skills and Addressing Pressing Concerns of Modern-day Society

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Abstract

Picturebooks can be of great potential for primary English language education (ELE) since they can promote English language skills and address pressing concerns of modern-day society, such as the climate or the refugee crisis. This contribution illustrates which types of picturebooks are suitable for primary ELE, which skills can be promoted when using picturebooks, and what their potential is. It also provides concrete examples of how to use picturebooks to achieve general educational goals, such as critical environmental literacy, empathy, and kindness towards peers, refugees, and animals while simultaneously fostering learners' language skills development.

Keywords: picturebooks, primary English language education, language skills, critical environmental literacy, empathy, and kindness

1. Introduction

With Putin's war in Ukraine and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, an increasing number of refugees arrives in German classrooms. Therefore, it is essential to address the influx of refugees in an age-appropriate way at schools, to teach children empathy and kindness, and thus create a positive and welcoming learning environment, where all students can thrive. To achieve this, teachers can use picturebooks such as *Kind* by Alison Green (2019) in primary English education to promote learners' language skills development and help them achieve general educational goals, such as educating them on being kind towards their peers, refugees and animals. In the light of climate change and other threats to our planet, another crucial general educational goal that ties in with this is the development of critical environmental literacy on a basic level. To foster basic critical environmental literacy, picturebooks like *The Tale of a*

Toothbrush: A Story of Plastic in Our Oceans (2020), written by M. G. Leonard and illustrated by Daniel Rieley, can be used in primary English language education (ELE).

This contribution seeks to demonstrate how picturebooks can be used to foster English language skills while also addressing pressing concerns of modern-day society by defining which types of picturebooks are suitable to achieve these educational goals, illustrating their potential for the EFL classroom, and providing concrete examples of how to work with them in primary English classrooms.

2. Definition of the term *picturebook* and selection criteria

Various definitions of the term *picturebook*, also referred to as *(picture) storybook* (Binder, 2021; Ellis & Brewster, 2014), have been outlined and discussed in numerous publications (e.g., Bader, 1976; Binder, 2021; Burwitz-Melzer, 2013; Mourão, 2015 and 2016). For this contribution, I would like to draw on Bader's frequently cited definition of this term:

> A picturebook is a text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historic document; and foremost, an experience for a [reader]. As an art form, it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless. (Bader, 1976, p. 1)

Hence, picturebooks are multimodal, authentic books that use both words and (usually double-page spreads of) pictures to narrate a story and create meaning. They are "more than the sum of its parts" (Nodelman, 1988, p. 200), and they provide an insight into cultural traits, the society, and the history of other (English-speaking) countries. Various researchers have described and categorized the complex relationship between pictures and words (e.g., Binder, 2021; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Mourão, 2016; Schwarcz, 1982; Golden, 1990 – for a detailed description and analysis of the relationship between pictures and words see Binder, 2021, pp. 137–145). For the purpose of this contribution, Golden's distinction of three different types of picture-word-relations will serve as a basis: According to

her, the illustrations can enhance or elaborate the text; the text can depend on the pictures for clarification; or the text and pictures can be symmetrical (i.e., the pictures mirror what is happening in the story or the meaning of the words). Picturebooks with a symmetrical picture-word-relationship are also called *illustrated books* (Binder 2021, p. 108; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001, p. 6). According to numerous researchers (e.g., Alter & Frisch, 2021; Ellis and Brewster, 2014; Linse, 2007; Opitz, 1995), they are especially suitable for primary ELE.

Another noteworthy aspect is that Bader's definition excludes what Binder (2021, p. 108) considers to be subcategories of picturebooks, namely "exhibit books" (picturebook dictionaries without any narrative), and "picture narratives" (picturebooks without words/with hardly any words). These kinds of books might also be helpful in other TEFL contexts; nevertheless, I would argue that in primary schools, young learners especially need authentic linguistic input in order to learn the English language. Moreover, compelling stories can spark learners' motivation and interest in the English language (Krashen, 2021), which is why (story) picturebooks, as Bader defines them, can be of great value for primary school learners of English.

3. The potential of picturebooks in primary English language education

The rich potential picturebooks hold for young learners has been demonstrated by various scholars and will be summarized in this section. As Loder-Buechel (2020, p. 34) puts it: "There's nothing better than a good picture book to get started on a new topic, to get children involved in other worlds – and to teach them language in a low pressure-relaxed setting." Krashen (2021) and Ghosn (2002) also highlight that authentic and compelling stories can spark learners' motivation and interest in the English language. Moreover, Böttger (2020, p. 119) points out that picturebooks are usually amusing and can thus help to develop a positive attitude towards the foreign language and stimulate learners' imagination. Hence, picturebooks can be used to attract learners' attention and foster their confidence and a positive mindset.

When it comes to specific English language skills, which can be promoted by using picturebooks in class, Hughes (2006), among others, has outlined that working with picturebooks can promote all receptive and productive skills. According to him, they "can be used to introduce, recycle and re-use vocabulary and structures and make them meaningful and memorable through the story context" (Hughes, 2006, p. 153), especially if these lexical items get repeated throughout the book (Bland, 2019, p. 90; Hughes, 2006, p. 153; Ellis & Brewster, 2014, p. 6–7). Bland (2019, p. 90) emphasizes that due to their rich linguistic potential, picturebooks can be considered high-quality input in ELE: Not only do they tend to contain lexical repetition, but also syntactic repetition (e.g., parallelisms, phrasal repetition), phonological repetition (e.g., rhymes, alliteration, assonance), dynamic rhythm, onomatopoeia, typographic experimentation, and creative word choices, which can expand both learners and teachers range of vocabulary, and inspire children to get creative themselves (Bland, 2019, p. 90–91; Bland, 2013, p. 8, pp. 122–124; Bland, 2015, p. 151; Ellis, 2012, p. 29). In addition, by listening to the story or re-reading it themselves, students can train their receptive skills, and if the pictures accompanying the text illustrate the words or the ongoing action of the story, this visual support can help students understand unknown words and the gist of the story of an authentic picturebook (Mourão, 2016, p. 27-28; Bland, 2019, p. 90). This can positively impact their self-concept, and it can help them learn basic words so that they can talk or write about different basic topics. Once they have acquired new words and chunks from the text, they can practice and use them in basic speaking and writing activities, although speaking activities generally play a more critical role than writing tasks in primary English education (Böttger, 2020, p. 65). Additionally, they can be used to train basic mediation skills, for instance, when students are asked to summarize the book's content in their L1. Hence, picturebooks can be used to train all communicative skills and enhance students' foreign language proficiency in terms of vocabulary and grammar, spelling, pronunciation, intonation, and according to Böttger (2020, p. 67), also their language awareness when they compare what they learn about English with what they know about their native languages.

However, although many educators primarily use picturebooks to foster communicative skills and contextualize words and chunks of a specific semantic field in order to expand learners' vocabulary (Mourão, 2015), picturebooks can also promote far more skills than that, as numerous researchers have shown:

For instance, using picturebooks in class can foster literary competences, which include empathic competence, aesthetic and stylistic competence, cultural and discursive competence, interpretive competence, as well as reading competence, and general linguistic competence in English (processing texts) (Alter & Ratheiser, 2019, p. 384). Among others, Alter and Frisch (2018), Burwitz-Melzer (2013), and Ellison (2010) have shown how picturebooks can be used to foster these competences in primary ELE.

Since picturebooks consist of both pictures and text, both modes should be decoded and interpreted to understand the multimodal text, i.e., picturebooks can be used to promote visual literacy as well as creative and artistic skills if students produce their own multimodal texts (Ellis, 2016, p. 28). Researchers like Burwitz-Melzer (2013) have shown how picturebooks can be used to foster visual literacy. Furthermore, moving image literacy can be fostered using picturebook animations, and digital literacy can be fostered when using picturebook apps (Ellis, 2016, p. 28). Brunsmeier and Kolb (2017) also provided a practical example of using story apps in primary ELE.

Moreover, picturebooks are cultural artifacts and thus provide an insight into different cultures. Therefore, they can help stimulate intercultural learning, which comprises the following skills in primary ELE according to Kubanek (2008, pp. 6–7): language awareness, acting appropriately in intercultural encounters, showing respect, openness, and the willingness to perceive culture-specific and transcultural aspects of conversations and the ongoing action in different texts, reflecting on one's beliefs, finding a new position in-between the different cultures, and learning about and comparing differentiated, non-stereotypical facts about English speaking countries to one's own culture and other cultures. Eickhorst (2007), for instance, has outlined how picturebooks can be used to foster

intercultural learning in primary school education, and Alter (2013) has demonstrated how intercultural competence can be developed by using First Nations' children's picturebooks.

Other researchers have demonstrated how picturebooks can be used to achieve general educational goals in primary ELE, such as acquiring social skills and moral attitudes (e.g., Binder, 2021, p. 315), and promoting (mental) health literacy (e.g., Ellis, 2019b; Traverso, 2013; Nikolajeva, 2013). The latter encompasses the ability to recognize, manage, and prevent mental health problems (Jorm et al., 1997), as well as the ability to recognize one's potential, to cope with the normal stresses of life, to be a productive member and contribute to society (WHO, 2018). It also entails emotional literacy, and the positive effects on learners' well-being picturebooks can have (Binder, 2021, p. 315).

In this contribution, I would like to demonstrate how picturebooks can be used to achieve two different general educational goals: basic critical environmental literacy as well as developing empathy and kindness towards peers, refugees, and animals, since these two issues are of pressing concern for today's society and should therefore be addressed in primary schools.

4. Picturebooks in practice

4.1 Fostering critical environmental literacy

Ludwig and Summer's Ladder Model of Critical Environmental Literacy (2021) encompasses five components: having a general awareness of the relationship between the environment and human life, having an understanding of human and natural systems and processes, appreciating nature, and feeling empathetic concern for the environment, developing problem-solving- and critical thinking skills in order to make informed decisions, and having the capacity for personal and collective action, as well as civic participation (Summer & Ludwig, 2021, p. 26). Hence, children should not only learn about threats to the environment, but they should also reflect upon their actions, learn to lead a sustainable lifestyle, develop a sense of responsibility towards the environment, and protect it.

These general educational goals for environmental learning are also part of various primary school curricula, e.g., the Bavarian curriculum (ISBa). Even though children are not expected to fully comprehend the concept of global warming, the science behind it, and the complex interdependent relationship between people's actions and the environment at primary school, they should still learn to appreciate nature and to protect the environment as well as they can. This is shown in the Bavarian curriculum: In their science lessons at primary school, learners are expected to learn about the characteristics of the local flora and fauna, using water and energy in an environmentally conscious way, water contamination (e.g., through detergents, solvents), and about how environmental factors (e.g., temperature, exposure to light, soil) influence where certain plants can grow and animals can live (ISBb). In addition, they should reflect on the food production in their region (e.g., hen's egg, grain), food prizes, where groceries come from, and whether one should buy imported food (ISBb). As this section will show, picturebooks about these topics, which are adequate for primary school learners of English, can be used to encourage environmental learning on a basic level.

A practical example of a picturebook that can promote basic critical environmental literacy in primary school education is *The Tale of a Toothbrush: A Story of Plastic in Our Oceans* (2020), written by M. G. Leonard and illustrated by Daniel Rieley. It is a humorous story written from the perspective of Sammy, an old toothbrush that gets thrown away, subsequently travels the world, and meets other plastic items in the ocean while trying to find its way back to its previous owner, six-year-old Sofia. On its journey home, an albatross mistakes the toothbrush for food and tries to eat it, but then realizes its mistake and helps take the toothbrush to its previous owner. When the toothbrush is reunited with Sofia, both are very happy, and Sofia convinces her mother to keep the toothbrush and use it for other purposes rather than throwing it away.

Seeing as this topic and basic environmental learning goals are also part of various primary school science curricula (e.g., ISBa, ISBb, ISBc), it can be a suitable topic for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) projects at primary schools (for further information on CLIL at primary schools see Steinlen & Piske in this volume). Drawing on CLIL lesson

examples by Ball (2016) and Steinlen and Piske (in this volume), I would suggest that the following educational goals can be achieved by using *The Tale of a Toothbrush: A Story of Plastic in Our Oceans* in a CLIL context:

Children learn which products are made of plastic, how plastic items get into the ocean, why plastic is detrimental to our environment, what we can do to cut down plastic waste, and how to creatively re-use plastic (conceptual focus, i.e., the content they will learn). They can achieve these educational goals by listening to, reading, and interpreting the illustrations in the picturebook *The Tale of a Toothbrush: A Story of Plastic in Our Oceans*, identifying and writing down relevant lexical items to talk about plastic, and producing four different posters focusing on what plastic is (which items are made of plastic), how plastic waste gets into the sea, how plastic affects us and our environment, and how to avoid producing more plastic waste (procedural focus, i.e., the skills they will practice, and linguistic focus, i.e., the language they will need).

Content-wise, this book is suitable for this purpose since on the last two pages of the picturebook, there is explicit yet age-appropriate information on why plastic is detrimental to our planet. For example, there is a picture of a turtle trying to eat a plastic bag in the ocean, and the accompanying text says: "On average, eight million pieces of plastic enter our oceans every single day. This is very bad for the sea creatures who live there." Hence children learn that some animals sometimes eat plastic by mistake, which can have disastrous effects both for the animals and the entire eco-system. In addition, children learn about recycling and think about creative ways to use plastic they do not need anymore. At the end of the story, for instance, the child decides to use the toothbrush to brush her doll's hair, clean her football boots, and paint with it instead of throwing it away.

Language-wise, this book is an appropriate medium to achieve the above-mentioned educational goals since it contains various lexical items of the semantic fields of *waste* and *plastic*, e.g., *throw away, bin, dustmen, wrappers, plastic straws, plastic bag, rubbish sack,* and *shampoo bottle* (see Figure 1). Moreover, the last two pages of this book actively encourage learners to go through the book again and look for the right words for the

plastic items which are depicted on the last page (e.g., plastic bags, bottles, jars, wrappers), which enriches young learners' vocabulary and provides them with lexical chunks to talk about this topic. Additionally, there are various rhymes in the book such as "swirling and whirling in the middle of the ocean", which can also help learners remember certain lexical items and enhance their word attack skills (Linse, 2007, p. 48). With regard to sentence structures, there are primarily main clauses linked together with coordinating conjunctions like *and* or *but*. However, there are also some simple participle clauses, relative clauses, as well as temporal and causative subordinate clauses introduced by basic subordinating conjunctions such as *because*, *when* and *as*, for example, "The sun rose and the sun set a hundred times, as Sammy sailed the seas." In addition, the vast majority of sentences are written in the active voice; only some sentences are in the passive voice ("Sammy was squashed up against an empty shampoo bottle", see Figure 1). When it comes to tenses used in the book, in direct speech parts, the simple present is used, whereas the narrated parts of speech are written mostly in the simple past and rarely in the past perfect (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Excerpt from *The Tale of a Toothbrush: A Story of Plastic in Our Oceans* (2020), written by M. G. Leonard and illustrated by Daniel Rieley

According to Steinlen and Piske (in this volume), this is a great asset of the book since children should be introduced to different sentence

structures so that they can “learn the whole spectrum of linguistic structures of language” (Piske, 2013). Several researchers (e.g., Schmid-Schönbein, 2001, p. 112; Elsner 2010, p. 120; Krashen, 2021; and Reckermann, 2021) also advocate for using picturebooks whose language goes slightly beyond learners’ current level of English, as long as the content is suitable to achieve the desired educational goal, unknown words are limited to an appropriate number, and teachers use scaffolding and storytelling techniques to facilitate understanding. Furthermore, it is essential to point out that, although the picturebook contains some words and grammatical forms that learners might not be familiar with, students should still understand the gist of the story by looking at the pictures.

Figure 1 illustrates that the symmetrical relationship between the pictures and the written text of the story aids understanding: All the plastic items mentioned in the written text (a shampoo bottle, a toothbrush, and a plastic bag) are shown in the picture, and most of them have their name written on them. In addition, the plastic objects not only have their name on them, but they also have faces that mirror their feelings, which facilitates students’ understanding of lexical items which express emotions. For example, the meaning of the noun phrase “the grumpy shampoo bottle” can be deciphered by looking at the angry expression of the shampoo bottle in the picture, and the verb “to wail” can be comprehended by looking at the sighing plastic bag. Moreover, the dark colors underline the general depressing and sad atmosphere inside the plastic bag, which can also help students understand the gist of the lexical chunks. In addition, analyzing the different facial expressions of the plastic objects and thus learning to read emotions can help foster children’s emotional literacy. Although plastic items are inanimate objects that do not have feelings, the facial expressions drawn on them humanizes them and this can help students sympathize with these objects. Seeing that being thrown away distresses the plastic objects in this picturebook might also lead to students not wanting to throw away any more plastic items and may lead to a more responsible and considerate use of plastics in the long run. Moreover, various pre-, while- and post-storytelling activities can help students explore the picturebook’s rich linguistic and thematic potential.

Pre-storytelling

When using this book in the classroom, teachers could start by showing the book's cover and asking students what they think the book is about. Then teachers could show a plastic item they have to the class (e.g., a pencil) and ask students if they have any plastic items with them and if they can show them to the rest of the class and name them in order to collect words for plastic items. Hence, they can make students aware that plastic items surround them and that plastic still plays a significant role in our lives.

While-storytelling

In a reading circle, teachers should tell the story two times, applying storytelling techniques such as using facial expressions, gestures, elements of theater performances, individual voices for the different characters, the imitation of typical sounds of animals, and pauses to reflect in order to secure understanding (Böttger, 2020, pp. 121-122). Furthermore, there are various videos of native speakers reading out all of the books mentioned in this contribution on YouTube; hence, teachers could also incorporate these videos if they use sufficient scaffolding techniques to ensure students understand the content. Moreover, they should focus on the comprehension of the gist first and then on specific aspects of the story by using yes/no questions or questions which require short answers (Böttger, 2020, p. 121) on the following aspects: whom the toothbrush meets, why it ends up in the ocean, what it is trying to do, why the albatross tries to eat it, and what Sofia is planning to do with the toothbrush when it returns. Another possible task would be to alter specific details in the story and have students find out what was altered to train their ability to listen closely (Böttger, 2020, p. 122); for example, have the toothbrush meet other plastic items or other animals which are not in the story to expand their vocabulary in that lexical field. In addition, they could use an actual toothbrush and have it tell the story or let students act out some scenes using the toothbrush to make them engage with the story. Moreover, according to Bland (2021), using finger puppets or realia, such as a toothbrush, to tell a story and practice language is also a valuable method in primary ELE (see interview in Grund et al. in this volume).

Post-storytelling

Having listened to the story two times, students should create mind maps on essential lexical chunks and ideas from the book in groups, and then use them to design four different posters focusing on what plastic is (which items are made of plastic), how plastic waste gets into the sea, how plastic affects us and our environment, and how to avoid producing more plastic waste. Depending on the learners' level of proficiency, they may need some additional language-focused activities.

Lastly, in a CLIL setting, this book can be used in combination with *A Planet Full of Plastic: And How You Can Help* (2019), written and illustrated by Neal Layton, which provides more explicit information on the topic of plastic: It gives even more examples of which items are made of plastic, who invented plastic, what *biodegradable* means, garbage patches in the ocean, ways to recycle plastic, and how we can all help solve the plastic problem. However, when planning a sequence on plastic in primary education, teachers should first use *The Tale of a Toothbrush* to introduce students to this topic, as it does not focus on mere facts but embeds them in a humorous story told from the perspective of a living being with whom students might sympathize. Hence, this book might be more likely to spark students' interest in the topic. *A Planet Full of Plastic* might be helpful as a follow-up for students who want to learn even more about this topic and can thus be used as a tool for differentiation. It goes without saying that there are various other picturebooks about the detrimental effect plastic has on our planet, e.g., *Rocket Says Clean Up!*, written by Nathan Bryon and illustrated by Dapa Adeala, which is narrated using only present tense forms, and for which you can find teaching material online on the website of *PEPELT* (Picturebooks in European Primary English Language Teaching) (see links). In conclusion, *The Tale of a Toothbrush: A Story of Plastic in Our Oceans* can enhance students' understanding of the topic, expand their vocabulary in this lexical field, and thus promote their English language skills.

4.2 Promoting empathy, kindness, and a positive learning environment

Saving our planet is not the only pressing concern our societies have to face nowadays, but so is welcoming those who had to flee their countries due to natural disasters, wars, or persecution. Therefore, it is essential to address this topic in an age-appropriate way at schools, to teach children empathy and kindness, and thus create a positive learning environment. As Nikolajeva (2013, p. 249) points out, picturebooks can be an ideal medium to foster empathy since they "evoke our emotional engagement through images as well as words and, moreover, through amplification of words by images." In addition, by looking at the emotions portrayed in the pictures, children can learn to understand the emotions of people surrounding them in real life, and according to extensive empirical research (e.g., Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Evans, 2009; Sipe & Pantaleo, 2008), even very young children can comprehend and respond to these emotions shown in picturebooks (Nikolajeva, 2013, p. 249). Therefore, picturebooks such as *Kind* (2019), written by Alison Green with pictures by 38 illustrators, can help develop empathy and kindness towards other children who have fled from war-torn countries for various reasons: First, the story provides children with concrete examples of what they can do to be kind to both animals and people and to welcome and integrate new students into their community. Second, the picture-word relationship in this book is symmetrical, and hence the facial expressions as well as the lighting mirror the feelings portrayed by the characters, and thus help children understand and sympathize with them. For example, when characters are sad, they are painted with dark colors, and those who try to cheer them up are painted with light colors and sometimes even carry a source of light (e.g., a candle).

Furthermore, the book is easy to understand for primary school learners of English since the meaning of the words can mostly be deduced from the pictures. Hence, children should be able to get the main idea by looking at the pictures. However, some words are not illustrated in the pictures and may need further elaboration by the teacher (e.g., *marble*, *button*, *patient*, see Figure 2) – nonetheless, the meaning of the majority of words as well as the gist of the story can be understood by looking at the pictures. Moreover, with regard to tenses, almost all verbs are in the

simple present form. There are only a few exceptions: the will-future is used three times (e.g., “I bet you’ll soon fill it up”, see Figure 2), the present perfect two times (e.g., “They’ve had to leave their homes and their countries because of danger”; “Have you ever made a kindness jar”, see Figure 2), and the present continuous only once (e.g., “And let’s make sure no one’s left out when we’re playing a game”). Nevertheless, the meaning of these phrases is also mainly depicted in the illustrations. In addition, there are barely any subordinate clauses, only three conditional clauses (e. g. “If they’re trying to learn our language, perhaps you can tell them new words?”, “We can give them a hug if they’re feeling lonely”, “if you don’t let people in, you’ll never know what you’re missing”), however, the meaning of these clauses can be deduced by looking at the illustrations, and the vast majority of clauses only consist of a main clause or two main clauses linked together by coordinating conjunctions, such as *and*, which makes them easy to read and easy to understand.

Figure 2: Kindness Jar – Excerpt from *Kind* (2019) by Alison Green

What is more, the picturebook includes many direct questions for the reader (e.g., “Imagine a world where everyone is kind. How can we make that come true?”, “How can you welcome them?”, “What can you do to be kind today?”, “Have you ever made a kindness jar?”, see Figure 2), which

is ideal for having students engage actively with the story, think about these questions, and respond to them. In summary, the language of the picturebook can be considered adequate for using it in primary schools, and children can learn about ideas of how to be kind to their peers and their surroundings, as well as essential lexical chunks to express their ideas in English, all of which can be explored by using different pre-, while-, and post-storytelling activities.

Pre-storytelling

On PEPELT 21's YouTube channel, Ellis suggests a promising task to introduce the picturebook to young learners: Asking the two questions the picturebook starts with: "What can you do to be kind today?" and "Imagine a world where everyone is kind. How can we make that come true?" (PEPELT 21, 2019). To answer these questions, children should be provided with lexical chunks to start their sentences, e.g., *I / You / We / They can* ..., and some students may express their ideas in their first language(s). However, teachers can recast what they said in English and thus prepare them for different words and ideas they might encounter in the picturebook (PEPELT 21, 2019). Hence, students become familiar with lexical items to express acts of kindness and brainstorm ideas on what they can do to be nice today.

While-storytelling

As mentioned in the previous example, teachers should use storytelling techniques to facilitate understanding and ensure children get the gist after reading the story once. When reading the picturebook for a second time, teachers could use the Total Physical Response method, which Bland (2021) also deems a valuable method in ELE, in order to foster text comprehension and practice acts of kindness: They can encourage children to do exactly what the picturebook proposes since it provides concrete examples of how to be kind to their peers. For instance, children could practice giving someone a smile, asking someone to hold their hand when they are frightened, showing interest in new students by asking them about their favorite game or hobby, finding out about what they have

in common, and helping them learn their language by teaching them new words and learning words from the new student's L1 in return.

Furthermore, when using the illustration of the kindness jar (see Figure 2) in class, teachers can conceal the verbal explanation of what a kindness jar is and have the children speculate about what it is by looking at the illustration (either in their L1 or with language support in English). The bright colors and the happy faces of the children in the picture indicate that the kindness jar creates a pleasant (classroom) atmosphere where everyone is having fun while building an environment in which everyone feels comfortable and in which everyone can thrive and blossom like the plants in the illustration; hence, students work towards achieving an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and to their personal development. Moreover, this illustration demonstrates that showing kindness is something that enriches and embellishes the classroom, and which should be treasured, like the castle they are building in the illustration.

Post-storytelling

As a post-storytelling task, children can then create their own kindness jar. However, rather than having them put a marble or a button into it every time someone is kind to them or their peers (see Figure 2), teachers can have students write down something nice someone did for them or they did for someone else on snippets of paper, fold them and put them in the jar (see also Ellis' suggestion on PEPELT 21, 2019). This way, students can practice the new words they gained from the picturebook and collect more ideas on how to be kind. Ellis recommends having the teacher read out what the students wrote at the end of each week or month (PEPELT 21, 2019). I would suggest having the students read out the sentences so that they can practice their speaking skills and creating an incentive that makes children want to actively contribute to filling the jar, for instance, working with rewards such as playing an English game or asking them which activity they would like to do as a reward every time they manage to fill the jar with meaningful content. Moreover, teachers could place the picturebook right next to the jar and a list of all the ideas which have been collected in class so that children can go through these

materials again at their own pace and use them to find lexical chunks they would like to use when writing their acts of kindness on a snippet of paper. The PEPELT team mentioned previously also provides additional teaching material and other activities which can be carried out when using this book in a primary school setting or primary teacher education.

These accumulated acts of kindness can help create a positive learning environment, which can have a positive effect on students' self-image and personal growth (Traverso, 2013, p. 183), and this can also facilitate learning processes, as many studies have shown (e.g., Helmke & Weinert, 1997; Helmke, 2017; Meyer, 2017). Hence, by using this picturebook in class, children can learn how to be kind and welcoming towards their peers and new students/refugees, which can then also be conducive to creating a learning environment in which students can grow, learn English in a pleasant atmosphere, and which can increase student motivation to participate in class, and take an interest in the language.

5. Conclusion

Although this contribution might not make students end wars and solve violent conflicts and the climate crisis, it provides concrete examples of how primary English language teachers can equip children with the necessary skills to deal with these pressing issues our modern-day society faces. To be precise, it demonstrates how picturebooks can be used to foster critical environmental literacy, empathy and kindness on a basic level while simultaneously promoting their English language skills.

Evidently, these are not the only challenges our society has to tackle. Education for democracy, gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, diversity, body safety, consent, and what Summer and Ludwig (forthcoming) call taboos and challenging topics (e.g., violence, bullying, racism, and losing a loved one) are also issues of great importance, and there are numerous picturebooks about these topics and the general educational goals linked to them, whose potential for primary ELE is yet to be explored (see lists on Educate2Empower Publishing and PEPELT).

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The Power of Self-Selected Fiction

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Abstract

In this contribution, I present evidence strongly suggesting that reading popular, self-selected fiction is a highly effective and very pleasant way of acquiring language and developing literacy. Not only does it increase language competence, it also increases knowledge of a variety of subjects: people who read more, know more, and it results in deeper understanding of others' points of view.

Keywords: Fiction, self-selection, language acquisition, input, academic language

1. My New Appreciation of Popular Fiction

I live in Southern California, about 40 kilometers from Santa Monica. Before the pandemic began, I drove to the Santa Monica area regularly, about twice a week, first in order to spend some time with my grandchildren and second, to work out at world famous Gold's Gym and maybe say hello to Arnold. The only route is Pacific Coast Highway, and I find the drive unbearably boring. At first, I tried radio news, but it is hopelessly conservative. Then, I tried music, but the greedy radio stations charge if you want to hear good music (classical or popular). Then I discovered audiobooks. I got them on disk from the two local libraries I belong to. It was a life-changing experience.

Both libraries only had audiobooks in English and neither had classics; nearly all were popular books, best sellers, and very little in my favorite genre, science-fiction. So I started listening to best-sellers, detective stories, historical fiction, romance, medical novels, legal novels, and novels for young readers, genres I rarely pay attention to.

My first: *Harry Potter* (Rowling, 1997). I was amazed at how good it was. Rowling included a lot of commentary about education, including good

teaching and bad teaching, and the headmaster of the school was one of the main characters. It was just right for a professional educator like me, and I even discussed it in one of my classes. (One of my students wrote an insightful essay with this title: Is Hermione smart?)

Hunger Games (Collins, 2008) gave me a new perspective on funding for education. Each city sends one young person to fight to the death; the city of the winner gets fantastic rewards. The reader/listener gets absorbed in the contest, hoping the protagonist will win. The core message is revealed by the fighter's coach: "Remember who the real enemy is." Of course, the real enemy is the central government (the "capital"), setting the cities against each other as a distraction. I realized, thanks to this novel, that we are doing the same thing in education, awarding grants to individual districts and schools, creating artificial competition instead of serving the common good, education for all students.

I have no special interest in courts and the law but I found John Grisham's novels not only fascinating but highly informative. I had served as a foreman for a jury about ten years before this experience. While driving Pacific Coast Highway, I listened to Grisham's *The Runaway Jury* (Grisham, 1996) and I realized what a mediocre job I had done as foreman and how I could have done much better in helping the jury arrive at a fair and just decision.

The books were so good that after I arrived home, I sometimes sat in the car for a few minutes to listen to the end of a chapter. In short, I developed a great respect for everyday "popular" literature. Not every novel was brilliant, but most were quite good.

2. Backing up: Some theory and application

The foundation for this discussion is what I consider to be the central hypothesis of language education: The Comprehension or Input Hypothesis. Current theory distinguishes language *acquisition* from language *learning*. Language acquisition is a subconscious process: While it is happening, we don't know it is happening, and after acquisition has taken place we are not always aware that it has happened. Language *learning* is "knowing about" languages; conscious knowledge of the rules.

We are very good at language acquisition, but we are not very good at language learning.

Nearly all of our competence in using language, our ability to speak, write, and understand, comes from what we have acquired. Language learning has only one function: we can sometimes use it to "monitor" or inspect what we are about to produce, and make corrections, but our ability to do this is very limited: even the best linguists admit they consciously know only fragments of the grammar of a language; much of the grammar of any language is as yet undescribed. The real question for language teaching is not how we *learn* language. It is how we *acquire* language.

The evidence strongly supports a simple hypothesis: Language acquisition does not occur from speaking or writing or from grammar study or from getting corrected: We acquire (not learn) language when we understand what we hear and read. The ability to speak and write is the result of language acquisition, not the cause. This is, of course, a hypothesis, not a proclamation of truth. It is, however, consistent with a great deal of research which has been published in books and journals over the last several decades (see e.g. Krashen, 1982 and Krashen et al., 2017).

3. Application

The Conduit Hypothesis claims that there are three stages in developing competence in a language, and each stage provides a passageway or conduit to the next. I present here one example, developed by Beniko Mason. In Stage One, Story-Listening, the teacher fills the class-time with stories, stories that have "stood the test of time," (e.g. fairy tales), and are made comprehensible though the use of drawings, context, and occasional translation. There are no comprehension questions after the story, no grammar or vocabulary exercises, and no tests on the vocabulary or grammar used in the story. Students hear hundreds of stories over several semesters (Mason, 2020).

Stage Two is GSSR, Guided Self-Selected Reading (Mason, 2019). Students are provided with access to a library with large quantities of comprehensible, interesting reading material written for those acquiring

the language, e.g. what are called "graded readers" in English. Teachers help students select suitable material based on their interests and level of English. This stage can last for several semesters. In Stage Three, students read "authentic" books in English, that is, books written by and for native speakers of English. When students reach this stage, our job is done.

4. The Importance of Self-Selection

An excellent way of making sure students are interested in what they read is self-selection. Studies confirm that self-selected reading results in superior gains in reading competence when compared to assigned reading (e.g. Lee, 2007). Our reaction when a well-meaning friend or family member gives us a book as a gift is clear evidence of the value of self-selection. Gift books are often interpreted as "assigned reading" and we dread it when, a few weeks later, the giver asks us how much we liked the book.

Garrison Keillor (1985) describes an experience familiar to many of us. "As a former English major I am a sitting duck for gift books, and in the past few years I've gotten Dickens, Thackeray, Smollett, Richardson, Emerson, Keats, Boswell, and the Brontes, all of them Great, none of them ever read by me, all of them now on my shelf, looking at me and making me feel guilty."

Again, my own experience: When I was in secondary school in the US, I took the required courses in American literature and English literature. "Great" books, classics, were assigned. I did the assigned reading and passed all the tests. I don't remember a single author or title, not one. After school, I read what I wanted to read. I remember every one of the science-fiction novels I read, and every one of the baseball stories I read. And they had a powerful influence on me.

Before the pandemic, I met regularly with a friend who is about my age. Seymour and I decided to reread all the baseball novels of John R. Tunis. His classic, *The Kid from Tompkinsville* (Tunis, 1940), was our first selection, a novel described by one reviewer as "The book of Job for boys." I read it first when I was about 12, again in my 20's, again in my 40's, and again, more than 30 years later to discuss it with Seymour. I have no

particular interest in baseball, but the novels are excellent literature and still give me reason to reflect on my life and behavior.

5. Research on Self-Selected Reading of Fiction Confirms its Value

Fiction readers show very impressive development in language and literacy: We reported that the more self-selected reading done by college students of English as a Foreign Language, the better their gains on a standardized test of English (the TOEIC). The correlation between the amount of time reading and TOEIC gains was a spectacular .94, and doing other things (TOEIC test preparation, listening to the radio) had no effect. For each hour of reading, students gained an average of .6 points on the TOEIC (Mason & Krashen, 2017), which predicts moving from lower to very high levels after three years of relaxed reading. And what they read was largely fiction.

A particularly elegant study confirming the power of reading to increase vocabulary was done by Saragi et al. (1978). They asked adults (native speakers of English) to read *A Clockwork Orange*, a novel that contains 241 words, each repeated an average of 15 times, from a slang unknown to readers before reading the book. The version subjects read did not have a dictionary included in the back of the book. Subjects were given a surprise test on the slang words after reading the book and averaged 76% correct: That means they acquired 45 words, simply by reading a novel.

There is also good evidence that readers acquire a substantial amount of "academic" language, the language young people need for school, from reading fiction. McQuillan (2019) examined the vocabulary in 22 novels written for young people (e.g. Nancy Drew, *Twilight*): the novels included 85% of 485 "academic" words on an academic word list, words that appear in several academic areas at the post-secondary level (Coxhead, 2000) and 44% appeared 12 times or more in the novels McQuillan examined, indicating that readers who read these books had a good chance of acquiring them.

McQuillan (2020) reported that reading all seven *Harry Potter* novels would result in the acquisition of between one-fifth and one-half of the words on Coxhead's academic word list. He concluded that this

vocabulary gain is 1.6 to four times more efficient than what has been achieved so far through explicit instruction.

6. Those Who Read More Fiction Know More.

As I mentioned above, I learned a great deal from reading (and listening to) fiction, and the research supports this: Those who read more, know more. Studies so far have only been done in English as a first language among adults, but they tell us that those who read more (fiction) know more about history, literature, and science (West et al., 1993).

Reading also results in what has been termed desirable “habits of mind”: First, fiction readers show more empathy for others (Kidd & Castano, 2013). As journalist Terry Gross points out, when you read fiction “You’re learning to be somebody else, learning the see the world through their eyes.” In addition, readers understand that the world is complex, and are wary of simple solutions to complex problems (Djikic et al., 2013).

The Guardian asked Barack Obama about his reading habits and what he had learned from reading: His response is in close agreement with the results of studies exploring the “habits of mind” of fiction readers discussed above: "When I think about how I understand my role as citizen, ... the most important stuff I’ve learned I think I’ve learned from novels. It has to do with empathy. It has to do with being comfortable with the notion that the world is complicated and full of grays, but there’s still truth there to be found .. And ... it’s possible to connect with some[one] else even though they’re very different from you." (Barack Obama, as cited in Colyard, 2016).

7. Fiction versus Non-Fiction

Several studies confirm that fiction is not only a good predictor of performance on tests of vocabulary and reading, but have also shown that fiction reading is more effective than non-fiction (Sullivan & Brown, 2014; Jerrim & Moss, 2019). An interesting finding in the Sullivan and Brown study is that the scores on the vocabulary test were only related to reading done at age 42. The amount of reading subjects reported doing as age 16

was not a significant predictor, nor were their vocabulary scores on tests administered at that age.

8. Why the reluctance?

Self-selected reading of interesting fiction appears to be the most powerful tool we have in language education: The research is consistent and agrees with many of our own experiences. It works and is very pleasant to do. Why the reluctance to even try it?

One possibility is that few teachers and administrators are aware of the substantial amount of research supporting self-selected fiction reading. This is understandable: Nearly all scholarship is buried in academic books and journals, unnecessarily long papers written using what one observer called "tortured vocabulary" (Hedges, 2010). To make matters worse, the books and journals are forbiddingly expensive: only university faculty who have access to first-class libraries can access these writings.

To make matters even worse, there is a long tradition of disapproval of fiction and a glorification of the value of nonfiction. This movement was very powerful 150 years ago, and its effects appear to be long-lasting. During this time, libraries "worked valiantly to reduce the proportion of fiction circulation (Ross et al., 2006, p. 11). Critics of fiction proclaimed that "... the craze for books leads to 'inattention, want of application, distaste for study, and unretentive memory' (Bean, 1879, p. 342).

My hope is that shorter, clearer writing, presented open-access in free or at least in affordable publications, will solve these problems.

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Through the Anti-Bias Looking Glass: The Messages We Send Our Learners in (Primary) ELT

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Abstract

English language teaching materials in primary schools are fraught with images and examples that upon closer scrutiny, need unpacking or even replacement to steer learners away from stereotypes and to promote deeper thought and encourage exposure to the world. The purpose of this paper is to introduce readers to the Learning for Justice's Social Justice Standards and show how these can be applied to standard coursebook images for basic A1, A2 and B1 level activities. These same activities can be applied to images and texts from other sources, such as international newspapers' images of the day. Secondly, results of a classroom experiment with pre-service teachers using the Dispositions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Scale will be shared and ideas for prompting discussion provided. Finally, larger project ideas for EFL lessons in public primary schools to promote an anti-bias stance to education will be suggested.

Keywords: anti-bias education, EFL, Social Justice Scales, coursebook adaptations, authentic materials, cultures

> *The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change.*
>
> (James Baldwin, 1963)

1. Introduction

The words of the late novelist James Baldwin unfortunately still perseverate today. The world is still navigating through turbulent waters – locally in Switzerland 2021 celebrated only 50 years of women's right to vote, yet in many countries this is still a concern. Globally, UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals encourage us to think about issues facing us all, such as climate change. Glocally, Black Lives Matter and the Me Too movements provide a push towards a more just future no matter where we are.

This paper is a plea for teachers to consider what they are working with in the English language (and all other) classroom and to learn omit materials that can be seen as oppressive or too limited, to address other materials that can be seen as provocative more deeply, or use authentic sources that encourage learners to expand their background knowledge and encourage an open and tolerant world view as local curricula suggest. In the words of Derman Sparks, "it is not sufficient to be non-biased nor is it sufficient to be an observer. It is necessary for each individual to actively intervene, to challenge and counter the personal and institutional behaviors that perpetuate oppression" (1989, p. 3). To do so, using the Dispositions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Scale and the Learning for Justice Social Justice Framework can create awareness and be valuable for the planning of instructional content. These tools can be used from the images we show our learners to the model sentences and texts we provide.

Teachers, who are in a role of responsibility, have an obligation to uphold basic tenets of their local curriculum; in Switzerland these are upholding "humanistic and democratic values" (D-EDK, 2015) in every subject taught. In this same line of thought, the Council of Europe's 2020 "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion" volume refers to both addressing overgeneralizations and stereotypes (p. 24) as well as embedding foreign language teaching into contexts that "develop competences for democratic culture, such as valuing cultural diversity and openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices" (D-EDK, p. 14). Thus, the foreign language classroom - albeit working with learners who

cannot express themselves to the same degree as they can in the local languages - has the same social responsibilities as the regular classroom – it is not because learners cannot express themselves elegantly in a foreign language that foreign language teaching has to be babied down and cognitively over-simplified.

Addressing current events and issues of social justice and not avoiding them in every classroom and including the EFL classroom is supported from other perspectives. First of all, long before the age of nine (when foreign language instruction begins in Swiss and other European schools), learners are aware of the ethnic, racial, and cultural groups to which they belong (Ray, 2015) and are aware of and even act upon racial bias as early as the pre-school years (Waxman, 2021). Thus, it is never too early to propagate critical thought and to include materials that reflect the world.

Furthermore, there is more and more evidence (e.g., Hirsch, 2010 or Willingham, 2017) to suggest that reading skills are influenced more by content or background knowledge than pure reading skills per se. This research generally encourages content and projects that increase learner contact time with myriad topics from science and social studies, current events, and more. In the ELT classroom, this can be interpreted as a recommendation for a CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach. CLIL can not only be beneficial because it helps learners see connections and provides rich and meaningful contexts, but also because such CLIL content provided in a foreign language classroom increases learners' background knowledge and thus hopefully has a positive effect on other skills in the local language, such as reading (see contribution by Steinlen and Priska in this volume). Such contexts, in a social justice, anti-bias setting include historical knowledge, politics, religion and are tied to each and every school subject.

2. Using the Dispositions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Scale

Developed by Whitaker and Valtierra (2018), The Dispositions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Scale (DCRPS) measures dispositions towards praxis (willingness to be vulnerable, to exam identities), towards

social justice (willingness to discuss hot topics) and towards community (not discussed here). It is a good place to start to see not one's own bias as perhaps Harvard's Implicit Bias test might show, but rather to see one's dispositions towards educating diverse students regardless of one's own beliefs or affiliations. Concrete ideas for using this scale in pre-service training can be found in Loder-Buechel (2022) where pre-service teachers were asked to judge the appropriacy of certain images (such as a woman serving a man wearing a crown turkey as an example of a traditional English Christmas as shown in Figure 1) found in Swiss primary school coursebooks, to rate themselves on the scale and then to again judge the appropriateness of certain images found in coursebooks.

Figure 10: Traditional English Christmas dinner picture (Arnet-Clark et al., 2019, pp. 42–43)

Pictures, such as that in Figure 1, suggest “this is what all English Christmases looks like “which are overgeneralizations, are Anglocentric when English is a Lingua Franca, neglect other holidays at the same time of year, and the picture itself can lead to thoughts on gender roles. This process led to quite a revelation for many students as noted in their comments: “Uh-Oh...It might be better to have different families doing

different things and open this up to other winter holidays" (Student A) or "The picture shows stereotypes like the woman serving the man. However, if there is enough material in the classroom against those stereotypes and if the teacher opens a conversation about the problem of this picture it can still have a positive effect" (Student B).

Scale item (taken from Whitaker and Valtierra, 2018)	Possible questions for discussion or thought
I value assessing my teaching practices.	If you were to use this picture as the Teachers Notes state (name all the costumes and describe what is in the picture), would the language the children learn be functional and useful in the larger world and would the level of thought the prompt provides allow for critical thinking?
I am aware of my cultural background. I am willing to examine my own identities.	Does your own culture celebrate Halloween or is it seen as a commercialized American holiday? Have you lived abroad and experienced Halloween? What could you bring into the lesson from your own experiences?
I am willing to be vulnerable. I believe that hot topic conversations (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, religion, etc.) should be had in class when necessary and/or relevant.	When you look at this picture, do you see any costumes you think may not be appropriate (e.g. people dressed as Native Americans)? How would you broach this in English or in the local language with your learners?
I am willing to take advantage of professional development opportunities focused on issues of diversity.	Do you know where to find information on Halloween and other such holidays (e.g. Dia de los Muertos or All Saints Day)?
I value equity (giving each student what they individually need) over equality (giving each student the same thing).	How can you use this picture to not only promote thought but also to allow learners to work at their own levels? Is there a dialogue that can be created from the picture that supports any of the topics elicited here (compliments, cultural appropriation)?

Table 1: Using selected items from the DCRPS to discuss a Halloween party

The DCRPS is meant to show willingness on a much larger scale than for a singular school subject, yet it is extremely valuable in ELT as well, especially on this micro level for reflection. The statements on the scale (see Table 1) can be prompts for discussing coursebook content, and lead to intercultural and anti-bias learning for both teachers and learners alike. The DCRPS does not necessarily have to be used for pictures that are provocative or where there is a clear issue – it can be used as tool for analysis about pictures that merit more discussion due to the topic they represent. For example, Halloween is a topic that is often acceptable to include in ELT books, yet in some books it is presented without much context, as a simply descriptive activity (describing costumes). As an example of using the DCRPS statements, when looking at a picture of a Halloween party where one sees a haunted house and about thirty children dressed up in various costumes, including Native Peoples, discussions can be held in teacher training or even with learners in the local or target language depending on the learners' age or interests that connect the DCRPS statement when applied to the Halloween (Table 1).

Following a description of the picture itself in the classroom with learners, teachers can then choose to develop teaching ideas that are more reflective of a willingness to encourage social change. They can:

1) Start with the level of thought they want the learners to be on (justifying a costume decision? complimenting a costume?);
2) Go to Cambridge University Press' Language Profile grammar section and search for A1 or A2 level language structures that would reflect the thought that is to be encouraged;
3) Design a language teaching activity (see Table 2 for an example role-play) that is at the right level for their target learners.

Although this is not using the scale for its original intent, such an exercise allows for a level of thought that then can transfer to other pictures encountered and encourage the more in-depth and reflective use of pictures found in coursebooks. It also allows a guided way of getting (future) teachers to (re)consider what they are "expected" to work whilst allowing them to knowledgably decide to work with materials sensitively or even not at all – in this case perhaps it would simply be better to print out pictures of various holidays around the world. Finally, there are other

tools, such as the "Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books" (Derman-Sparks, 2016) which can be used for similar guided thought activities. These tools can also be used in various situations different than the ones for which they were originally written. This can contribute to the better use of images and text in any coursebooks.

Aim: Asking about cultural appropriateness *Setting: Two friends* Friend A: I need to find a Halloween costume! Friend B: I am going to be a bird – my little sister has a costume. Friend A: I have an Indian costume and lots of feathers, I can wear that! Friend B: No!!! It's not "Indian", it's Navajo or Hopi or something! And you are not Navajo or Hopi. You cannot wear that! Friend A: Why not? Friend B: Because that is traditional and you are not Navajo! What do you know about the Navajo or Hopi? *Students can continue the conversation.*

Table 2: A2 level role-play ideas using a Halloween party picture prompt (own source)

3. Learning for Justice Social Justice Framework

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a US platform that serves teachers with materials to combat prejudice and hate. One core tool they provide is the Learning for Justice Social Justice Framework (Chiariello et al., 2016) which are based on Derman-Sparks' (1989) goals for anti-bias education. These standards are broken into four domains and provide standards for Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action and describe learning outcomes and possible scenarios for kindergarten through twelfth-grade students. For Swiss teachers who are allowed the freedom to teach in the way they see fit and use additional materials, but who are not allowed to choose the

coursebooks with which they teach and often do not have time to create new materials as they are generalist teachers, this framework can provide a useful angle from which to view the current coursebooks for purposed adaptations or exclusion of content.

3.1 Using the framework for questioning

Taking the same Halloween picture described above, using the Social Justice Framework prompts us to think about how this picture could be used in class, in English or in the local language.

From an identity angle, the following questions teachers could ask:

- Where do I fit in in this picture? Where and who am I in this picture? Why?
- Who do I want to be in this picture? Why?
- Would I have been the same person last year? Why or why not?
- Who influences who I am?

From a diversity angle, teachers can ask if the people in the picture are representative of a diverse population or if there are people in the image that represent the world as it really is. From a justice angle, the question can be asked if children are allowed to dress up in a certain costume (such as a Native person), and list what would and would not be allowed and why. Finally, from an action angle, learners can prepare a <u>proper</u> Halloween party with certain rules (no Black Face, etc.) or host an event that raises money for a certain cause.

The question that comes up in class is often of whether or not these ideas are too complex for primary school EFL learners. The answer is a mix of asking ourselves if we should be allowed to teach "Halloween" if only denotations are used when the pictures we provide our learners are full of connotations and ideas for expanding the topic to the local language or also to other subjects, in this case to have learners compare Halloween with All Saints Day and Dia de los Muertos – which is possible in the English language classroom but simply not in the official coursebooks.

3.2 Using the framework more generally – "Identity standards" example

The Learning for Justice Social Justice Framework can also be used more generally, as a tool to scrutinize coursebook activities and get an overview of the entire curriculum. Generally, the process would be to:

1) Read through the standards (Chiariello et al., 2016) on the Learning for Justice website (https://www.learningforjustice.org/).
2) Locate where there are examples of them in the locally used materials and find out where these examples could be taken further.
3) Find out for which standards are not exemplified in the local materials and plan out activities around these missing standards.
4) Analyze the provided scenarios for use with learners.

The example provided here takes the standards for "identity". This same analysis could be done in class for diversity, justice and action standards but is not treated here.

What elementary school coursebooks in Switzerland do provide are opportunities for learners to "develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society" and "language and historical and cultural knowledge that affirm and accurately describe this membership"(Chiariello et al., 2016). These can be found in family tree activities, in a unit where learners have to present their family origins and mini books about themselves. This could be taken further whereby learners take any of these products and look more at the history of their origins or where their families split or merged with other groups.

To delve deeper, using pictures such as Elise Gravel's "All Kinds of Families" picture that shows eleven different families with the author's comment "There are many different kinds of families. I can't draw them all on this page, it's impossible!" (Gravel, n.d.). Learners can answer the following questions:

- Do you know any families like the ones in the pictures?
- What do they do for fun together?
- What is a family? What makes a family a family?
- Who is in your family?

- Which families do you know / are in this picture that are NOT like yours?
- What language would YOU use to describe these families? Should you avoid descriptions such as "his mother is White, his father is Black"?

Where the local coursebooks do not touch upon these identity standards are in "people's multiple identities interact and create unique and complex individuals" and in the recognition of traits of the "dominant, home and other cultures" (Chiariello et al., 2016) and how an individual negotiates amongst many contexts. Here, teachers can confront learners with more varied identities by asking:

- Who am I today?
- Who will I be tomorrow?
- Who am I sometimes?
- Who influences who I am / want to be?

Teachers can take the pictures of families and look at them from a cultural perspective – is this Canadian example similar to what we see in Switzerland? Furthermore, to address these missing standards, in the Swiss classroom, teachers can look at stereotypical images of Switzerland (fondue, Heidi, Swatches, etc.) and ask learners if they see themselves in the same way "Canadians" see them and if anything is missing.

Finally, the anti-bias scenarios provided in the standards as examples of the application of the standard to the classroom are worth working with on a content and language level. An example of one such scenario is:

> For show and tell, Joi brings in a picture of her family on a church camping trip. "My family goes camping a lot. I like camping," she says. "I'm a Christian, and sometimes my family goes camping with the church. I'm also a big sister, so I have to help my parents take care of my little brother, especially when we go camping" (Chiariello et al., 2016, p. 5).

This example is already at an A2 level (cf. http://www.roadtogrammar.com/textanalysis/) which is appropriate for a group of Swiss elementary school learners. Therefore, teachers can use the text directly as it is by

letting the learners replace words with their own, by turning it into a role-play, by creating a gap or a cloze activity.
Other anti-bias scenarios are a bit too complex linguistically, and need to be simplified, for instance reworking a scenario provided at a C1 level by simplifying the language and using cognates found in German to bring to a B1 or B2 level, as shown in Table 3.

Original Text	**Adapted Text**
Omar's mother is serving as a chaperone on her son's field trip. On the bus ride, the teacher, Ms. Robin, overhears a conversation between Omar and Peter. "What is your mother wearing on her head?" Peter asks. "It's called a hijab," Omar replies. "Many Muslim women wear them." "Why does she wear it?" "Our religion teaches us that the hijab is a way of being humble and modest. Muslim women wear it to show they love God." (Chiariello et al., 2016, p. 6)	Omar's mother went on the class trip. On the bus, Peter asks Omar: "What is your mother wearing on her head?" "It's a hijab," says Omar. "Many Muslim women wear them." "Why?" asks Peter. "Our religion teaches us that the hijab is a way of being humble. Muslim women wear it to show they love God."

Table 3: Adapting the Social Justice Anti-Bias Scenarios to a more accessible level in ELT

The example in Table 3 can be used for a discussion, in English or the local language, about why hijabs are worn and what else people wear for religious or other reasons. In this regard, the general topic of clothing can be addressed. In many ELT coursebooks, learners have to describe each other by the color of their clothing in almost every grade, and even in the fifth grade in the Swiss context, after more than two years of English, they are asked to "Describe your best friend (eyes, hair color, etc.)" and the same in secondary, but with more attributes. With such exercises, instead of just simplistic descriptions, we can work on the semiotics a bit more by asking what it says about the person (and why). For instance, we can teach "I like wearing ponytails: I need my hair out of my eyes for gymnastics"

as an example of what we look like with why we do so. We can also show pictures, such as drag queens and teach language such as "They are wearing fancy clothes! They like them!" Adding word pools of positive characteristics is not overly linguistically demanding and might actually capture learners' interest – learning "They're spunky" is so much more fun than learning "They have brown eyes."

There is a wealth of teaching ideas that come from using Social Justice Standards that are not in many current local coursebook materials. It would be relatively simple and much more meaningful to create activities based on these materials that provide a common thread that would go through the curriculum: promoting an anti-bias stance to education. It is simple enough to teach "one mom, two moms", to create partnerships through platforms such as epals, or to explicitly put deconstruct gender stereotypes by using better pictures and example sentences. It is easy enough, instead of showing single representations of events such as holidays (e.g., Halloween), to print out several pictures from several different cultures. These ideas promote an anti-bias curriculum.

4. Suggestions for using newspaper pictures

Besides exposing, provoking and unpacking coursebook materials, a simple way of presenting the world as it is by regularly using newspaper pictures. All the international newspapers and many local ones have "Pictures of the Day", "The Week in Pictures", or "Bilder der Woche" which make rich prompts for simple language activities in ways that open learners' eyes to the world around them. With a measured and age-appropriate selection and discussion in the local language if need-be, such images can prompt critical thinking and awareness and most of all, provide exposure. Coursebook images are always a compromise and are often outdated.

Relative short, simple activities at the A1 or A2 levels could be:

- Having learners write captions and then comparing them to the ones provided;

- Uncovering the picture bit by bit with an image reveal tool (e.g., https://www.classtools.net/reveal/) and just naming the colors or objects seen in each section;
- Having learners label what is in the picture either directly on the picture or as an ABC race on the board or on a separate sheet of paper;
- Having learners list categories / solutions / reasons for the picture as a whole or elements within;
- Using the pictures for classroom routines where every lesson, a child has prepared to show and describe a provided or selected picture;
- As a riddle, a learner can pretend to be in the picture somewhere and describe "from where I am in the picture, I can see…";
- Having learners write 2 truths and a lie either about what is in the picture or about the context of the picture;
- Having learners use a graphic organizer to hypothesize on the Who/What/Where/Why/When/How of the picture and then following up on the actual information;
- Having learners look at the picture for 30 seconds and then taking it away ("What do you remember?" → *"I saw … There is / are/was/were …"*);
- Doing a word art project with the picture: learners take a small version of the picture and glue to a piece of paper and continue the drawing around it in a mix of word and picture;
- Hanging pictures around the classroom, describing one and having the learners go there and say more about it;
- Being provided with one picture a week and at the end of every lesson respond to a prompt (such as "What is in the picture?" or "What does the picture tell us about the situation?").

For entire lessons, with enough support for an A1 or A2 level or at higher levels, learners can:

- Plan a story around the picture, then write it up or prepare a comic or storyboard about it;
- Choose two similar pictures and compare and contrast them;
- Find out more about the picture, its background and what it represents;

- Create a news report using the picture.

These examples do not take much work on the part of the teacher and can easily be integrated as permanent routines in the classroom (e.g. every Friday is a "What's Going On in the World?" lesson). These ideas provide practice of the basic structures that learners need ("There is/are", "In this picture, I can see…") yet more than just teaching English, using such pictures can increase learner world knowledge substantially, hopefully thereby promoting critical thinking skills and through exposure, reading skills.

5. Conclusion

There are multifold implications of using the tools and ideas presented here. First of all, pre-service teacher training needs to include an awareness and discussion of dispositions and mindsets. With these in mind, teachers can view the materials they might be expected to work with in a new light that sheds questions on the implicit or latent messages being sent to learners, these which might actually contradict a teacher's own beliefs or dispositions. Secondly, even a quick go-through of the core elements from the Social Justice Framework with a possible lesson in mind can provide ideas for questions or alternate ways of working with materials. Thirdly, knowing that it is acceptable to present the world as it is and the issues that touch us all even to younger learners or beginning language learners can lead teachers to taking more risks – be it in simply presenting pictures from the local newspaper to teaching entire units on Black Lives Matter or Unsung Heroes or whatever one is passionate about. Finally, such an awareness can lead to even simple changes: why show female ballerinas and male boxers when there are many both male and female dancers and boxers.

Just as Baldwin (1963) says, we teachers in central Europe are in a role of responsibility, we are obliged by our curriculum to help our learners learn to manoeuver in a colorful, diverse world and expose our learners to the many people and places in it and we must not shirk this responsibility. There are many authentic numerous resources from the English-speaking world that can support English language teachers around the world (see https://padlet.com/laura_buechel/diversity) to help.

Therefore, there is no reason for teachers to avoid “hot topics”, they should confront and embrace them and expose their learners to them as addressing issues of privilege, race, gender and more belong in every subject and in every grade.

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Getting Young Learners to Speak English from the Start: Examples for Teaching Practice

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Abstract

One focus of early foreign language learning in the primary EFL classroom is the development of oral skills. Imitative and reproductive speaking activities can provide opportunities for the development of basic speaking competencies and fluency. Speaking practice aims at progressing the acquisition of the target language and helping children to become communicatively competent speakers of English. Using classroom management as a basis, this contribution suggests practical examples aimed at enabling and equipping young learners to speak English from the start.

Keywords: TEYL, classroom management, speaking practice, pronunciation training, dialogue practice

1. Teaching Speaking to Young Learners

Foreign language learning with young learners builds on a trustful teacher-student relationship, a non-restrictive learning atmosphere free from fear and characterized by constructive feedback, the quality of speech (the teacher as a role model), and enough room for integrated practice and individual development. In general, young learners tend to have great trust in their primary school teachers and rely on their speaking competence as their role models. In most publications, the expression *young learners* is applied to children from the age of three to twelve. This contribution focuses on the skill of speaking in TEFL to young learners from the ages of 6 to 10 in a classroom setting, as in most German federal states teaching English to young learners (TEYL) starts in grade 3 at the age of eight or nine. In Germany, educational as well as curricular decisions are made by the federal states. Therefore, only six federal states already start early in class 1 (5/6-year-olds) (Hempel et al., 2017). When starting learning English in the school setting at the age of 6 or 8 (in 1st

or 3rd grade), children are already equipped with a variety of qualities that will help them learn a foreign language: Their joy of learning and ability to imitate, their willingness to speak, as well as their little fear of making mistakes (Böttger, 2020). With high motivation and their childlike openness to new things, they easily overcome the fear of the unknown and make use of their natural ability to play with sounds and words (Kirkgöz, 2019).

Speaking in a foreign language is a complicated, multidimensional skill in which many sub-processes take place in parallel. Being able to communicate successfully in everyday foreign-language situations, to adapt one's language to the respective conversational situation and special contexts, requires a competent interplay of the language components. (Böttger, 2016, p. 131). As Böttger rightly states, when starting their journey to acquire a foreign language, the components pronunciation, intonation, and learning basic vocabulary play a major role for young learners (Böttger, 2016). In the following paragraph, I will focus on the principles of early speaking practice and a holistic language teaching approach.

2. Principles of early speaking practice

An early start and a high exposure to the target language form important aspects of successful foreign language acquisition with young learners. In line with their age-specific characteristics and needs, the most important principles in TEYL are raising curiosity, learning without restrictions, promoting individuality, applicability to the learners' lives (*Lebensweltbezug*), and providing enriching task formats (Böttger, 2016, p. 150). Task formats demanding and promoting musical/motoric skills, problem-solving, and stimulating multiple sensory channels form an integral part of TEYL. Integrated repetition and practice play a key role not only in the primary EFL classroom.

Equipping learners to use a foreign language for authentic communication in real-life situations is essential. As Cameron highlights, children should be enabled "to use the foreign language with real people for real purposes" (Cameron, 2001, p. 37). It is important to consider this

social aspect of foreign language learning. Meaningful communication that involves relevant and age-appropriate topics can help structure the language acquisition process. New words should always be linked to existing language knowledge and presented in useable chunks, sentences, and/or dialogue structures. To use and further develop the heterogeneous skill levels brought in by the young learners, a learning atmosphere free of restrictions and the constructive handling of mistakes is necessary.

Cameron emphasizes two guiding principles for TEYL: “Meaning must come first” – children need to understand the spoken language to learn it and “to learn discourse skills, children need both to participate in discourse and to build up knowledge and skills for participation” (Cameron, 2001, p. 36). The target of teaching should be discourse as situational language use to enable the children to speak about relevant content in real conversational situations. Discourse happens whenever teachers and learners interact during tasks and activities in (language) classrooms. Teachers need to be aware that their young learners may sometimes continue with activities or tasks even if they do not understand what is being said because they want to please their teachers and respect them. Young learners need repeated listening to models of language use, especially by native or proficient speakers. Language input through listening can be provided by audio or video recordings and/or in-person visits from native speakers in addition to their language teachers. Furthermore, they should be provided with a variety of opportunities to say the words and chunks in different scenarios and get constant feedback to improve their fluency and accuracy (Cameron, 2001).

2.1 Songs in early English learning

Songs offer a great way to practice the young learners’ pronunciation, listening skills, vocabulary, as well as sentence structure, and form an integral part of TEYL. As Kirkgöz notes, “[s]ongs help children gradually internalise the structures and patterns of the foreign language and to learn specific vocabulary” (Kirkgöz, 2019, p. 182). In a review of nine empirical classroom studies the pedagogical value of songs and their positive effect on receptive and productive vocabulary development, motivation, pronunciation, communicative abilities and literacy is shown (Davis,

2017, p. 452). When teaching songs, the use of illustrations and gestures seems to be enhancing learning and memorizing foreign language words and phrases as well (Macedonia, 2014). In a typical children's song, phrases are short and use simple conversational language helping young learners to process the language easily (Murphy, 2014). For children, rhymes, raps, and songs can be fun, highly motivational, and help them especially with the acquisition of new vocabulary and the internalisation of correct pronunciation and intonation patterns. The rhythm of a song, rap, or rhyme can support the acquisition of correct intonation patterns in English sentences and phrases. Correct intonation patterns of recurring basic sentences (e.g., "How are you?" ↑) can be practiced within a song to avoid the habituation of wrong patterns. Songs with an appropriate level of difficulty should be selected by the teacher as too much complexity discourages young learners to engage and sing along (Davis, 2017, p. 451). Together with lively discourse, and a native-like classroom language in the TEYL classroom, songs offer an age-appropriate and effective way of acquiring the language.

2.2 Classroom management in TEYL

Purposeful classroom management is of great significance as every English teacher faces organizational constraints such as the weekly amount of usually two English lessons with typically forty-five minutes each – a common structure of the German school system. Not teaching one's own class – as German primary school teachers normally do – and filling in as a subject teacher can complicate teacher-student relationships. Classroom management starts with "establishing and maintaining order in a classroom within an educational system that aims to foster learning as well as social and emotional growth" and "encompasses all of the teacher's practices related to developing mode of instruction (e.g., lecturing, group work) and dealing with learner behaviour" (Zein, 2019, p. 154). A close look at each learner encourages a holistic language teaching approach treating and analysing the student within the context of his or her system and background (Kirkgöz, 2019). Increased use of English in the primary school classroom opens opportunities for listening and elementary speaking. Teacher-fronted

language teaching followed by pair or group work allows the students to practice the new words in a protected space.

3. Speaking in the TEYL classroom

The basic precondition for developing speaking skills is to initially experience the foreign language through spoken language. According to Böttger, the conceptual order of the receptive, reproductive/imitative, and productive phase should be considered when acquiring a foreign language (Böttger, 2016). Speaking in a foreign language takes place at different levels: imitation, reproduction, and production. The first phase is characterised by memorisation through imitation: The learner pronounces and repeats sounds, words, phrases, sentences, even parts of texts. This poses a high demand on the learners' ability to memorise and pronounce new words which then must be retained and known by heart (Böttger, 2020). Steady pronunciation training in meaningful contexts builds the groundwork towards becoming competent speakers.

3.1 Pronunciation: Laying the foundation for speaking competence

Training the correct pronunciation of words and sounds and integrated repetition aims at enabling speakers to use the language freely. From the start, pronunciation practice should be introduced together with nonverbal instruction signs. These help the teacher to interact with students while placing focus on the pronunciation of the word. Whenever a new word, chunk, or phrase is integrated into EFL practices, a repeated phonologically correct presentation of the new word by the teacher forms the basis. Students must repeatedly see and hear how individual sounds are formed in the teacher's mouth. Table 1 illustrates examples on how to form and explain three of the typical English sounds and sound combinations to learners. Teachers could show similar illustrations (see Table 1) to learners and explain what they specifically have to do with their tongue and lips to form the sounds correctly by reading out the instructions. Feeling for the vibration of the vocal cords and inspect the outer appearance of the mouth with a hand mirror can help students to check if they engage the right articulatory organs in the right manner (see Böttger, 2006, for further ideas and applications).

/dʒ/	/r/	/w/
e.g. ***German, jump, age***	e.g. ***red, green, three***	e.g. ***water, word, what***
- The consonant /dʒ/ is a voiced, alveo-palatal, affricate consonant.	- The consonant /r/ is a voiced, palatal, liquid consonant.	- The sound /w/ is a voiced, bilabial glide.
- The lips are open and rounded. - The middle of the tongue is placed behind the upper teeth. - The tongue is quickly moved downward, and the air is forcefully pushed out.	- The tip of the tongue is moved upwards and backwards. - The tongue is curled slightly but does not touch the top of the mouth. - Air is breathed in and let out. - The vocal cords vibrate.	- The lips form a tight circle, and the tongue is pulled back. - The tongue touches no other part of the mouth. - The lips are opened quickly while the tongue is moved forward, and air is pushed out of the mouth.

Table 1: Teaching typical sounds and sound combinations – /dʒ/, /r/ and /w/ (based on Rogers, 2013)

A *silent period* follows the conscious presentation of the new word by the teacher that gives the students the time to process the exact sound and manner of articulation. During this 3-second period the teacher is counting down with three fingers nonverbally signed and forms the word again silently and in an exaggerated way. Thereafter, the students repeat the new word or chunk aloud chorally. The first rounds of repetition take place as teacher-fronted instruction so that every individual learner can see and hear the sound with precision before submerging in the following choral response. Variations like the game "*Like a ...*" (repeating the word like a robot, a witch, a grizzly bear, a princess, etc.) or "*Lip reading*"

(guessing the word just by reading the teacher's lips) create a diverse and multi-layered practice process. The class can then be split into different groups (e.g., window/door side, front/back, by rows/table groups, etc.) to repeat and practice pronunciation in smaller groups. To prevent individual mispronunciations and keep an eye on the individual, a few students can be asked to repeat alone by a nonverbal sign of the teacher (*repeat* = index fingers rotating around each other). Afterward, the training can continue in small groups or pair work to give room for supportive cooperation and constructive student feedback on each other. Intensive pronunciation practice can help to avoid *fossilizations* defined as the lasting incorrect memorization, and internalization of a word pronunciation extraordinarily difficult to relearn (Böttger, 2020, p. 98). Establishing reoccurring pronunciation routines and the repetition of familiar exercise formats as described fosters proper pronunciation and avoids future communication barriers through fossilization.

Intonation, emphasis, sound, and fluency are additional modules to be trained when dealing with chunks and sentences. The importance of message before accuracy does not take effect in this early oral production phase. Dangers of neglecting these aspects are wrong stress, intonation, and pronunciation of individual sounds becoming ingrained, or ultimately a wrong pronunciation being formed. The teacher must be familiar with the pronunciation and intonation of the new words and the right emphasis of sentences before introducing them in the EFL classroom. Careful preparation and practice beforehand is an important factor of effective TEYL. Against this background, the following section discusses how to initiate free speaking after repeated and ongoing imitation practice and the repetition of words, chunks, and sentences in communicative situations.

3.2 Speaking practice: Initiation of free speaking

As speaking can be learned first and foremost through the act of doing it, there should be consistent classroom management focusing on oral communication as a starting point (Böttger, 2016). Through motivating speaking situations and praising small steps, young learners can be encouraged to speak in the foreign language. The automatization of

correct speech habits as a predominantly mechanical process through imitation and repetition in age-appropriate settings forms the basis of free speaking: The transition of English language input from working memory to long-term memory succeeds well in the primary school years when something is methodically practiced and repeated in a varied and active way. If new vocabulary is in addition integrated into a larger linguistic context (e.g., a word in a whole sentence) and well-structured and organized in a larger thematic context, it is even better memorable. A meaningful documentation of thematic units preserves knowledge for later access, such as in the form of written word webs or self-made picture dictionaries. (Böttger, 2020, p. 24)

It is, therefore, necessary to not only orally present new words but also show the written word or sentence at a later point in the lesson. The written fixation helps with memorising and offers a great opportunity to talk about written vs. spoken English to foster language awareness. A well-managed booklet for new vocabulary supports the learning process and promotes method learning. Speaking whole sentences in a foreign language is no easy undertaking: Every aspect must be well aligned with the other. As Cameron notes "a speaker needs to find the most appropriate words and the correct grammar to convey meaning accurately and precisely, and needs to organise the discourse so that a listener will understand" (Cameron, 2001, p. 41). To master this challenge, students need to overcome their fear of failure and start speaking, being certain they are met with encouragement and praise. This achievement and courage is to be recognized and rewarded by the teacher to enable progress. Importantly, however, not every student is born a talker – some children need more time to get involved in actively speaking the foreign language. To respond to learners' varied learning needs and language skills, the teacher can implement differentiated (proactive) instruction (Sullivan & Weeks, 2019). Differentiated instruction refers to an instructional design wherein "teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse individual needs to maximise the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 121). Differentiated instruction can be put into practice in numerous ways. For instance, teachers can allow variable response times and completion rates for

speaking tasks and thus recognise their students' diversity (Sullivan & Weeks, 2019). Smaller groups with similar needs can be formed and additional scaffolding can be provided in the form of pronunciation aids (e.g., individually recordable audio pens). In more heterogeneous groups, more advanced students can be good role models and function as assistant teachers. The more classmates get involved in actively participating in the lesson, the more oral communication in foreign language is cultivated and the easier it is for quiet students to follow their classmates' examples. The consequent use of English as classroom language is the most evident but also most effective parameter, as it gives children the opportunity to listen to and practice English as often as possible. Responding and asking in English should become natural in and in-between English lessons. Compared to listening, speaking demands much more of the young learners' language resources and skills. Therefore, speaking activities "require careful and plentiful support of various types, not just support for understanding, but also for production" (Cameron, 2001, p. 41).

4. Getting Young Learners to speak: Activities and methods

The following section focuses on how to get young learners to speak (freely) in the foreign language. I will present and explain activities and methods out of the TEYL classroom. These activities derive from various teaching resources available for TEYL and are commonly integrated into teacher education programmes during teacher training (*Referendariat*) in Germany. Also, I have worked with these activities in practice for several years and found them very helpful and productive to foster speaking practice in the young learners EFL classroom.

Repetitive scenarios, as Bland (2019) describes them, are routines in classroom management, such as giving work instructions, setting up tasks, distributing material, or giving feedback "supply opportunities for realistic target-language use" (2019, p. 82). Bland moreover claims them to be the reason why teachers of young learners must learn to use English flexibly to be able to lead through an English lesson and the daily classroom activities with ease. Therefore, an early beginning of establishing and further developing a manageable, reasonable, and

comprehensible repertoire of classroom phrases in the target language is essential.

4.1 Daily classroom routines in English

The daily classroom routine is a great opportunity to introduce classroom phrases with increasing difficulty using gestures, facial expressions, and body language for contextualisation. The morning circle can be held in English starting with an English greeting, a song, and checking the daily attendance provides an opportunity to practice counting. The daily schedule is presented in English including the actual date, the time of the year, and the daily weather report. At the beginning of the school year, this practice might be for the most part teacher-driven: The new words are gradually introduced in a meaningful context and implicitly anchored through daily repetition. The teacher keeps a close eye on pronunciation and lets the whole group repeat chorally and individually. After some days or weeks, some students are invited to perform this task on their own and function as "the daily speaker", taking on the role of the teacher. Simple everyday activities in the classroom like standing up and sitting down, switching on the lights, opening the windows to let fresh air in, closing and opening the door, changing organizational structures (group/partner work, come to the front and sit in a circle), handing out materials, asking for attention/silence, getting ready for the next lesson and simple task instructions offer the possibility of integrating English into the daily classroom routine (ISB, 2021). With the help of picture cards attached to the respective objects and places in the classroom, the children are reminded of the vocabulary and enabled to use them actively. What might at first start with a very passive role of the students – listening, contextualising, and understanding – will lead to growing engagement.

Word cards labelling important objects in the classroom indirectly introduce them to new word groups in a meaningful and action-oriented way. As Böttger states, implicit learning processes without required attention offer special potential for early English learning (2020, p. 28). In the same way, (movement) games with familiar content and classroom rituals forming an integral part of the daily routine can be executed in English (Böttger, 2020). The learning is linked to new, different content

and the active component supports holistic learning and memorisation. Popular primary school games like *Simon says, corner arithmetic (Eckenrechnen), movement memory (Bewegungsmemory), giant-human-dwarf (Riese, Mensch, Zwerg), hangman*, etc. can be played in English if the concepts and rules are well known to learners in German. Classroom services (*Klassendienste*) and the assigned tasks are introduced step-by-step in English by referring to their tasks with already known classroom phrases during the everyday classroom routines ("*delivery service*": *handing out worksheets, "airing service": opening/closing the windows, "board service": cleaning the board*, etc.). After some time and repeated use of the English words and structures, the students will get used to refer to the tasks in English. *Magic words* (e.g., *Thank you, You're welcome*, etc.) can also become part of the classroom language by following the example of the teacher: The teacher reminds the students of the *magic words* every time teaching material is handed out or interaction takes place in English. An English farewell song, rhyme, or rap can end the school day. Even on schooldays without one of the two (or more) weekly English lessons, a rather considerable amount of English can therefore be spoken throughout the day. Patience, repetition, and persistence pay off as after a while, the children use English in classroom situations more naturally. Table 2 provides a summary of proposed activities and methods.

	Examples	Competences	Vocabulary
Classroom routines	greeting (farewell) songs	- address and greet, and say goodbye to someone - ask how someone is feeling, express personal feelings and state of mind	*greetings and farewell, courtesies*
	date/weather announcement	- communicate orally using elementary thematic vocabulary - festivities and customs, current events	*numbers, days of the week, months, seasons, holidays, weather, adjectives*
	Daily schedule	- provide information about the school, class, teachers (school life)	*school subjects, special events*
	Daily attendance	- provide and ask for information about the class (school life)	*numbers, "...is missing"*
	Classroom services	- imitate typical sounds and sound combinations, and use them intelligibly and largely correctly - understand simple task instructions and respond to them verbally and non-verbally	*rooms and furniture, school things, household chores, etc.*
	"Magic words"	- give thanks and to respond to thanks (courtesies)	*"Thank you, Here you are, You´re welcome, Please" etc.*
	Task instructions	- understand simple task instructions and respond to them verbally and non-verbally (e.g., frequently recurring classroom phrases; craft instructions)	*"Listen., Write down., Colour in. Cut out., Work with your partner." etc.*
Games & songs	Movement games	- understand games instructions and respond to them verbally and non-verbally - Total Physical Response (TPR)	*parts of the body, movements, actions (e.g. Simon says, ...)*
	Movement songs	- understand simple instructions for action and respond to them verbally and non-verbally - recite well-practiced short texts (e.g., rhymes or raps) from memory and sound	*parts of the body, verbs, (e.g. head, shoulders, knees and toes, ...)*

	Examples	Competences	Vocabulary
Classroom surroundings	Picture cards	- read individual words they have previously heard and developed in terms of content aloud correctly after repeating them several times	*rooms and furniture, school things, toys*
Other subjects	Maths	- understand and exercise arithmetic operations in English (e.g., corner arithmetic game, mental calculation, ...)	*numbers, arithmetic operators, etc.*
	Physical education	- understand simple game instructions and respond to them verbally and non-verbally	*sports, hobbies, body parts, etc.*
	Arts and crafts	- describe in simple words what they see in pictures, photographs	*colours, artists, etc.*
	Science and nature (geography)	- consciously pay attention to gestures, facial expressions, images, or the situational or linguistic context in order to infer content or the meaning of new words	*animals, pets, the weather, family and friends, vegetables and fruit, Great Britain, the USA, etc.*

Table 2: Ways of getting your learner to talk English (based on ISB, 2021)

The more connected, more varied, more often – the better: Getting young learners to speak English from the start is dependent on the learning atmosphere and on the classroom management, the primacy of oral communication, the quantity and the quality of language input, and practice. A wide range of opportunities to use the language in diverse contexts and situations can help young learners to build a stable network of vocabulary and sentence structures in the foreign language early on.

4.2 English lessons: structure, rituals, and classroom management

The speaking practice during English lessons benefits strongly from establishing early rules and structures. The aim is to enable as much speaking time as possible with high student participation. Clearly defined English-/German-speaking-times and nonverbal signs help communicate

without switching to German. At the beginning of each English lesson, a clearly defined “switch to English” with the whole class should take place. This can be achieved through an English rhyme/chant/song at the beginning and the joint phrase “Let’s click/switch to English!”. Whenever the teacher feels the need to switch to German during the lesson (e.g., explaining grammatical/intercultural content, giving complex task instruction), the whole class “clicks to German”. German phases should be as short and rare as possible and have a clearly defined ending (“Let’s click back to English!”). By letting the whole class chant and snip the switching back together with their fingers, they are made aware of the language change.

At the beginning of each English lesson, a warming up phase should follow the greeting to give every student the possibility to warm up with the language and repeat vocabulary from the lesson before. There are various ways of warming up, often depending on the individual lesson goal. In the form of a double circle (*Kugellager*) in front of the classroom, learners can practice vocabulary with the help of picture cards and sentence structures fixated on the designated “English wall” or the board. Within only 5 to 10 minutes, every student practices the words with changing partners. Using the method of the *marketplace* or *chat points,* with some guidance in the form of a *“Let’s talk” fan* (Figure 1) filled with conversation questions and sentences, all students practice simultaneously and actively.

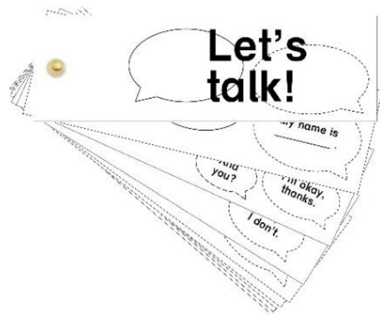

Figure 1: “Let’s talk” fan (own source)

Just like speaking activities, games should also have a clear structure that is introduced from the beginning. Every introduction of new vocabulary should be followed by various games to practice and deepen the learning experience. Games like *What's missing, Repeat if it's true, Charades (Pantomime), Pictionary (Montagsmaler), Snap!*, are a vital part of every English lesson. Teachers can initially introduce rules in German to make sure every student understands them. At a later point in time, the English instructions might be sufficient. When it comes to task instructions in the foreign language generally, picture cards visualising the desired activity (e.g., *Cut out., Stick in., Tick the correct answer.*, etc.) can be useful tools. Thus, instructions can be made sticking to the foreign language and the related pictures can be fixed to the board. As a positive side effect, with one glimpse at the board during their activities, the students are reminded of what is required of them. Task instruction cards can be as well used outside the EFL classroom for other main subjects.

4.3 Dialogue practice in the TEYL classroom

This section discusses the potential of dialogue lessons for starting free speaking production in the young learners' EFL classroom. As a part of every curriculum, the basics of age-appropriate conversation in English about oneself, one's hobbies, family, and friends can be introduced and practiced early on. This conversational practice can take place with a hand puppet, a partner/group, or the teacher. Starting with easy Q&A structures, the students can be challenged with gap dialogues needing to be filled in with further information. Flow charts can help to master more difficult dialogues like ordering food/drinks, interviewing a person, inviting somebody to a party, going to the flea market, or looking for a new pet.

The basic structure of each dialogue is presented to the students in an introductory lesson with the help of a short video clip or a role play by the teacher. Important vocabulary necessary to understand and perform the dialogue should be introduced and practiced in the preceding lessons. The first step is to make sure the students understand new words by using gestures, body language, and facial expressions as well as realia. Questions and listening tasks guide the student's attention during a

second presentation of the situation and give the teacher feedback on how much they understood so far and what needs to be explained more thoroughly. Extensive pronunciation training and repetition follow to enable fluent pronunciation and intonation. If needed, a short grammar excursion can be added to explain the derivation of the short form (*I'd like = I would like, I've got = I have got*, etc.) or how to form the plural in English (e.g., *one apple – two apples, one strawberry – two strawberries, one fish – two fish*, etc.). After a teacher-centred introduction, the students practice the dialogue and the new words in pair work. The roles change after each round and they give each other feedback on content, pronunciation, and acting out. The use of realia such as microphones, a purse, or items to be sold has been proven to be practical and engaging for students. Furthermore, a student desk placed between the two dialogue partners can create a more realistic setting and help the students to take on the roles more easily. In addition to the dialogue structure on the board, printed versions of the flow chart can be very helpful while practicing in small groups. The structure of the flow charts (Figure 2) helps each speaker to identify his or her part and gives a guideline for the students to try out different dialogue types.

Depending on the abilities of learners, the flow charts can be altered and adapted to their level of proficiency (e.g., negotiating the price, buying several items, asking for help, etc.). To produce extended talk, preparation time and various opportunities for practice with the dialogue partner(s) are crucial. Giving each group the possibility to present their dialogue and praising their effort in front of the class motivates others to continue to speak English in class. With the help of listening tasks, every student is included in the final presentation and takes part in optimising every individual's performance. Designated groups can look and listen for pronunciation, content, volume, and the quality of the acting out.

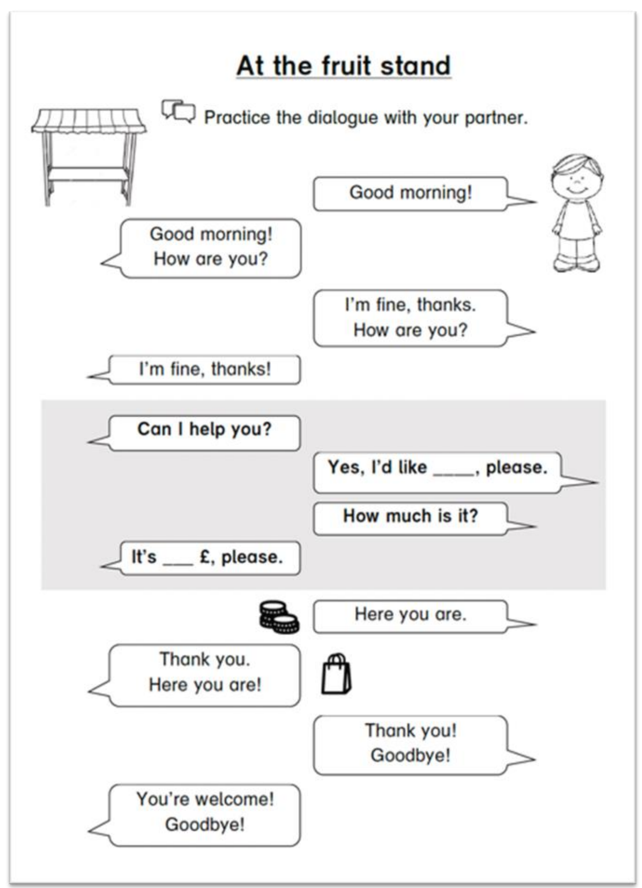

Figure 2: Flow chart: "At the fruit stand" (own source)

Textbooks can play a role in this context – depending on which issues or editions are used – as they offer various speaking occasions (e.g., crowd scenes (*Wimmelbilder*) at the beginning of each new unit) and ideas for communicative situations. They provide the young learners with useful vocabulary and the teacher with examples on how to introduce the corresponding topic and offer material like flow charts and picture cards. Textbooks in class size, if at hand, offer a resource-efficient way of equipping the students during group work with curriculum-relevant working material. Digital devices can also be useful, depending on

technology available in the classroom, as they combine audio and visualisation in one place at the learner's hand. With the help of free tools like for example the app *Book Creator*[3], teachers can create engaging eBooks containing the new vocabulary/topic as text, images, audio and video. Learners can repeatedly re-listen to new words/sentences with headphones, practice pronunciation individually on their own and solve easy tasks. Learning apps like for example *ANTON*[4] offer a wide variety of English exercises including topics like basic everyday vocabulary, conversational English, intercultural content and special days across all four grade levels. The task formats range from listening, matching, pairing, spelling, writing and reading activities and include quizzes and tests at the end of each unit. Learners get engaged and motivated to practice by colourful layouts, designs and the concept of gamification itself.

Working in smaller groups allows young learners to speak English in a more intimate setting. It might be easier for them to open and practice their speaking skills than it would in a classroom situation where a mistake will be recognized more openly by fellow students. Loder-Buechel (2020) points out effective ideas on how to get young learners to stick to English during classroom interaction. She strongly encourages to model the behaviour we want our learners to employ: "Paraphrasing, using body language and simply asking for help when you yourself can't find the language are the same strategic competence skills, we should teach our learners" (2020, p. 24). During group work, for example, it is especially difficult to get young learners to stick to the English language. Loder-Buechel proposes the use of props: A bean bag with a picture of an English-speaking person (e.g., The Queen, Greta Thunberg, etc.) attached to it wanders over to sit in front of a group switching back to German

[3] *Book Creator* is a digital book-creating tool with various options to combine text, audio, images and video into an eBook that can be published and used on various digital devices (https://bookcreator.com).

[4] *ANTON* is a universal learning platform (web & mobile) for school and students that can be used for independent self-learning as well as for interactive learning in a classroom context. The project "ANTON – Learning Platform for School" is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (https://anton.app/de/).

during group work, suggesting it wants to be part of the convo, too (2020, p. 27). This reminder helps young learners to recognise when they switch back to their mother tongue. It gives them time to react without being embarrassed by the teacher for making a mistake. There could also be a *Stammtisch* set up somewhere in the classroom a group can go to whenever something during their group work needs to be discussed or settled in German (e.g., because of its complexity, unknown words) (2020, p. 26). "By doing so, they are aware of the switch and how long they have switched, and the teacher can monitor or provide necessary support" if needed (Loder-Buechel, 2020, p. 26). As young learners are reminded of their usage of the first language in the EFL classroom, their awareness of the foreign language rises and shapes their future use and frequency of it. The teacher takes up a supportive position and provides scaffolding. After some time, English will take a more predominant position in classroom interactions between teacher and students.

5. Conclusion: Immersive teaching scenarios

Motivation and practice, a positive mindset and self-confidence are key when it comes to getting young learners to speak English from the start. As this contribution has shown, emphasizing meaningful pronunciation and dialogue practice, cultivating English as the classroom language in various ways, and using every opportunity possible to stick to English, young learners are equipped with what it takes to speak English from the start. Meaningful speaking tasks and activities – giving the students something they want to talk about – bring life to foreign language lessons. Adding the element of choice to language tasks encourages young learners to get involved and show their interests and expertise. When children are personally involved in a task and are given a chance to talk, participation increases automatically. In contrast, when too much is demanded from them, they might feel inhibited and will tend to produce only single words or formulaic sentences instead of freely taking part in the conversation. It is the teacher's responsibility to adjust tasks and topics to relate to the young learners interests to get them to speak the foreign language (Cameron, 2001; Sullivan & Weeks, 2019).

Given the limited amount of actual teaching time, the organisational constraints, and the lack of uniform national education standards for EFL teaching in primary schools in Germany, immersive learning scenarios gain importance. As German primary schools follow a class teacher system, the possibility of extended exposure to English for young learners is given by introducing immersive learning scenarios to the classroom. With cross-curricular teaching, task-based language learning, and CLIL scenarios (see Steinlen and Piske in this volume), more than just the weekly English lessons are held in English. Young learners can profit from various teaching situations in which they get used to listening to and improve their speaking skills. This requires teachers to rely on solid language skills, knowledge, and experience on how to teach English as a foreign language to young learners. Therefore, teacher training and in-school training for English teachers are important factors when it comes to improving the quality and thus the quantity of English teaching in primary schools.

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Reflective Practice for Primary English Teachers: A Qualitative Analysis of Expert Interviews

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Abstract

Professional advice plays a crucial role in (future) teachers' development. During an international lecture series, a group of researchers and practitioners gave talks on various topics related to the field of teaching English to young leaners (TEYL). Their presentations were followed by interviews that aimed at identifying practical implications for teaching. Following a qualitative approach, responses were transcribed and summarized in categories. The suggestions include providing well-chosen input, structuring lessons clearly, reflecting on teaching methods critically, applying TPR, using child-oriented media and employing picturebooks. On that basis, we derive suggestions for future TEYL exchanges.

Keywords: reflective practice, primary education, teacher education, expert interviews

1. Introduction

Features of "good teaching" are frequently discussed, both in educational research and in teaching practice. Throughout the history of teaching English, methodological standards – and thus aspects of what is considered "good teaching" – have been subject to change. Key principles of TEYL today comprise, inter alia, reference to child-oriented topics and situations, authenticity, and using visualizations (Böttger, 2020). Even today, opinions on methodological requirements towards teachers differ greatly, regarding English for young learners (EYL) in particular:

> Interpretations of the necessary methodological skills for teaching young learners vary considerably, both as a result of widely differing understandings of the nature of learning in educational institutions worldwide and because of the limited attention paid to the specific needs of children in EYL. (Enever, 2015, p. 23)

This contribution aims at summarizing key suggestions for practice as identified by experts of TEFL[5]. Expert advice plays an important role in the education of pre-service, novice, and experienced teachers alike. In fact, teachers' *continuing professional development* (CPD) is linked to numerous other terms, such as *teacher development* and *lifelong learning* (Bolam & McMahon, 2005, p. 33). Professional development in the understanding of lifelong learning never ceases and thus takes place both during (university) education and professional practice.

While exact definitions vary, teaching expertise can roughly be characterized as disposing of a lot of experience and know-how (Tsui, 2008, pp. 167-168). Thus, the role of an expert can, for instance, be assumed by lecturers, researchers, or colleagues. This contribution contains expert advice that results from interviews with TEFL lecturers and researchers, all of whom are involved in teacher education in different ways. The interviews were led by university students and conducted in the follow-up of the respective talk at the TEFL lecture series *English in Primary Education: Concepts, Research, Practice*. This international lecture series was organized by Theresa Summer and took place virtually, at the University of Bamberg, in May and June 2021. It included presentations by Janice Bland, Laura Loder-Buechel, Julia Reckermann, Martin Bastkowski, Thorsten Piske and Anja Steinlen, as well as Stephen Krashen. The interview questions related to advice on competent, effective, and child-oriented English teaching useful for future primary school teachers, as well as for teachers of English in general. In this contribution, we will discuss the role of expertise and reflective practice

[5] Throughout this contribution, we use the term *expert* as a neutral, non-evaluating umbrella term for people with extensive experience in a certain area. *Expertise* does not represent a target state here, but instead involves lifelong learning and learning with and from each other.

in English Language Teaching (ELT), followed by an overview of the qualitative analysis of these expert interviews and suggestions for future TEFL exchanges.

2. The role of expertise and reflective practice in ELT

In order to teach effectively, teachers require comprehensive knowledge to draw upon (Reynolds et al., 2022, p. 340). Corresponding knowledge areas are cultures, language systems, language use, processing and acquisition, instruction and assessment, and educational systems (Reynolds et al., 2022, p. 340). The interview questions addressed these topic areas, with the exact selection depending on the (research) interests of the respective interviewee.

Expertise has been studied since the beginnings of the 20th century (Johnson, 2008, p. 11). When it comes to teaching in general, research has emerged from "an intrinsic interest in gaining a better understanding of the special forms of knowledge held by teachers and the cognitive processes in which they were engaged when making pedagogical decisions" (Tsui, 2008, p. 167). With regard to teacher educator expertise, Waters (2008) states that suggested teaching ideas need to be considered implementable in the classroom from teachers' point of view (p. 218). This demonstrates the importance of the exchange between theory and practice, which at the same time plays a major role during university education.

In the context of this contribution, we will discuss expertise in the field of TEFL, with a focus on experts in both research and practice. Moreover, the term *expertise* is also used in the context of teachers' professional development as suggestions in turn influence the expertise of (future) teachers. According to Helmke (2017), expertise is not a feature of teaching quality per se, but rather a personal trait that influences the latter (p. 76). Thus, both willingness and capability of reflecting on one's teaching are indispensable measures for improvement (Helmke, 2017, p. 116).

In 1983, the concept of the *reflective practitioner* was coined by Schön (Helmke, 2017, p. 116). In doing so, Schön (1983) suggests *reflection-in-*

action, that "links the art of practice in uncertainty and uniqueness to the scientist's art of research" (p. 69), and further observes that when implemented by teachers, reflection-in-action makes "'good teaching' and 'a good classroom' [...] topics of urgent institutional concern" (p. 335).

Nowadays, the term *reflection* is frequently used when evaluating something retrospectively. In the context of teaching, Farrell (2020) states that reflective practice is rather complex, namely "more than fleeting thoughts before, during, or after a lesson; it means that teachers examine what they do in the classroom and why they do it" (p. 9). Moreover, reflective practice implies that teachers consider "their beliefs and values related to English language teaching and [...] determine whether classroom practices are consistent with them" (Farrell, 2020, p. 9), which means that reflection is strongly linked to both beliefs and teaching practice. This interconnection is illustrated in Wallace's *reflective practice model of professional development* (1991), as shown in Figure 1:

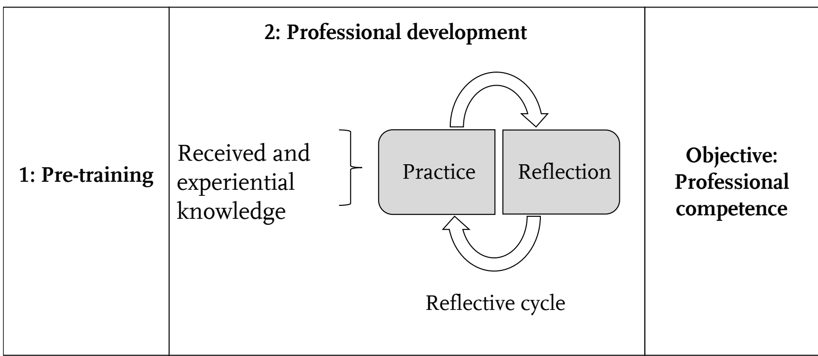

Figure 1: Reflective practice model of professional development (based on Wallace, 1991, p. 49)

Here, Wallace (1991) distinguishes between the two stages of *pre-training* and *professional development*, leading to the objective of *professional competence* (p. 48). The professional development stage is thereby characterized by received and experiential knowledge that influence each other and are accompanied by continuous reflection in the so-called *reflective cycle* (Wallace, 1991, p. 52; 56). The input that (future) teachers

receive, for instance provided as here, through interviews, contributes to their received knowledge and therefore drives forward their professional development.

As a selected example of empirical research in the field, the study *VERA – Gute Unterrichtspraxis* asked primary school teachers to fill in a questionnaire about their teaching practices (Helmke, 2017, p. 116). Results showed that most teachers exchange ideas for improving their teaching with colleagues often (48%) or even very often (18%) (Helmke et al., 2008, as cited in Helmke, 2017, p. 116). In comparison, only few of them (16% often, 5% very often) discuss matters of teaching quality in the context of a quality circle or working group (Helmke et al., 2008, as cited in Helmke, 2017, p. 117). Yet, 20% of participants completely and 72% rather agree that they spend time reflecting upon their teaching (Helmke et al., 2008, as cited in Helmke, 2017, p. 117). On the one hand, these results underline the ubiquity of reflective practice, which, conversely, indicates a need for practical suggestions. On the other hand, they equally show that reflective practice tends to be exerted among colleagues and, so far, less frequently in a wider context. The present study connects thereon, bridging the gap between theory and practice and bringing together various perspectives.

3. Methodology: Qualitative interviews

The six interviews were conducted individually, each after their talk in the context of the TEFL lecture series *English in Primary Education: Concepts, Research, Practice*. The TEFL experts who were interviewed can be associated with different strands of TEYL (“Abstracts”, 2022):

1) **Janice Bland**, Professor of English Education at Nord University, Norway, with research interests in, e.g., children’s and young adult literature and multiple literacies

2) **Laura Loder-Buechel**, experienced teacher trainer at Zürich University of Teacher Education

3) **Julia Reckermann**, former primary school teacher currently holding a junior professorship for TEFL at the University of Münster; research interests in teaching young language learners

4) **Martin Bastkowski**, teacher, teacher trainer, and visiting lecturer for ELT at Hildesheim University, with teaching experience both at primary and secondary schools in Germany, Ireland, and the US

5) **Thorsten Piske** & **Anja Steinlen**, Professor and senior lecturer at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, with work on first and second language acquisition and bilingual teaching programs

6) **Stephen Krashen**, the most frequently cited scholar in foreign language education, well-known for his contributions, for instance to the fields of literacy and language acquisition

The interviews were led by students of the seminar *English in Primary Education: Concepts, Research, Practice* that was linked directly to the lecture series. Each session consisted of the expert's talk, followed by the respective interview. The audience of the talk therefore had the opportunity to listen to the interviews directly, but they were also recorded for asynchronous reception and further analysis.

According to the typology of interviews by Lamnek and Krell (2016), the interviews were explorative and half-standardized, as questions had been prepared and sent to the interviewees before the actual interviews, yet possibly altered due to spontaneous reactions and shifts in wording (p. 315). They were led individually after the respective talk and therefore communicated audio-visually via Zoom, with the audience of the previous talk listening. The style can be described as neutral to rather informal, and questions were predominantly open (Lamnek & Krell, 2016, p. 315).

Some of the interview questions were addressed to several interviewees alike, for example:

1) *What motivated you to specialise in the teaching of English as a foreign language to young children?*

2) *What tips and tricks can you give us from your field of study?*

Other items individually fit the respective research interests of the interviewee, for instance:

1) *To what extent would you argue should we encourage children to write freely?*
2) *In your opinion, should bilingual classes also be taught English lessons in the first two grades?*

In a next step, the recorded interviews were transcribed and then analysed according to the following steps as outlined by Cohen et al. (2017, p. 524):

1) Generating natural units of meaning
2) Classifying, categorizing, and ordering these units of meaning

The classification and categorization resulted in six thematic areas. These units of meaning will be outlined and explained in the following, combined with critical evaluations and practical implications for teaching.

4. Results: An analysis of expert interviews

The ideas and suggestions of the ELT professionals can be described as *core practices* or as first steps in developing more specific core practices, as they represent individual elements with the goal of fostering learning. More specifically, "[c]ore practices consist of strategies, routines, and moves that can be unpacked and learned by teachers" (Grossman et al., 2018, p. 4). The expert advice, which lends itself to the development of core practices, can be grouped into the six main categories shown in Figure 2.

Here, these categories have been arranged from rather general advice to more specific suggestions. They will be described individually in the following.

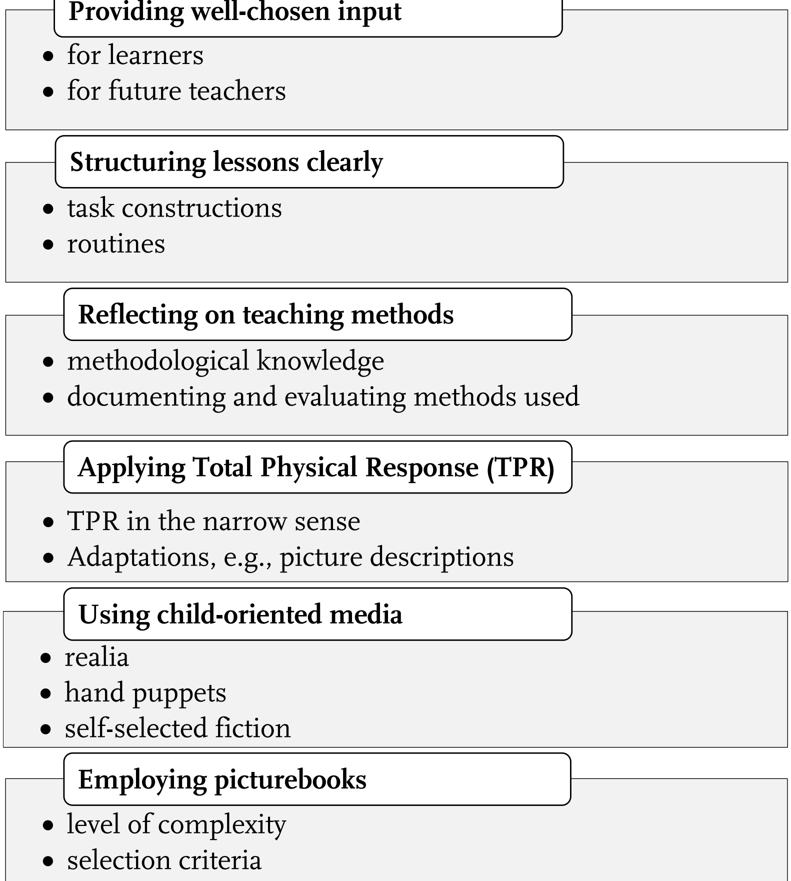

Figure 2: Expert advice on TEYL (based on interviews with Bland, Loder-Buechel, Reckermann, Bastkowski, Piske & Steinlen, Krashen, 2021)

4.1 Providing well-chosen input

To begin with, both Loder-Buechel (2021) and Reckermann (2021) highlight the importance of well-chosen input, although they regard this aspect from slightly different angles. Loder-Büchel (2021) puts emphasis on the already acquired knowledge of young learners:

“I think also to not underestimate the kids, like they really come in with a lot of language [...] And you encourage them to try to use all their linguistic resource, and you’re often surprised at how much the kids actually know and can do, and not to teach single words.” (Loder-Büchel, 2021)

Reckermann (2021), on the other hand, criticizes too much teaching time being spent on less challenging activities such as drawing. At the same time, the potential of more challenging input is highlighted:

“Don’t be happy-clappy all the time, so just don’t color in all the time. And also, don’t only do songs and games all the time because there are so many more challenging, yet still relevant, authentic, and interesting things that we can do with children and that will eventually, at the end of year 4, lead to very promising results.” (Reckermann, 2021)

These views have an underlying theoretical basis. According to Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1982), learners acquire a language through input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence (p. 21). Thus, language acquisition is impeded if pupils are treated as if they have little or no prior knowledge and only single words are taught. In his interview, Krashen (2021) also refers to input and how it can help against initial anxiety of speaking:

“If you get lots of comprehensible input, listening and reading, you will want to speak.” (Krashen, 2021)

After this reference to input and language acquisition in general, Krashen (2021) points out that teachers themselves should not hesitate to learn another language, ideally through a lot of input:

“Do another language [...] Choose a language where there’s lots of input available. That’s my recommendation.” (Krashen, 2021)

The TEFL experts thus consider comprehensible input relevant for language acquisition: for young learners, their teachers, and adult

learners alike. Next to the importance of input, Reckermann (2021) adds further aspects:

> "So, the time that we have, we should spend that on qualified input, qualified output, qualified teaching." (Reckermann, 2021)

In doing so, Reckermann (2021) suggests an efficient use of time in the classroom. Input is regarded in a larger context, namely in combination with output. The roles of these aspects in the classroom evidently depend on teaching and are consequently part of the teacher's responsibility.

4.2 Structuring lessons clearly

In ELT, input is frequently provided in form of materials used during lessons. These materials are in turn often embedded in tasks. When it comes to structuring lessons, Bastkowski (2021) highlights task construction as a way of allowing more time on tasks during lessons. The underlying concept is called the *four-step structure*:

> 1) Explain the **content**: What are students supposed to do and why?
> 2) Present the **material and method.**
> 3) Indicate the **time**: Focus on a precise deadline, not on a time span.
> 4) State the **form of interaction.**
>
> (Bastkowski, 2021)

By following these four steps, young learners can focus on the task without being distracted, for example, by worrying about what exactly they are supposed to work on, or by calculating how much time is left. Regarding the form of interaction, Bastkowski (2021) describes three instructions that teachers can add to their lessons: *heads up*, which refers to classroom discussions, *heads down*, i.e., individual work, and *heads together*, which implies working in pairs or groups. Familiarizing the students with these instructions can provide increased transparency for learners.

With regard to task construction, Piske and Steinlen (2021) point out that providing young learners with a clear and recurring lesson structure will help them predict what will happen, which will increase comprehension:

> "What helps the students a lot is when the instructional routines are predictable." (Piske & Steinlen, 2021)

Another suggestion that is strongly linked to instructional routines is made by Bastkowski (2021), who developed the *four Bs* (*brain, book, buddy,* and *boss*) to imply the order students should follow when looking for assistance during an activity: First, they are encouraged to think about it on their own (*brain*), then look for information in materials (*book*), after that, they can ask a peer (*buddy*), and finally the teacher (*boss*). This technique motivates the students to work as independently as possible, while still providing scaffolding.

4.3 Reflecting on teaching methods critically

When planning a lesson, its input, and its structure, the respective teaching methods play a major role. Reckermann (2021) as well as Bastkowski (2021) focus on the importance of reflecting on different teaching methods. Reckermann (2021) advises to always reflect one's own experiences critically and to consider what research has put forth:

> "Try to critically reflect on the way you were taught. Is that really the teacher that you would like to be? What would you like to be as a teacher? What is a modern way of teaching? What do we know from research? And try to, if necessary – and very often that is necessary because in the primary school, quite a bit has changed over the last one or two decades – so, try to go away from how you were taught and start trying to find your own style of teaching." (Reckermann, 2021)

In fact, Enever (2015) states that it is part of teachers' expertise to use methodological skills that correspond to the learners' age (p. 22). Summer (2013) similarly addresses the need for a thorough evaluation of the teaching and learning context when choosing and implementing a method (p. 1). As not every teaching method will match the individual learning and teaching environment.

However, keeping track of the various activities and methods can be challenging, which may result in lessons that lack variety. As a measure

against this, Bastkowski (2021) proposes to create an activity book. In this book, teachers should list their tried and tested warm-ups, introductions or lead-ins, main methods, as well as feedback activities:

> "With the help of the activity book, you can plan your lessons way quicker. And of course, you have again balanced teaching, variation of all those different activities and ideas." (Bastkowski, 2021)

However, teachers should not only reflect on what method can theoretically be used for certain lesson goals, but also consider the respective group of learners specifically and thus include corresponding measures of differentiation and scaffolding. By constantly revising the activity book and adding one's experiences and evaluations, teaching quality can continuously be improved, which might not be the case if teachers keep relying on a restricted number of methods that they are familiar with.

4.4 Applying Total Physical Response (TPR)

Focusing on methods in TEYL more specifically, the interviewees frequently referred to Total Physical Response (TPR), even if the explicit term was not necessarily used. In 1969, Asher suggested the method as a way of exclusively focusing on listening comprehension in early foreign language learning, which would, in a next step, facilitate speaking (pp. 16-17). Underlying key principles of TPR are "1) understanding language before speaking, 2) developing understanding through bodily movement, and 3) not forcing speaking from students" (Summer, 2013, p. 7). Bland (2021) specifically recommends the use of TPR and at the same time offers a practical example:

> "If possible, teach in the gym. You don't have to teach only in the classroom. You can maybe create a scenario where they are parked in a boat on the sea, for example [...]" (Bland, 2021)

Moreover, Piske and Steinlen (2021) express the importance of combining language with action. This constitutes one of the principles of TPR:

> “It is really important to accompany any kind of language with action and vice versa, whenever you do something, you need to use language a lot.” (Piske & Steinlen, 2021)

Despite the numerous positive aspects of TPR, it should not be implemented in an unreflective manner, keeping in mind that learners also need time and opportunities for “quiet anchors for individual reflection” (Legutke et al., 2014, p. 31).

During the interview, Bland (2021) described an adapted version of TPR that involves less movement: The teacher describes a picture and learners draw the picture, based on what they understand. This adaptation might be more challenging, as learners are required to remember and transfer information.

Yet, speaking, writing, and reading are not essential components of TPR as learners do not engage in interaction. Solely relying on TPR therefore neglects other important communicative skills. Primary school teachers should thus reflect critically when and how often they integrate TPR in their teaching. What is more, TPR is only one way of integrating motion into the classroom. There are several other options for developing motion-based activities across all age groups, such as using activities based on theatre pedagogy in the classroom (Sambanis & Walter, 2019).

4.5 Using child-oriented media

The potential of media use in TEYL is frequently being discussed and has become an essential part of initial teacher education (e.g., Böttger 2020; Legutke et al., 2014). In the following, the term *media* will refer to “the vehicles, or stimuli, that convey a pedagogical message which is linguistic, cultural, literary or other” (Evans, 2013, pp. 217-218).

Among the key principles of TEYL, Böttger (2020) lists *authenticity*, which, next to numerous other aspects, includes a meaningful use of media and the usage of real objects (p. 77). In the classroom, these realia create a context in which communication can take place (Böttger, 2020, p. 207). Piske and Steinlen (2021) also stress the importance of “real-life objects [and] visuals” to support the content of the lesson and help the students

understand the target language better. Moreover, Bland (2021) highlights the relevance of showing pictures and toys to students for language skills to be fostered in context. She mentions the usage of toy animals in lessons as an opportunity to practise asking simple questions:

> "Collect little animals and little toys that you can use, so realia [...] I hid something in a box and first of all – I did this, but later the children could do so. And then we guessed 'What's in the box?' and they, the one who has the box, can only answer 'yes' or 'no', so the children practise asking questions: 'Is it an animal?' [...], 'Does it live on the farm?' or 'Does it live in the wild?'" (Bland, 2021)

Beyond the context of these interviews, Krashen (2003) describes the relation between realia and input: "The classroom hour is filled with aural comprehensible input. Teachers help make input comprehensible in several ways. First, they provide context in the form of pictures and realia" (p. 7).

In addition to realia, Bland (2021) mentions glove puppets as a way of engaging students in dialogues and helping them practise basic language skills. Legutke et al. (2014) describe four perspectives that explain the potential of glove puppets (pp. 97-98):

1) **Psychological perspective**: glove puppet as "mediator" between students and teacher and as "co-teacher"
2) **Linguistic perspective**: glove puppet as motivation to engage in communication
3) **Educational perspective**: glove puppet teaching aspects of culture
4) **Learning perspective**: students as observers of communication between teacher and glove puppet

In a nutshell, realia and glove puppets can be used for several reasons and in various contexts. Focusing on literature in general, Krashen (2020) emphasizes the importance of *pleasure reading* as it provides "optimal input for acquisition" (p. 167) and, based on recent research, sums up the potential of self-selected fiction (Krashen, 2020). With fiction being the topic of the talk (see Krashen in this volume), self-selected fiction was outlined again during the interview:

“Let’s make sure they [the students] have something to read. Let’s get them so good and get them so excited they’ll want to read on their own. That’s our job.” (Krashen, 2021)

Enabling students to read self-selected fiction, both with regard to learners’ competences and to the corresponding prerequisites, such as the school’s equipment, is considered one of the core objectives of teaching. Yet, Bland (2018) identifies that learning through literature in TEYL is “patchy and poorly resourced in most countries” (p. 280). However, it matches further current concepts well, such as content-based teaching, intercultural learning, and multiple literacies, and simultaneously introduces children to the joy of reading (Bland, 2018, p. 280).

4.6 Employing picturebooks

Following the consideration of the overall benefits of literature in TEYL, this section will focus on picturebooks more specifically. These were frequently referred to during the interviews, such as with Reckermann (2021), who specifically suggests the use of picturebooks:

“Exit the course book as often as possible and do something beyond the course book [...] like picturebooks.” (Reckermann, 2021)

According to Bland (2018), picturebooks are multimodal and represent the “format that is currently perhaps best known and most widely used in ELT with young learners” (p. 271). The term *picturebooks* is frequently spelled as one orthographic word in order to highlight the interplay of pictures and text (Bland, 2018, p. 271). According to Mourão (2016), their potential is not limited to fostering receptive skills, but instead they offer authentic contexts for language use and may prompt discussions and responses (p. 25). Their multimodality allows for increased complexity, as suggested by Mourão (2016), since this will challenge learners to “fill the gaps between the pictures and the words” (p. 39). Reckermann (2021), however, states that picturebook stories run the risk of not being interesting to primary school learners and thus advises to choose rather complex and therefore engaging picturebooks:

“Picturebooks will to a certain extent be too childish, content-wise. So, it’s important that they don’t feel too childish to the learners, that there’s still a story that is still appealing to learners in the primary school because those that we usually would use as picturebooks are those that were written to learners that are a lot younger.” (Reckermann, 2021)

In this context, Reckermann (2021) points out the importance of selection criteria that can be used as a basis when choosing picturebooks for one’s teaching. Such a list of criteria can be found in Bland (2018) and these, for example, include accessible language and content, pictures that add meaning to the story, words and illustrations that foster empathy, and diversity (p. 280).

These six suggestions have emerged from interviews conducted during a TEFL lecture series. Against this background, suggestions for future TEYL exchanges arise, which might eventually improve teacher education in the long run.

5. Suggestions for future TEYL exchanges

The lecture series and interviews allowed for a detailed and direct exchange between future teachers of English and TEFL experts. In comparison to other engagement with expert advice, for instance by attending lectures or reading publications, students here played the active role of interviewers, could bring in their own ideas, and ask follow-up questions. They were thus not only passive consumers, but also prosumers involved in the development of suggestions. At the same time, the teacher educators outlined their ideas in interaction, could immediately react to students’ suggestions, and therefore assumed the roles of tutors or mentors, rather than “merely” being lecturers or authors.

We consider this mutual exchange beneficial for all participants, in order to discuss issues, concerns, and ideas collaboratively and in a larger context. Opportunities for this exchange, such as TEFL lecture series, can be initiated top-down within institutionalized frameworks or bottom-up by (future) teachers themselves (Padwad & Parnham, 2019, p. 553). Next

to lecture series, several other opportunities for TEFL networks are conceivable, such as associations, clubs, and activity groups, or communities of practice, possibly using online platforms such as Facebook groups (Padwad & Parnham, 2019, p. 554).

For that purpose, the potential of digital media is huge, since it easily enables virtual meetings over long distances, which enormously expands the scope of the exchanges and allows for even more fruitful discussions that bring together various (international) perspectives. Interdisciplinary approaches can also play an important role in bringing together the different aspects of teacher education in a profitable way. The aforementioned networks should therefore not be limited to TEFL, but also include other fields such as literary and cultural studies and applied linguistics.

6. Conclusion

In this contribution, we have brought forth suggestions for practice for TEYL, based on interviews with Janice Bland, Laura Loder-Büchel, Julia Reckermann, Martin Bastkowski, Thorsten Piske and Anja Steinlen, as well as Stephen Krashen (2021). Their advice comprises providing well-chosen input, structuring lessons clearly, reflecting on teaching methods critically, applying TPR, using child-oriented media, and employing picturebooks.

The scope of six suggestions might seem sparse, considering the overall field of teaching principles and CPD. As Bolam & McMahon (2005) point out, publications in CPD are written in large numbers and from numerous different perspectives, which has resulted in “too many rather than too few approaches and theories” (p. 52). Therefore, and in terms of bringing together theory and practice, we consider few tangible suggestions for practice particularly useful, which can, in a next step, be applied to specific contexts and curricula.

We have further outlined specific ideas for exchanges between all participants involved. This exchange may, in a next step, foster reflective practice and teachers’ professional development. In that regard, Krashen (2021) urges to write short and comprehensible papers that are openly

accessible as this will help make research (and expert advice) easily available to anyone interested. Further research is needed in order to bring together various perspectives on TEYL, for instance from pre-service and novice teachers, experienced teachers, and researchers. This will cater for an ongoing exchange between theory and practice and between participants in English language education overall.

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A Look Ahead: Foreign Language Encounters and Future Challenges of Primary English Language Education

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1. A focus on English in primary education

Encounters in foreign languages happen on a daily basis. First encounters with different foreign languages are a social reality, especially in Germany – a country in which roughly one third of all people have a migration background (Destatis, 2022). For German-speaking children growing up monolingually, such first encounters – whether in kindergarten or school – usually take place in English before institutionalized early foreign language teaching. Children are likely to encounter the use of English as a lingua franca in communicative situations at playgrounds or on holiday, or they may encounter English through digital media. In addition to the importance of learning two or more foreign languages from a very early age, which was concluded at the Barcelona European Council meeting in 2002 (Council of the European Union, 2014), English as the lingua franca is a perfect choice for the first foreign language to be learnt at school for a number of reasons:

First, English is omnipresent in daily interaction, for instance in the use of loanwords (e.g. etwas 'liken', eine 'App') and in the language of pop cultural texts including comics, music, and films (cf. Werner, 2018). As such, English does not only dominate language use and spheres of audio-visual culture such as the television and film industry, but also areas of daily life and interaction such as clothing, food, and toys. What is more, English is a global language and it exists in various forms – thus the preferred term global Englishes in the plural, which further hopes to help overcome the "prevailing monolingual myth" in English language education (Galloway, 2017, p. 1). English is used by people across the world in a great range of different contexts. It is the language of aviation, shipping, international tourism, the universal church, sporting events, international congresses and committees, from the Council of Europe to

the United Nations. A great number of the world's scientific journals are written in English as are business contracts and information stored on servers worldwide, and this list seems practically endless.

The content of foreign language teaching and learning in primary schools is therefore well founded with the English language (or *languages* in the plural), its literatures and English-speaking cultures. Certainly, this does not exclude a multilingual approach (cf. Ludwig & Sambanis, 2022) – although ways of integrating multilingual activities at primary school must yet be conceptualized and empirically investigated. Importantly, all efforts to teach English in primary school are aimed at children. When they enter first grade, they bring enormous potential for a successful language acquisition and learning process with them. Where, then, does the completely outdated discussion about language sequences and number of English lessons in different grades come from, despite ideal language acquisition conditions?

If parents' fears about their children being overwhelmed by the new language, the possible neglect of the German language as well as about structural reasons, such as the lack of nationwide all-day instruction, are eliminated from this discussion without trivializing them, a special foreign language learning context emerges in primary schools:

In addition to the generally short contact time with all languages, including German, the generally largely non-authentic English-language input in the classroom situation is particularly problematic - to put it in simplified terms. The communication there is largely language-related, not content-related, systematic instruction prevails, and regular real-life applications are missing. In elementary school English lessons, the students often receive language material that is selected according to foreign language didactic aspects and is certainly also intended to promote an authentic engagement with language, but on a much narrower basis than possible compared to natural language acquisition. Dealing with the correct spelling of words plays a marginal role, orality is in the foreground. The language material is pre-structured through selection and arrangement, and conveyed regarding specific competence formulations, which makes it much easier to classify them into existing knowledge

structures. Sensitive error correction helps to eliminate incorrect linguistic hypotheses. In all, the underlying primary didactical formula could be reduced to "long exposure and regular use". And, what is true for the English language, should also be correct for all languages in a continuum of all languages used.

2. The future road to follow: Embedding all languages on a learning continuum

Irrespective of increasingly secure knowledge about early foreign language, the problems of the 1960s have remained relevant long after the turn of the millennium: In addition to the structurally and financially justified lack of well-trained primary school English teachers, a smooth transition from elementary schools to secondary schools in year 5, for example, is still something to be desired.

The different beginnings of early English learning in the German federal states in the first, second or third grade of primary school ensure an unequal starting situation in the institutionalized encounter with a foreign language. In Bavaria, for example, English lessons currently begin in grade 3, in Hamburg in grade 1 and in North Rhine-Westphalia in the first half of the first grade. This imbalance naturally increases at the transition from primary to secondary school. The different number of English lessons in the timetables of primary schools lead to a strongly divergent build-up of English-language skills. In addition, the curricula of the individual federal states are difficult to compare, just like performance assessments and documentation at the end of the 4th grade, which are partly based on grading as in Baden-Wuerttemberg, partly on verbal reports as in Bavaria.

Both then and later, during the transition to the professional, tertiary area, it becomes apparent how different the English language foci are not only in terms of pedagogy, methodology and didactics, but also in terms of the timetable and the freedom to choose a foreign language individually on all school levels. This break or gap has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s. Secondary schools were generally not prepared for the first wave of foreign language teaching being introduced in primary schools. In the

decades that followed, coordination improved in different regions, particularly due to the transfer of early foreign language teaching from being arbitrary to compulsory school subjects, which, however, continued to differ in German federal states. As a result, further systemic and structural instabilities were generated in a cascading manner. This led to many misunderstandings among teachers at primary and secondary level, largely the result of information deficits about the lessons in the subsequent years at secondary school.

Despite the diverse educational policy efforts regarding joint curriculum development, problems remain with the subjective attitudes of the teachers involved, their different levels of training, differences in hourly quotas and still large curricular leeway. In addition, there is a lack of national educational standards. This is where the overarching process and field of action for school policy and school administration lies, the location and embedding of English lessons in primary schools in a reliable, orderly and comparable continuum of lifelong foreign language learning.

All those responsible must be involved in order to arrive at well-balanced solutions in favor of harmonious, continuous and lifelong learning of English and foreign languages, despite the *Länder*-specific diversity. In every learning process, and therefore also in the learning of English, continuity describes gapless, flowing, uninterrupted, even and steady relationships without abrupt changes in school policies. Such continuous learning results in increased anticipation as well as an associated learning planning and action security for both teachers and learners.

On such a continuum (BIG, 2009), language teaching and learning processes develop progressively, constantly and continuously. Some structures, however, have a negative effect on such a desired development. They can be of curricular, institutional or structural origin, for instance, a diversified understanding of competence objectives among those in charge of primary education, deficient teacher training or a different understanding of the children's interculturality or cognitive competences. Those factors prevent a continuous, reliable early English learning. This also applies to foreign language learning in general. In the continuum of

language learning, school forms and levels must not be seen as stand-alone institutions or be viewed as such.

However, the process of comprehensive and long-term harmonization requires an adjustment of the system differences at all levels mentioned. For learning English especially, there are pedagogical and didactic-methodical measures that take everyone involved at the teaching/learning level into account. Aspects of teacher-learner relationships are also considered, for example in the subject teacher, class teacher, course leader principle, the different language learning cultures, changed expectations and the diverging social structure of the school levels.
The concept of lifelong (foreign language) learning refers to the need to create the conditions inside and outside of educational institutions to be able to learn languages for a lifetime in order to be able to actively participate in the ever more rapidly changing international and multicultural society. The English language as the lingua franca and generally the first foreign language to be learned in Germany is a suitable starting point.

The main rescue package for ending all discussion about sense and nonsense of teaching English to young learners consists initially and uncompromisingly in the development of an overall language concept of the Conference of Ministers of Education. This should range from the last year of kindergarten/pre-school with related curricula/timetables up to secondary level, including the implementation of educational standards for the subject English in year 4 or the subject English as a core subject with at least 3 hours per week and interdisciplinary approaches and bilingual programs, as well as in a second step, up to the tertiary level.

3. Empowering teachers

The simultaneous quality assurance of these basic measures aims at an institutionalized and nationwide offer of advanced and further training concepts for university-trained and non-qualified teachers. Additional training for non- or less qualified teachers within a few weeks or months can only - accepted with grudging teeth - be a temporary instrument for the current transitional situation.

The constant expansion of foreign language skills offered to practising teachers through targeted, consistent coaching units and suitable online training platforms will immediately be reflected in the target group, the elementary school students. Thanks to their considerable potential for imitation, young learners will be able to reproduce the language presented through their teachers as target language models. At the same time, as the proportion of English spoken in class by self-confident teachers increases, the lessons will become more communicative, more meaning-focused, more open, and more appropriate to the situation of language learning on the whole. Anyone who speaks English well is also more open and more flexible in terms of didactics and methods, since concentration no longer has to serve one's own foreign language performance, but rather the communicative processes in the classroom.

From a didactic point of view, there are few but important adjustment screws that can be turned in order to achieve professionalization in the direction of English lessons suitable for primary school children. Above all, it is important to consider the cognitive potential of the children. This means that teachers should present the spelling of words to learners in a targeted manner as part of English-language literacy. The first reading and writing activities can quickly strengthen skills in this area. Furthermore, grammatical phenomena and structures can be integrated as chunks as required, possibly explained if considered necessary or relevant to (some individual) learners. Using the German language (or other languages) may help learners to quickly explain certain regularities, and encouraging learners to reflect upon other first languages they may speak can be valuable as a first step towards developing learners' language awareness (Jakisch & Sturm, 2019).

The selection of the language material, which includes authentic texts that are age-appropriate on the one hand and provides useful communicative vocabulary, especially verbs, on the other hand, is valuable in terms of developmental psychology and English didactics. Both printed and digital picturebooks hold great potential in that regard. Concerning the latter, digital adaptations of printed picturebooks as well as apps (cf. Yokota & Teale, 2014; Al-Yagout & Nikolajeva, 2018) could enable a skills-integrated and more authentic interaction with literary texts, provided that IT

specialists, educators, and TEFL researchers cooperate and make the most of the affordances digital elements have to offer for foreign language learning. To give some examples, apps could provide scaffolding (i.e. by reading aloud certain chunks, visualizing and explaining vocabulary) or initiate interaction by prompting learners to interact with each other or a character in the story. As Al-Yagout and Nikolajeva (2018) point out, "[s]uccessful apps utilize the affordances of the medium, offering young readers unique educational and aesthetic experiences" (p. 277).

Differentiating, individualizing, cooperative, collaborative and inclusive methods strengthen young personalities learning English in the classroom. Interdisciplinary, bilingual units with topics from other learning areas of primary school promote learning in two languages – early preparation for future secondary and tertiary education. Incidentally, they increase contact times with the English language and thus contribute to the development of partial bilingualism.

The acceptance of mistakes should also become an important parameter for the English-language learning process. As Shin et al. (2021) highlight, "[s]tudents will make mistakes, a natural part of language development" (p. 67). Mistakes are thus a basic requirement for diagnostic analyses, not for the pure grading, so that both the weak and the strong can be individually supported. Appropriate quality assurance methods for observing, documenting and evaluating elementary school English lessons, which are ideally based on minimum standards, such as the observation sheet and the portfolio, already exist, but they still need to be further developed and, above all, used.

The necessity of really having to 'save' English lessons in German elementary schools from radical cuts or deletions seems neither obvious nor necessary in view of the requirements of European politics. Nevertheless, it is the constant drop of criticism of its still unclear role in the educational process, albeit the rather singular, pilot and project-like efforts, which wears away the stone, the social and political support of early encounters with foreign languages. Without any doubt, the quality and quantity of foreign language education for the young target group, primary school children learning English, must be saved. Without the

measures described, the foreign language world will hurry away from young learners in the future.

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University of Bamberg Press

This volume focuses on the teaching of English as a foreign language to young learners at primary school. The volume features an introduction that covers essentials of teaching English to young learners from a theoretical, empirical, and neuroscientific perspective while also discussing the notion of a principled mindset, competence development, transcultural learning, the use of materials and literature, and lesson planning. The subsequent contributions cover reading and writing, bilingual programs, the transition from primary to secondary school, storybooks, the importance of self-selected fiction, anti-bias education, ways of encouraging young learners to speak, and professional advice for primary English language educators on the basis of a qualitative analysis of interviews. Based on an international TEFL lecture series, researchers, teacher educators, and practising teachers from Germany, Switzerland, and the United States share their insights into these central issues and offer theoretical concepts for the professional development of (pre-service) primary school English teachers. Practical ideas and examples included in this volume aim to make theoretical constructs accessible and relatable for future teachers of English. The afterword features a look ahead by critically examining future challenges of primary school educators and highlighting (1) the great importance of an early start with English as a foreign language and (2) the need for developing national educational standards for primary education.

This volume provides a research-based and practice-oriented foundation for (pre-service) English teachers wishing to expand their knowledge and gain an insight into recent developments in foreign language learning theories and concepts. Although mostly aimed at primary school educators, particularly the introductory chapter will be equally relevant for university students or teachers focusing on vocational and secondary school teaching, so that they develop an understanding of specific features of primary English language education and, as concerns secondary school teachers, can contribute to a smooth transition in the fifth grade.

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