



The EFL Transition from Primary to Secondary School

Martin Bastkowski  0000-0002-4799-1150

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 satisfactory (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 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 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>lesson 1</i> | | | English 5a | English 6c |
| <i>lesson 2</i> | | | English 5a | English 6c |
| <i>break</i> | | | <i>quick exchange</i> | <i>quick exchange</i> |
| <i>lesson 3</i> | English 9f | English 8d | | |
| <i>lesson 4</i> | English 9f | English 8d | | |
| <i>break</i> | <i>quick exchange</i> | <i>quick exchange</i> | | |

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).

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| making English picture buttons | taking a picture with a life-size cardboard English celebrity | getting to know language trips, e.g. to England |
| doing English quizzes | finding out more about CLIL classes, e.g. in PE, history, science, or geography | presenting English competitions (e.g. Big Challenge) and certificates |
| doing easy handicrafts, e.g. English placemats | experiencing a modern communicative form of real-life scenarios, e.g. a language village | introducing learners' outcomes, e.g. an e-poster or podcast about the school |

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 noticeably 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 ... |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions about myself (name, age, hobbies). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • words in a song, chant, or rhyme. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name and count numbers, days, and months. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • words in a song, chant, or rhyme. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short sentences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

3 Hello, class

WALK AROUND Find out about other students.

1 Hello! I'm ... What's your name?

2 Hi! I'm ... I'm ... (years old). How old are you?

3 I'm ... (years old). I'm from ... Where are you from?

4 I'm from ... (too). I like ... What about you?

5 I like ... Nice to meet you!

6 Nice to meet you too. Bye!

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

2 Scout's song

a) Listen and act out the song. Then listen again, act and sing.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Hi, hello, nice to meet you today. How are you? I'm fine, I'm OK. I live here in Brighton, right by the sea. It's a nice day to meet And to find something to eat. Oh, what's that? (Look out! It's Scout!)</p> | <p>I'm a seagull, I'm Scout the seagull. Just look how high In the sky I can fly. That's where I like to be. I'm a seagull, I'm Scout the seagull. Just look how high in the sky I can fly Over the sea.</p> |
|--|--|

b) Ask and answer.

A: Ali, how are you? B: ☺ I'm fine/OK. Mia, how are you? C: ☹ I'm not so good. Leo, how ...

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.

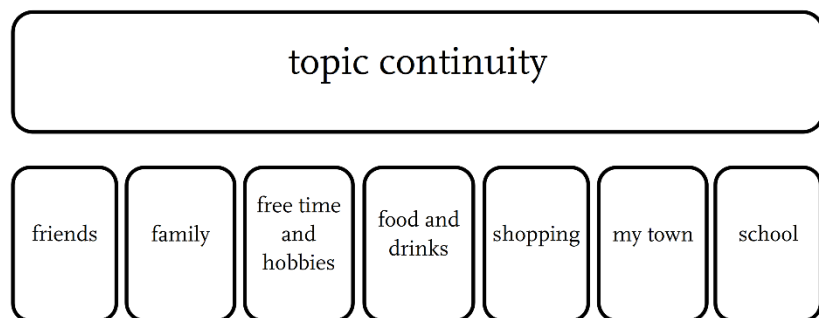


Figure 8: Topic continuity

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.

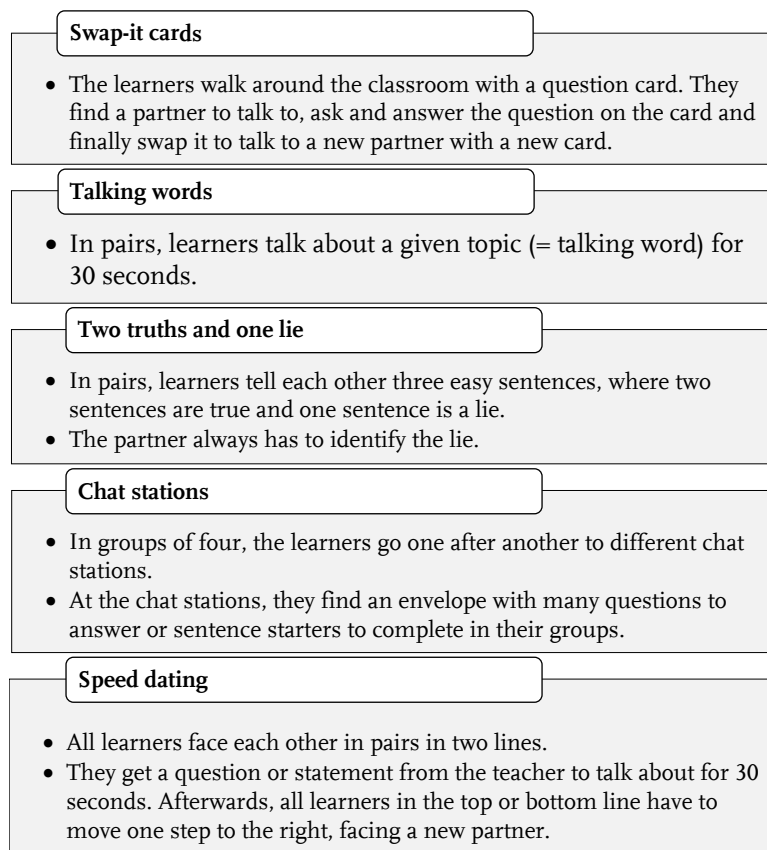


Figure 9: Useful activities for a transition (Bastkowski, 2016)

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 |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classroom discourse • connecting words and pictures • coloring the picture • drawing or numbering • matching • right/wrong sentences • multiple choice • task instructions by the teacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • matching the sentences with the pictures • gap-filling • reading and drawing • connecting word and picture • ticking the right word/picture • finding the correct order | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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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