

Issues in multi-literacy

Valerie Sollars

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Table of contents

Foreword	
Literacy as correspondence – of skills and values	5
<i>Lucija Čok</i>	
Introduction	7
<i>Valerie Sollars</i>	
Defining literacy	7
The case studies	9
Concluding remarks	10
References	10
Multi-literacy: literacy acquisition, (creative) reading and writing in a foreign and/or second language	11
<i>Janez Skela</i>	
Introduction	11
Literacy as correspondence	12
Multi-literacy: approaches to literacy development, (creative) reading and writing in a foreign or second language	14
Activities for promoting reading and writing skills at an early stage of foreign language learning	16
Appendix 1: Vowel Sound Pictures	48
Appendix 2: Consonant Sound Pictures	49
References	50
Storytelling as vehicle to literacy	53
<i>Christl Meixner, Anna Birketveit, Sirje Priks, Birgit Kessler-Vogler, Lilja Jóhannsdóttir</i>	
Introduction	53
Objectives of the project	54
Development of the project	55
Methodology	61
Project reports: Project report from Norway	62
Project report from Austria	65
Project report from Estonia	66
Project report from Germany	70
Project report from Iceland	72
Interpretation of results	74
Résumé	79

Literacy development in a second language	81
<i>Monica Axelsson, Frank Bulthuis, Gunilla Östergren</i>	
Introduction	81
Theoretical background	82
Purpose	83
The reception of migrant children in Sweden	84
Methodology	84
Results	85
Conclusion	96
The reception of migrant children in the Netherlands	97
Methodology	100
Results	101
Conclusive discussion	112
References	115
List of Appendices	116
Appendix 1: Goals for reading	117
Appendix 2: AVI-charts	119
Appendix 3: Reading over the borders. Example: Greek language	125
Appendix 4: Profile chart (example)	128
Appendix 5: Results of the Dutch children in graphic form	129
Young learners' reading and writing experiences of a second/foreign language: the Maltese and Finnish context	135
<i>Valerie Sollars, Ulla-Kaisa Ylinen</i>	
Introduction	135
Literature review	135
The Maltese background	137
The Finnish Background	138
Methodology	139
Results and Discussion	140
Conclusion	166
References	166
Appendix 1: Teachers' questionnaire	167
Appendix 2: Children's questionnaire	168
Notes on the contributors	172

Foreword

Literacy as correspondence – of skills and values

Lucija Čok

General trends towards the early introduction of second or foreign language into compulsory education have resulted in the fact that early literacy in more languages has been recognized as a pedagogical phenomenon, both from the broader socio-cultural and concrete educational point of view. The post-Lisbon period, the strategy of “knowledge-based Europe” with a range of supporting programme documents and initiatives have additionally strengthened the importance of multi-literacy as a linguistic and general European value and criteria.

In spite of the fact that the basic project goal aimed at was the same – gaining multi-literacy – it is evident that different social, educational and school environments have produced various approaches, most of which remained rooted in traditional approaches: literacy, characteristics of writing, co-ordination of the methodologies in the mother, second and foreign languages, training of teachers, teaching material and so on.

The implementation of an integrated approach to multi-literacy, nevertheless, offers a number of innovative strategies on the national level as well as on the level of international networks where individual issues, problems and dilemmas referring to multi-literacy have been discussed, elaborated and implemented into schools according to specific theoretical and practical individual backgrounds.

In order to develop and master the competencies to read and write, which seems to be quite a demanding process for pupils, it is necessary to look for procedures and strategies through which the optimum transfer from first/mother language to all other languages can be achieved. The development of aural discrimination (the importance of perception), the application of logographic strategies in the take up of reading and writing, the capacity for recognition and differentiation of the structure of oral and written communication, all belong to the range of procedures, classified as meta-procedures of a pupil’s developing literacy.

In the process of early foreign language learning/teaching the oral communication remains of primary importance, while written communication – as a higher level of symbolisation – has been usually introduced with a time lag in relation to the first/mother language.

Within the process of multi-literacy we identify differences, particularities and recognize equivalencies. It is advisable to acknowledge and evaluate skills obtained in mother tongue as the grounding of pupils' literacy in a second language.

Nevertheless the experience in a number of countries (also due to the development of new technologies and cultural techniques) confirm the fact that different educational environments demand the development of innovative and unique methodological approaches in order to ensure the efficiency and meet the needs of specific target groups. With this in view, the flexibility of the solutions developed, their adaptability to the target groups and cultural environments identified and the stimulation of innovations has been estimated as the concrete added value to the mainstream objectives of the project itself.

The Slovene concerns with regard to multiliteracy have led to a national strategy of multilanguage literacy development offering Slovene experts examples of experimental instruments and a platform for systematic exchange of experience. This has been taken up in the first medium-term programme of the European Centre for Modern Languages in form of an international project during the years 2000 to 2003.

The present publication represents the concrete result of the findings of this project. It has created an international network of experts faced with the same problem in different social, cultural and educational environments. Apart from the concrete linguistic findings and results, the publication represents a rich account of innovations, of analysing and evaluating problems, of experimenting, developing and implementing innovations in the field of literacy, with special emphasis on multilingual literacy.

In accordance with the importance given to language competencies and communication skills within national as well as general European educational policies the project offers a high quality theoretical and practical ground for further elaboration on national and international level.

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Introduction

Valerie Sollars

The four case studies presented in this book conclude the work launched in Graz in December 2000 at the workshop *Literacy as correspondence – an integrated approach to multi-literacy*. One of the objectives of the workshop was the setting up of research and development network groups to explore the relationship between the teaching of first, second or even third literacy and how young learners are coping with the range of experiences they are exposed to in a variety of contexts in different countries.

As a result of information questionnaires obtained from the participants prior to the start of the workshop, it had been expected that research and development networks would be formed on the basis of five possible contexts, namely:

- First literacy in first language
- First literacy in second language
- Second literacy in first language
- Second literacy in second language
- Second literacy in foreign language

However, given circumstances which developed in the course of the workshop and which were beyond anyone's control, only three of these contexts have been explored and are presented in the four case studies which follow. Looking at the process of acquiring first literacy in one's first language and gaining second literacy in one's first language were not explored by any of the case studies.

Prior to a synopsis about each case study, it is worth reflecting upon one's understanding and definitions of literacy.

Defining literacy

When speaking about first and second literacy development, several issues come to mind: one of the main questions to arise would be when is a person literate or even bi-literate? How does one achieve literacy in different languages? What factors contribute or hinder the development of multiple literacies? Do we all acquire literacy in our mother tongue before learning to read and write in a second or even foreign language? What are the pedagogical implications involved in first and second literacy instruction? How similar or dissimilar should teaching first literacy be from second literacy?

To a certain extent, how and when we become literate depends on one's definition of literacy. Nowadays, there is wide consensus on the importance of making learners aware not only of the mechanics involved in reading but also of its functions and purposes. As research in emergent literacy has amply demonstrated, from a very young age, children are very much aware of the purposes for which adults engage in literacy events (Heath, 1980; Teale, 1986). Children are almost constantly exposed to seeing meaningful examples of print being used in their immediate environment, just as they are generally exposed to meaningful, oral language. Such conclusive evidence has implications for what and how reading could be taught in a classroom context. Apart from ensuring that letter names and letter sounds are in place, children should be presented with and invited to participate in literacy events which are meaningful, purposeful and relevant to their needs. Indeed, if the purpose of education is to help young learners develop into life-long learners, methodologies and approaches applied during formal teaching in class should reinforce reading experiences which equip the learners with skills and strategies which enable them to read independently and efficiently.

Knowing the letter names, letter sounds, being able to use phonetic cues and syllabification where appropriate are only part of literacy development. Barking at sounds in isolation would not enable learners to attain the meaning behind the marks on paper and whatever approach or methodology is adopted to facilitate children's acquisition of the mechanical components, it has to be couched within contexts which children can identify with.

However, in dealing with literacy contexts in a second or third language, it is not just the skills and strategies formally taught by teachers that are utilised by the learners. What children have acquired naturally from their first language experiences will, positively or negatively, influence what they do in subsequent literacy development in other languages. Thus, we come across children who have pronunciation difficulties in their second language because they grew up with a very phonetic mother tongue but are exposed to a second language where sound/letter correspondences do not always fit in. This is just one example in which transfer from literacy 1 to literacy 2 can occur. But for any transfer of skills and knowledge to occur, it is assumed that when children are developing their literacy in a second language, they have some foundation of literacy in their first language.

Transfer effects are evident and comparisons can be made where children are acquiring their second literacy in their second or foreign language. Yet, with developments and changes around the world, which in turn are reflected in people's voluntary or involuntary movement from one country to another and with an evident increase in awareness of the benefits which can be accrued as a result of exposure to several languages from an early age, teachers and education institutions are sometimes facing the realities brought about when children are acquiring their first literacy in a second language. Consequently there may be little information or meta-linguistic knowledge related to reading skills to transfer from the knowledge of a previous language. In the absence of such knowledge, it seems that the onus for promoting second literacy is on

the teacher and the language methodology presented to the learners in formal contexts. The case studies presented in this book reflect upon a variety of teaching methodologies and their implications for children who are learning a second/foreign language.

The case studies

The first chapter reports on work, currently in progress in Slovenia. Recent research has been conducted with Slovenian children for whom Italian is the second language. The research aimed at exploring the extent to which it is easier to teach children sound pictures rather than individual letter names or letter sounds in a language. Experimental materials have been produced and piloted. As the research findings are being analysed and the materials improved upon, another research project has been initiated considering the literacy acquisition of English as the foreign language where Slovene is the first language and language of instruction. The chapter explores the extent to which literacy in English can be taught by teaching the learner the 134 sound pictures that represent the various sounds used in English.

The second chapter brings together the experience of 5 participants who met at the workshop in Graz and agreed to look into the benefits of story-telling as a mode for teaching English as a foreign language to young learners. The participants report about the preparatory work they had to undertake before being able to present children with a set of five stories and accompanying follow-up activities which would not only promote the use of English but would also stimulate the children to elicit and look up information about the different cultures.

The third chapter examines the acquisition of first literacy in a second language among a very specific group of people: migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden and in the Netherlands. The chapter provides information about the educational provisions available in both countries for the migrants/refugees and moves on to present case studies and follow the progress of 10 children as they struggle to move from their reception classes into mainstream education. Several factors contribute to how well or how quickly individual children can move into the mainstream.

The fourth chapter is a comparative study between Maltese and Finnish 9 to 11-year-old children which examined children's reading and writing experiences in English. English is considered a second language in Malta and a foreign language in Finland. However, from responses children provided in their questionnaires, Finnish children appear to be more confident and have a higher self-esteem about the language than the Maltese children. The reports provided by the teachers in both countries about their teaching styles do not appear to be very different. Factors which contribute to the variations in children's perceptions are discussed.

Concluding remarks

The progress review reported in the first chapter and the various results achieved in the three case studies reinforce the complexity of literacy learning and development. This arises from the interdependence of a range of factors. Just as first language and literacy development occur in a context of real collaboration with more knowledgeable others, subsequent language and literacy development thrive in collaborative environments which promote the use of a particular language in meaningful settings. Yet the extent to which each individual child is successful in developing second and third literacies does not depend solely on the collaborative and meaningful environment but on the extent to which individual learners bring in additional factors which go beyond linguistic knowledge, skills and understanding. The learners' motivation and attitudes towards the language and their personality contribute substantially and interact with the learning styles and classroom organisation which teachers create as the latter strive to present their students with material which is stimulating, motivating and conducive to learning. The extent to which learners can capitalise and make sense of such experiences depends on the interplay between the learners' prior linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge, their personality and the personal circumstances which allow them to develop second or subsequent literacies to varying degrees of success.

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Multi-literacy: literacy acquisition, (creative) reading and writing in a foreign and/or second language

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Introduction

Developments in Slovenia 2000 – 2002:

In Slovenia, the main thrust of activity tying into the ECML 2002 workshop on approaches to early multilingual literacy development has been two national research projects: (1) *Literacy as correspondence*; and (2) *Multi-literacy: literacy acquisition, (creative) reading and writing in a foreign and/or second language*. Both are based on the following premises:

- reading and writing are essential for survival in modern society; already the child's development across the school curriculum depends on his / her progress in literacy (this is especially true of mother tongue literacy, but also of second and foreign language literacy);
- developing literacy in a second / foreign language always happens in the context of developing literacy in a mother tongue, whether it precedes or follows it, and therefore there is always transfer (positive or negative);
- learning to read and write is a complex and not entirely understood process with many requirements, which calls for a lot of effort and motivation on the part of the child, especially when a child has to become literate in several languages successively or even simultaneously;
- reading and writing are closely interconnected with / grow from speaking and listening ability – phonemic awareness should precede reading and reading should precede writing;
- a better understanding of literacy development and study of approaches to it can make the process more effective / efficient;
- more effective / efficient instructional practices need to be presented to teachers in accessible ways; most importantly, they need to be incorporated into widely used language learning materials and teacher training programmes.

It must be stated at the outset that the groundwork for the initial workshop proposal (*Literacy as correspondence – an integrated approach to multi-literacy*), as put

forward by Lucija Čok, was laid by a project which had been launched in Slovenia in June 2000. The focus of that research project was on bi-literacy acquisition within three different 'strands':

- a. literacy acquisition in *Slovene – Italian*: Slovene being the first language (i.e. mother tongue) as well as the language of instruction, and Italian being the second language;
- b. literacy acquisition in *Italian – Slovene*: Italian being the first language (i.e. mother tongue) as well as the language of instruction, and Slovene being the second language;
- c. literacy acquisition in *Slovene – English*: Slovene being the first language (i.e. mother tongue) as well as the language of instruction, and English being the foreign language.

Only the *Slovene – Italian* strand has been pursued so far. Within this research project some experimental materials (i.e. a workbook with suggested literacy acquisition activities focusing primarily on listening skills) have been produced and piloted. The research findings are being analysed and the experimental materials improved accordingly.

Literacy as correspondence

The initial title of the workshop '*Literacy as correspondence*' originates from the following facts and assumptions:

All writing systems, having been designed for people who already know the language, are poor reminders of how the language is pronounced. So it is a serious mistake and a hindrance to success to take the writing system of a second/foreign language as the point of departure for learning it. *Alphabetic systems* have the disadvantage of not representing regional differences in pronunciation, but the marked advantage that only a small number of symbols needs to be learned. Although the value of written symbols is relatively independent and must be learned for each language, there is no need to be unduly frightened by the 'enormous' task of learning how to read. Still, the writing systems of some languages are easier to learn than others. Thus, children learn to read languages that have a good *sound/spelling fit*, such as Dutch, Turkish, Spanish, or Slovenian, quite easily, without having to spend years on intricacies. Poor sound/spelling fit results from (1) the alphabet not having enough letters, (2) borrowings with foreign spellings, and (3) changes in the sound system not reflected in the writing system. These conditions describe a language like English, whose writing system has a very poor sound/spelling fit. What makes the English writing system very difficult is the fact that many sounds are represented by several letters or letter combinations, and certain letters and letter combinations represent more

than one sound. Thus in languages like English and French what may be easy to say is not necessarily easy to read, and *vice versa*. So just exposing the students to the written language is not enough. There must be *systematic instruction* to overcome the various problems presented by the learning task. Acquiring (initial) literacy should not be merely a matter of luck.

So the word '*correspondence*' in the title of the workshop, '*Literacy as correspondence*', refers to teaching the correspondences between the sounds and the various letters (i.e. sound pictures) in a language. It draws on the so-called *Phono-Graphix Method* (see McGuinness and McGuinness 1998), which is *not* an eclectic mixture of the phonetic approach (or phonics) of teaching letter-sound correspondences and the 'whole-language' approach (i.e. children 'emerging' into literacy; 'language-rich' environments). The authors propose their method for teaching the native language learner to read English.

Although the Phono-Graphix Method is based on the English sounds, its point of departure is a 180 degree difference from phonics. Instead of teaching children the sounds that letters make, it recognizes that letters do not make sounds, they represent sounds. It takes what the child knows, the sounds of his language, and teaches him the various *sound pictures* (i.e. codes) that represent these sounds.

The method is based on the belief that it is easier to memorize the *134 sound pictures* (see appendices) that represent the various sounds used in English than to memorize the 20,000 words that the native speaker will use in his daily vocabulary. There are about 55 words in the English language that do not decode properly, the others are predictable and decodable if one knows and uses the English written code.

Literacy as correspondence: production and dissemination of teaching/learning materials

On the national level, the project started in 2000. In the first phase of the project, the theoretical research was carried out, in the second phase, didactic materials for Italian as a second language were produced, and in the third phase, the didactic materials were disseminated in schools involved in the project (Primary school Dušan Bordon in Koper, Primary school Anton Ukmar in Koper, altogether 80 pupils).

The didactic set **SUONI IN SINTONIA – LETTERE IN ALLEGRIA** comprises two workbooks and a CD. The first workbook and the CD **SUONI IN SINTONIA** provide activities for the development of listening abilities and phonological awareness. Much research data (Magajna, 1995; Iozzino, Campi, & Paolucci Polidori, 1998; Chard & Dickson, 1999; Hemenstall, 2000; Zorman & Mršnik, 2001) show that advanced listening abilities and phonological awareness are related to successful acquisition of reading and writing. The development of phonological processing of the language includes the following abilities:

- perception and formation of rhymes,
- segmentation of speech in words,
- segmentation of words in syllables and blending syllables into words,
- isolation of sounds in speech,
- addition, reduction or substitution of sounds,
- segmentation of words in sounds and blending sounds into words.

The tasks in **SUONI IN SINTONIA** are based on the students' activity, such as memorizing songs, rhymes, riddles, didactic play and systematic sensitisation of auditory perception of sounds, their comparison and articulation.

The first section of the workbook (*Lime, pime, bime. Cosa sono? Sono le rime.*) includes tasks that help children adopt the intonation of the Italian language, practise the articulation and the stressing of words. By listening carefully to the teacher's articulation (or to the voice on the CD) and imitating it, pupils develop auditory perception of sounds and their accurate pronunciation. **SUONI IN SINTONIA** focuses mainly on sounds that are different from the Slovene as the pupils' mother tongue.

In the second section of the workbook pupils practise the segmentation of words in syllables. The stress is on words containing some consonant groups that are difficult for auditory perception (-mb- and -mp-).

The tasks in the third section include isolation of sounds in speech, segmentation of words in sounds and blending sounds into words. These are the most complex aspects of phonological awareness, since young children relate much more easily to a meaningful whole than to its component parts.

The second workbook, **LETTERE IN ALLEGRIA**, is currently being prepared. It will upgrade the abilities developed in **SUONI IN SINTONIA**. Auditory perception of speech and phonological awareness will be further developed by means of auditory and visual perception of sounds and their written counterparts (letters or groups of letters). The materials will be disseminated in schools in the school year 2002/03. They will be evaluated by teachers involved in the project (by means of a form), as well as by authors of the didactic materials and other experts.

Multi-literacy: approaches to literacy development, (creative) reading and writing in a foreign or second language

In 2001, the second related research project was approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, with the title *'Multi-literacy, approaches to literacy*

development, (creative) reading and writing in a foreign or second language'. It consists of two strands:

- development of literacy in Italian as a second language (continuation of the project described earlier); and
- development of literacy in English as a foreign language (main context: obligatory beginning EFL instruction in years 4-6 of the new 9-year primary school).

The *aims* and *objectives* of the project are as follows:

- to establish both differences and similarities between different languages (in our case Slovene, Italian, English) in terms of sound-letter correspondences;
- to establish and develop, on the basis of research findings, most appropriate and efficient foreign/second language literacy acquisition strategies which would take into account the literacy acquisition approaches in the learners' mother tongue;
- to develop a methodology of initial literacy acquisition in Italian and English (age group: 6-11).

Although literacy is usually defined as the ability to read and write, it needs to be emphasized that all the language skills (i.e. speaking, listening, reading, writing) are expressions of the same language system, and as such they are all interrelated. Therefore, practice in one should lead to higher levels of competence in each of the other three skills. With regard to sequence, in the early stages listening precedes speaking and reading precedes writing (i.e. the so-called first-language sequence).

Due to the fact that the *sound/spelling fit* of the languages included in the project (i.e. Slovene, Italian, English) can range from very good (e.g. Slovene) to very poor (e.g. English), we can expect that different methodologies of initial literacy acquisition will have to be developed.

Although the focus will be on initial stages of literacy acquisition (i.e. the ability of decoding and encoding one's speech into a written form), some guidelines will also be drawn up for the developing of more creative strategies of reading and writing.

When creating and piloting experimental materials for literacy acquisition, both the so-called part-centred (code-emphasis) methods (e.g. phonics and linguistic approaches), and the so-called socio-psycholinguistic (meaning-emphasis) approaches will be taken into account.

For many years, English as a foreign language instruction in Slovenia has mostly used a whole word approach to teaching children to read and write English. The orthography of English was considered too complicated to be broken down and handled with the help of rules; rather, learners were encouraged to memorize the spelling of words as visual wholes, together with their pronunciations. At the same time, literacy instruction in Slovenian as the mother tongue was predominantly phonic (which is understandable in view of the high sound-letter correspondence in Slovenian). This means that there

was a wide gap between the approaches to teaching reading and writing in the mother tongue and in the foreign language, which occurred for most learners in their 5th year of primary schooling, after they had mastered reading and writing in their mother tongue. No formal studies were done about the transfer occurring in this situation. Also, most of the English language learning materials have been imported from abroad and therefore did not foster an awareness that learning to read and write in a foreign language must take into consideration the differences and similarities between mother tongue and FL in terms of both language systems and instruction methodology.

'Multi-literacy: approaches to literacy development, (creative) reading and writing in a foreign or second language' is the first research project in Slovenia to study the development of literacy between the mother tongue and the first foreign language of Slovenian primary learners. As stated in the introduction, researchers from the University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education) have adopted a broad and flexible theoretical view of literacy and approaches to teaching reading and writing. Their main aim is not so much to analyse instructional practices as it is to construct a description of the English phonetics / orthography correspondence that will be adapted to the needs of Slovenian learners, and then lay out a methodology for using that description in classroom practice. The project is currently in the phase of preparing experimental classroom materials, which will be used by two selected primary schools. The materials will focus on the very first stages of literacy instruction, building heavily on oracy: listening activities for fostering phonemic awareness (recognition and reproduction of individual sounds, paying special attention to English sounds that do not exist in Slovenian), syllabification and spelling. These skills, however, will not be presented and practiced in isolation but as far as possible within meaningful, contextualized and creative language learning activities. The main methods used by the teachers participating in the project will be observation and action research. The experimental materials will serve both as a window into existing instructional practice and as a basis for the writing of an activity book (with notes for teachers) to be printed for use alongside approved main English course books in the reformed Slovenian primary school system. The findings of the research will also be published and incorporated into various teacher-training programmes, in particular into the new programme for primary teachers of English at the Faculty of Education which has been launched with the introduction of the new 9-year primary school system.

Activities for promoting reading and writing skills at an early stage of foreign language learning

Developing reading and writing skills should begin with sensitizing children to different sounds of a foreign language through a large amount of listening input. Only when children begin to feel the rhythm, stress and melody of a new language, are they ready for its production. Activities at the beginning include plenty of students' repetition after a model, whether this is a competent teacher or a tape. It is preferable to

present to students language in its contextualised form, most often through rhymes that include the sounds that we want to practise.

Examples of activities, described below, range from lower to higher level of complexity (from sounds to longer texts).

Firstly, students can identify and practise the variety of *sound-letter combinations* in different ways e.g. recognizing initial / middle sounds, phono-graphic recognition of sounds, etc.

Further activities based on *a sound level* include recognition of rhyming pairs, silent letters, homophonous pairs and similar. Activities that involve writing on that basis would range from changing letters, omitting them or adding them to change the meaning and pronunciation of words.

At a level above sound, students can count the number of syllables in a word non-verbally; for example by clapping or verbally; by telling the number of syllables.

At a word level, students can practise reading and writing skills through game-like activities (pelmanism, bingo, snap), crosswords and similar. They can write words on different materials (for example: posters, T-shirts, blackboard, each other's backs, etc.).

At a sentence level, students can match appropriate halves of sentences, answer questions (true/false, multiple choice, etc.), correct mistakes, fill in speech bubbles of characters, write their own vocabulary books and similar.

At a text level, students can read pictogram stories, write the missing words into gap-fills, order sentences into a story, and similar. The reading material varies from poems, jokes, riddles to storybooks, magazines, comics... As regards writing, students can write postcards, e-mail messages, letters to each other, teachers, editors of magazines and so on.

Only their and the teacher's imagination is the limit to the ways of encouraging the development of reading and writing skills at an early stage of foreign language learning.

What follows is a typology of reading and writing activities to be included in the experimental classroom materials for teaching early literacy in a foreign language (i.e. English).

Reading activities

1. Oral blending

Aim:	Differentiating among sounds, blending sounds together
Type of text:	Pictures or word cards
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I.
Description of activity:	The teacher shows the picture or the word card to students and pronounces it very slowly so that students distinctly hear different sounds that comprise the word (e.g. say 'man' as mmmmmaaaaannnn). Students repeat the word slowly after the teacher. They may later count the sounds of the word, pronounce each sound separately and even present the word with the cuisenaire rods (e.g. three rods for the word 'man').
Variation:	When the teacher pronounces the word slowly, children try to identify it as soon as possible among different pictures with similar sounds.

2. Recognizing initial sounds

Aim: Differentiating among initial sounds

Type of text: Pictures

Reading style: Intensive

Language level: I.

Description of activity: The teacher pronounces the words, while students look at the pictures and match the ones with the same initial sound (cat + cow, horse + hen).



Variation 1: Students look at the first picture and circle the picture in the row that begins with the same sound (e.g. green – yellow – grey – black).

Variation 2: Students look at the pictures which sound similar (e.g. ten, hen, men) and circle the word the teacher pronounces (e.g. hen).



Variation 3: Students have to write the initial sound, which is missing and circle the picture they hear from two similar words (e.g. hat, bat / big, pig).



3. Recognizing middle sounds

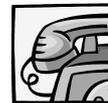
Aim:	Differentiating among middle sounds
Type of text:	Pictures with words (gaps of middle sounds)
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I.
Description of activity:	Students listen to the sounds and write the middle letter that is missing. Alternatively, they look at the pictures which help them understand the words. E.g.: bed, bad / bug, bag, big / hut, hit, hat etc.
Variation:	Students think of words which have similar middle sound and discuss with the teacher how to write them.

4. Phono-graphic recognition of sounds

Aim:	Identifying letters that comprise a sound
Type of text:	Words, pictures, short stories
Reading style:	intensive
Language level:	III., IV.
Description of activity:	Students are first shown all types of letter combinations for one sound, e.g. sound /u:/: boot, blue, new, super, suit, flute, soup, shoe, do, through (McGuinness & McGuinness 1998: 213). Then they try to think of other words for each category (e.g. shoot, true, flew, rude, group, to...). Later on they read a short story which contains examples of this sound.
Variation:	Instead of recognizing different letter combinations for one sound, students can do the opposite. They can identify different ways of pronunciation for one letter. They can be shown variations of pronunciation of, e.g. letter 'o' and later on classify words into similar pronunciation patterns. <i>Letter 'o' can be pronounced in these ways:</i> <i>/o/ – /ɒ/ – /u:/ – /ʌ/</i> <i>dog – show – two – come</i> Put these words into each category above: blue, lot, love, no, go, nose, not, nothing, wrong.

5. Syllabication

Aim:	Recognizing syllables in a word
Type of text:	Monosyllabic and polysyllabic words
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	II.
Description of activity:	Students clap the number of syllables and read out loud words or pronounce them after the teacher. Alternatively, students read the words and count the number of syllables in each one and write down the number.



 1

Variation:	After the students recognize the number of syllables in a word, they find out which syllable is stressed. This can be presented visually, e.g. with cuisenaire rods, where the tallest rod illustrates the stressed syllable: (ba – by)
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6. Silent letters

Aim:	Recognizing and pronouncing correctly silent letters
Type of text:	Words with missing letters (with or without pictures)
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I, II.
Description of activity:	Students write the missing silent letters into words (e.g. knee, climb...)
Variation:	Students may get the whole words written and then they mark the silent letter that occurs in a set of words. For example: <i>In which of the following words is K not pronounced: key, knee, know, knife?</i>

7. Homophones

Aim:	Differentiating between homophonous pairs
Type of text:	Words with pictures
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I, II.
Description of activity:	Students look at the pictures and read the two homophonous words. They circle the correct one represented by the picture. (e.g. sea/see)

8. Rhyming words

Aim:	Matching rhyming words, practising pronunciation
Type of text:	Words with or without pictures
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I, II.
Description of activity:	Students read the words and try to match words with a similar rhyming pattern. Afterwards, they can write the words under pictures (e.g. snake + cake, dog + frog, three + sea).



9. Finding words in words

Aim:	Recognizing words in words, de-chunking words
Type of text:	Words with or without pictures
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I, II.
Description of activity:	Students try to identify words that are hidden in longer words (e.g. <i>abandon</i> = band). They can rewrite them or highlight them with a coloured pencil.

10. Wordsquare

Aim:	Identifying words among mixed-up letters; spelling
Type of text:	Words written in a square
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I.
Description of activity:	Students find words in a 10x10 square full of letters. The activity can be made easier by writing the missing words next to the square. Students can prepare word squares for each other and thus practise writing as well as reading.

Find 8 family words in the square. The words go →↓!

B	G	R	A	N	D	M	A	T	M
D	Q	A	B	R	O	T	H	E	R
M	T	S	M	I	T	A	T	Q	X
O	N	V	O	Z	K	S	S	B	K
N	F	A	T	H	E	R	E	A	A
B	A	B	H	L	U	B	S	B	A
R	W	R	E	C	N	Y	U	Y	U
O	M	A	R	U	C	B	C	R	N
T	I	T	L	N	L	E	T	L	T
H	S	I	S	T	E	R	H	U	M

11. Connecting letters into words

Aim: Practising spelling

Type of text: Letters or segments of words with or without pictures

Reading style: Intensive

Language level: I, II.

Description of activity: Students connect the beginning and the ending of a word to make a complete meaningful unit (e.g. l ip > lip).
Connect 5 body parts!

A	CE	HA	AD	FI
RM	NGER	HE	ND	FA

12. Reading Bingo

Aim: Matching pronounced words to their written equivalents

Type of text: A bingo board with written words

Reading style: Intensive

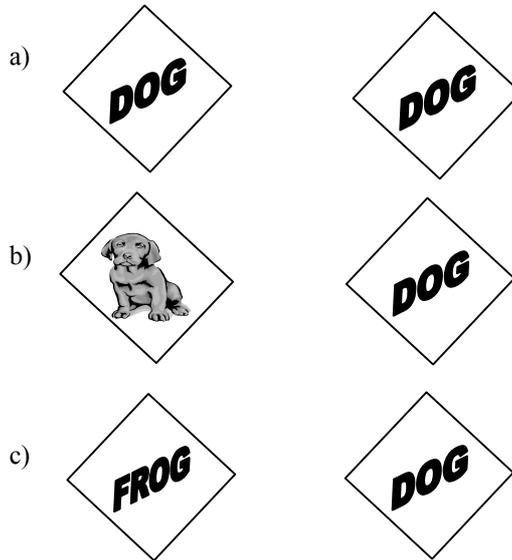
Language level: I, II.

Description of activity: Firstly, students choose 6 or 9 words from a set written on the blackboard. Then they listen to the teacher who pronounces separate words. If they have the pronounced word on their board, they cover it with a piece of paper. (Hint: words can be very similar (e.g. sheep vs. ship).

Variation: Sound bingo: Students have bingo boards with letters instead of words (e.g. b, p, m, n, t, d). The teacher says a word (e.g. big) and the students cover the field with the initial letter (e.g. 'b').

13. Pelmanism

- Aim:** Identifying pairs of words or words and pictures
- Type of text:** Words written on small cards
- Reading style:** Intensive
- Language level:** I.
- Description of activity:** Students in pairs or small groups search for a) two cards with the same word written on or b) a picture and a written word or c) a rhyming pair. Students can prepare the cards themselves.



14. Snap

Aim:	Identifying pairs of words, enjoying the game
Type of text:	Words written on small cards
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I.
Description of activity:	Students in pairs play a game of snap with written words on cards. First they divide the cards and then they simultaneously put the top one into the middle. If the two cards in the middle match, the first person to call <i>Snap!</i> collects the whole pack of cards in the middle. Instead of saying <i>Snap!</i> , students can read the word written on the two cards and the first person to read it, collects the cards in the middle. Students can make the cards themselves.
Variation:	Instead of looking for the same words, students can search for rhyming pairs or a picture and a word (Cf. 13. <i>Pelmanism</i>).

15. Reading and colouring or drawing

Aim:	Reading instructions and performing correct actions
Type of text:	Instructions for colouring or drawing a picture
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I.
Description of activity:	Students read the instructions and colour or draw the picture appropriately. The description can be simple or complex.

16. Reading and circling (Cf. odd-one-out)

Aim:	Identifying the word / description that does not fit in
Type of text:	Descriptions of pictures
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I., II.
Description of activity:	Students read the descriptions of pictures and circle or cross out the picture that does not belong to the description.

17. True/false sentences

Aim:	Confirming or negating sentences
Type of text:	Statements, a picture, a short story
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I., II.
Description of activity:	Students read statements and decide whether they are true or false according to the accompanying picture, story or overall knowledge.

18. Picture clues

Aim:	Choosing the correct word/phrase/sentence according to the picture
Type of text:	A picture and a short text or questions with given answers
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students read the text / questions and choose the correct answer according to the picture or match pictures to corresponding sentences. The text can be in the form of a mixed-up story, which the students then put into appropriate order.

19. Matching halves of sentences

Aim:	Connecting parts of sentences into a cohesive unit
Type of text:	A short story with sentences split up into halves (with or without picture)
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	II., III.
Description of activity:	Students try to make complete sentences by matching the beginnings and endings. They can have an accompanying picture to help them make correct sentences. An additional activity is to put the sentences into correct order. <i>Tom is</i> <i>his friend Ben.</i> <i>He is playing with</i> <i>in the garden.</i> <i>His father is cooking</i> <i>in the office.</i> <i>His mother is working</i> <i>a policewoman.</i> <i>She is</i> <i>in the kitchen.</i>

20. Pictogram Stories

Aim:	Reading a story with the help of pictures
Type of text:	A short story with some pictures instead of words
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	II.
Description of activity:	Students read a text with some pictures instead of words.

21. Gap fill letters

Aim:	Putting correct letters into missing spaces
Type of text:	Words with missing letters (with or without pictures)
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I.
Description of activity:	Students fill in the missing letters to make up words. The missing letters can be written next to the words to help the students.

22. Gap fill words

Aim:	Completing sentences with the words written below
Type of text:	A short story / sentences
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I, II.
Description of activity:	Students read the sentences and complete them with appropriate words that are written below. This activity includes simple writing skills. <i>One day Jane goes to the ____.</i> <i>The ticket costs three ____.</i> <i>She sees a lot of ____.</i> <i>Her favourite is the ____.</i> <i>She eats ____ - ____.</i> <i>She comes home at five ____.</i> <i>ice-cream, zoo, o'clock, animals, pounds, giraffe</i>

23. Putting sentences into correct order

Aim:	Reading sentences and connecting them into a story
Type of text:	Sentences written in separate lines
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	II., III.
Description of activity:	Students read sentences and put them into correct order to make a logical story.

24. Answering questions

Aim:	Reading and writing short sentences
Type of text:	Questions with a picture / a short text
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students look at the picture and answer the questions regarding the picture. Alternatively, they read the text and then answer questions.

25. Correcting mistakes

Aim:	Identifying and correcting mistakes in a text
Type of text:	Unconnected words, sentences, a story...
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students read the text and search for spelling mistakes or mistakes in meaning. The text and the mistakes can be adapted to students' level of knowledge.
Variation	Students can be given a text with accompanying pictures which do not match and find the differences between the text and the picture.

26. Reading and predicting

Aim:	Reading a part of a story and predicting what happens next
Type of text:	A written story
Reading style:	Extensive
Language level:	III., IV.
Description of activity:	Students read the beginning and middle of the story and try to guess the ending. Later on they read the written ending of the story.

27. Reading longer texts

Aim:	Enjoying reading, developing fluency
Type of text:	Comics, letters, email messages, stories, magazines
Reading style:	Extensive reading, skimming, reading for understanding
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students look at the pictures and read the accompanying text to get the overall picture of the story, usually with a final twist.

28. Reading board game

Aim:	Reading for fun and fluency
Type of text:	A board game with written instructions in the squares
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	I., II.
Description of activity:	Students throw a dice and move from square to square while reading instructions and performing them. There can be a story behind the instruction (e.g. <i>You have found some money. Take it to the police station. As a reward go three squares forward.</i>). Instructions can include TPR movement (e.g. <i>Jump three times. / Stand on one leg. / Touch the blackboard. / etc.</i>) Students can make the board game themselves.

29. Reading poems

Aim:	Reading for fun and fluency
Type of text:	(Rhyming) poems
Reading style:	Extensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students read the poem or rhyme and identify the rhyming words. They can learn it by heart.

30. Reading jokes

Aim:	Reading for fun and fluency
Type of text:	Simple jokes
Reading style:	Extensive, reading for understanding
Language level:	III, IV.
Description of activity:	Students read jokes connected to a topic, jokes with words with double meaning, etc. Many of them can be found in <i>Mostyn, D. 1998. The Biggest Book of Stupid Jokes in the Universe. Bath: Parragon.</i>

31. Reading stories

Aim:	Reading for fun and fluency
Type of text:	A story
Reading style:	Extensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students read a story and then may or may not do various activities connected to it. (e.g. they put the pictures from the story into the correct order).

32. Multiple choice story

Aim:	Reading and identifying the correct sentence that matches the picture
Type of text:	A story written in separate sentences with pictures
Reading style:	Skimming
Language level:	II.
Description of activity:	Students read the sentences and identify the one that matches the picture. In this way they make up a story.



- Brenda is at home.*
- Brenda is in the mountains.*
- Brenda is at the seaside. ✓*



- She phones her mum.*
- She sends a letter to her mum. ✓*
- She sees her mum.*



- She drinks tea.*
- She eats ice-cream. ✓*
- She eats bananas.*



- She swims in the sea. ✓*
- She jogs at the seaside.*
- She skis every day.*

33. A snake story

Aim:	Identifying the dividing line among letters to form words; de-chunking words
Type of text:	A story written in the shape of a snake without any intervals
Reading style:	Intensive
Language level:	II., III
Description of activity:	Students identify the borders between words and put in the appropriate punctuation.

34. Reading a story with the help of initials and pictures

Aim:	Reading for fluency
Type of text:	A story written with initials and accompanying pictures
Reading style:	Extensive, reading for understanding
Language level:	IV., V.
Description of activity:	Students try to read the story with the help of initials and pictures. If possible, they can write the story as well.



1. He i_ a p_____.



2. H_ h__ g__ l_____.



3. H_ p_____ them i_ t__
p____ b_____.



4. H_ meets a l__ of d_____.

Possible reading material

Word cards	Jokes	Storybooks
Instructions	Quizzes, riddles	Magazines
Rhymes, songs, chants, poems	Labels on shirts, food packages	Comics

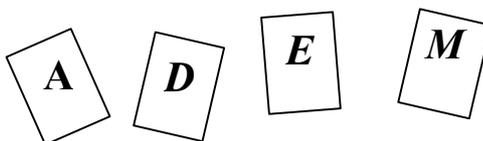
Writing activities

1. Anagrams

Aim:	Recognizing words and their spelling
Type of text:	Words with mixed-up letters
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	I.
Description of activity:	Students arrange letters into meaningful words (e.g. deha > head). To make the activity easier, we can add pictures or write words on one topic only. <i>Find six animals!</i> <i>erba =</i> <i>gip =</i> <i>gdo =</i> <i>ridb =</i> <i>hsamrte =</i> <i>lwof =</i>

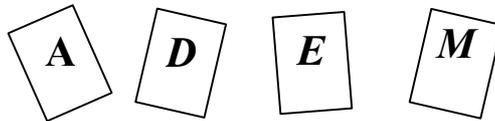
2. Letter Cards

Aim:	Putting letters into words; spelling
Type of text:	Magnetic letters or letters on separate pieces of paper (cards)
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	I., II.
Description of activity:	Students get magnetic letters or letters on pieces of paper (2 or 3 sets of alphabets) and try to make up a given word or a word of their choice. The activity can be made into a competition, with the person or group who makes up the word fastest getting a point.



3. Jumping on letters

Aim:	Practising spelling, TPR
Type of text:	Cards of letters scattered in a circle in classroom
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	The teacher scatters letter cards (the whole alphabet) on the floor in a random order. Students take turns to jump on appropriate letters to make up a word chosen by the teacher.



4. Writing words on each other's backs

Aim:	Writing for fun and relaxation
Type of text:	/
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students in pairs write words on each other's backs and guess which word is written.

5. Crossword

Aim:	Writing words into appropriate places; developing spatial intelligence
Type of text:	Crossword
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students fill in the gaps of the crossword with appropriate words. To make the activity more difficult the cues can be in the form of pictures instead of written words.

6. Blackboard games

Aim:	Writing as a whole-class activity; practising spelling															
Type of text:	Words															
Writing style:	Intensive															
Language level:	I, II.															
Description of activity:	<p>1. Crossword on blackboard</p> <p>Students write words on blackboard so that they are attached to each other. E.g.:</p> <table><tr><td>B</td><td>L</td><td>A</td><td>C</td><td>K</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>E</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td>G</td><td>I</td><td>R</td><td>L</td></tr></table>	B	L	A	C	K		E					G	I	R	L
B	L	A	C	K												
	E															
	G	I	R	L												
	<p>2. Writing a word chain</p> <p>Students write words stemming from the last letter of each word (e.g.: big – goat – two)</p>															
	<p>3. Hangman</p> <p>Students play the game of a hangman or a hungry shark on a blackboard by guessing letters that make up a word (e.g. B _ _ _).</p>															

7. Writing words on a T-shirt

Aim:	Writing for fun, learning spelling
Type of text:	A T-shirt
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	I.
Description of activity:	Students write on a T-shirt their favourite English words, the title of their favourite song together with a singer, their favourite hobbies, objects...

8. Labelling items

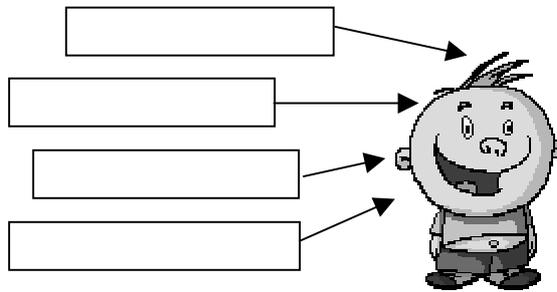
Aim: Labelling items on a certain topic in a picture or in the classroom

Type of text: A picture with lines for writing words

Writing style: Intensive

Language level: I.

Description of activity: Students look at the picture and label the marked items (e.g. body, food). They can also label real classroom objects.



9. Sorting Words

Aim:	Categorizing words						
Type of text:	Words or pictures						
Writing style:	Intensive						
Language level:	I., II.						
Description of activity:	Students read words or look at the pictures and put them into appropriate categories. Put these words into appropriate categories: <i>Butter, a penguin, a bag, an ostrich, a budgie, lettuce, a table, bread, ham, a pig, a book, a rabbit, a CD-player, cheese, paper.</i> Add other words you know into these categories. <table><thead><tr><th><i>food</i></th><th><i>animals</i></th><th><i>objects</i></th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td><i>butter</i></td><td>a penguin</td><td>a bag</td></tr></tbody></table>	<i>food</i>	<i>animals</i>	<i>objects</i>	<i>butter</i>	a penguin	a bag
<i>food</i>	<i>animals</i>	<i>objects</i>					
<i>butter</i>	a penguin	a bag					

10. Writing words beginning with a certain letter / sound

Aim:	Extending vocabulary, practising spelling
Type of text:	Words
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students are given 2 minutes to try to write as many words as possible beginning with one letter or sound. The student with the most words reads them.

11. Adding sounds

Aim:	Extending vocabulary; differentiating among sounds; practising spelling
Type of text:	Words and pictures
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students are given words and pictures. They have to add a sound to make another word. To make the activity easier we can add the picture for students to guess the new word (e.g. <i>back</i> > <i>black</i> , <i>thin</i> > <i>think</i>).
Variation:	Students add only one letter to all words and observe the difference in pronunciation. Example: adding the letter 'e' to words ' <i>hat, not, can, cut</i> ' changes words into ' <i>hate, note, cane, cute</i> '.

12. Omitting sounds

Aim:	Extending vocabulary; differentiating among sounds; practising spelling
Type of text:	Words and pictures
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students are given words and pictures. They have to omit a sound to make another word. To make the activity easier we can add the picture for students to guess the new word (e.g. <i>mask</i> > <i>ask</i>).

13. Changing sounds

- Aim:** Extending vocabulary; differentiating among sounds; practising spelling
- Type of text:** Words and pictures
- Writing style:** Intensive
- Language level:** All
- Description of activity:** Students are given words and pictures. They have to change a sound to make another word. To make the activity easier we can add the picture for students to guess the new word (e.g. *pin* > *pen*). Students write (and draw) the words and underline the changed letter.



pen



pet







boot

14. Finding words with the same ending

Aim: Recognizing words with the same endings
Type of text: A picture with written endings of words
Writing style: Intensive
Language level: I, II
Description of activity: Students look at the picture and find as many words with the given endings as possible.

Look at the pictures. Find words which end with **-en**, **-oat** and **-ee**.



-ee, -en, -oat

15. A writing board game

Aim: Writing words on a certain letter
Type of text: A board game with letters
Writing style: Intensive
Language level: I, II.
Description of activity: Students throw a dice and when they land on a certain letter they try to write either a) as many words beginning with that letter in 30 sec. or b) the longest word beginning with that letter.



start

A	C	F	I	S	P	K	K	U	W	Y
B	D	G	J	R	O	T	T	V	X	Z
	E	H		Q	N					

finish

16. Compound words

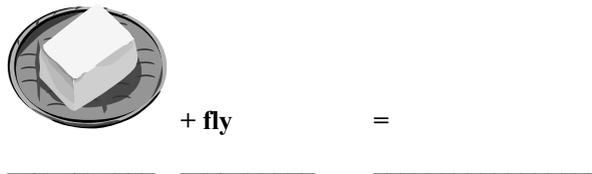
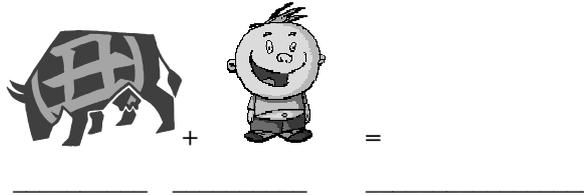
Aim: Making a new word from two words

Type of text: Pictures with or without written words

Writing style: Intensive

Language level: II.

Description of activity: Students look at two pictures and try to combine them to form a new word from them. They write the new word (and possibly draw a picture of it). E.g.: butter + fly = butterfly. They can have one word written and one drawn from which to make a compound noun.



17. Making posters

Aim:	Brainstorming words and phrases on a topic, presentation skills
Type of text:	Poster with written words, phrases
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students in groups make up posters on a current course book theme or any other. They draw or stick pictures and label them or describe them. Ideas for descriptions: different types of sports; describing actors, singers; labelling body items; describing computer games; space; dangerous animals, a story...

18. Scrabble

Aim:	Improving spelling and thinking skills
Type of text:	A board game for Scrabble with letters
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	IV., V.
Description of activity:	Students play the game Scrabble, which they prepared or the original one brought by the teacher. They make up words and collect points.

19. Writing sentences with the help of cues

Aim:	Writing correct sentences with the help of cues
Type of text:	A text and cues for writing sentences
Writing style:	Intensive
Language level:	II.
Description of activity:	Students first read the text and then write sentences about it with the help of cues (e.g. Tina/big car > Tina has got a big car). Sentences can be such as to practise only one particular structure.

20. Writing speech bubbles

- Aim:** Students fill in the speech bubbles of characters with appropriate phrases
- Type of text:** Pictures or cartoons with empty speech bubbles
- Writing style:** Extensive
- Language level:** II., III.
- Description of activity:** Students fill in empty speech bubbles with appropriate phrases, words, sentences.

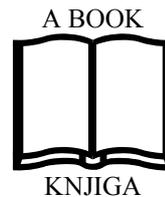


21. Writing postcards

- Aim:** Writing for a purpose, learning how to write postcards
- Type of text:** Postcards
- Writing style:** Extensive
- Language level:** All
- Description of activity:** The teacher brings empty postcards to students. Students choose a) who they want to write to (their friends, school friends, parents, teachers, real pen friends, characters from the course book...) b) whether they are going to write from an imaginary place or from a real one. The teacher helps students with the language, appropriate phrases for beginning and ending etc. (e.g. by writing them on the blackboard). Postcards can be sent or given to the people students write to. They can reply to students' postcards.

22. Writing vocabulary cards / books

Aim:	Writing to preserve words or phrases for future reference; practise spelling
Type of text:	Words or phrases with pictures
Writing style:	Extensive
Language level:	All
Description of activity:	Students write their own vocabulary books or cards for future reference. They can write the word, its translation and stick or draw a picture of it. The teacher should encourage students to write phrases as well. If they are capable, they can write an exemplifying sentence. Such cards can be prepared by the whole class as well and then saved for future use in a box where all children can get them.



MY BOOK IS BLUE.

Acknowledgement:

This article would not have been possible without the support and generous help of my colleagues and friends. I am particularly grateful to Mateja Dagarin, Urska Sesek and Anja Zorman.

Appendix 1: Vowel Sound Pictures

<p>'o-e'</p> <p>o-e oa oe o ow ough ou oo</p> <p>note boat foe most grow through soul door</p>	<p>'o'</p> <p>o au aw al a ough augh</p> <p>pot fraud lawn walk father fought taught</p>	<p>'i-e'</p> <p>i-e ie i igh y eigh</p> <p>kite cried wild night fly height</p>	<p>'u'</p> <p>u ou o-e a</p> <p>tub touch some about</p>	<p>'u-e'</p> <p>u-e u ew ue</p> <p>mule pupil few cue</p>	<p>'oo'</p> <p>oo ue ew u ui u-e ou oe o ough</p> <p>boot blue new super suit flute soup shoe do through</p>
<p>'ee'</p> <p>ee ea le y e i-e i ei e-e ey</p> <p>meet seat chief funny she petite variation re(c)ieve eve key</p>	<p>'a'</p> <p>a</p> <p>cat</p>	<p>'er'</p> <p>er ur ir or ear yr ar</p> <p>faster turn girl work learn syrup dollar</p>	<p>'ow'</p> <p>ow ou ough</p> <p>cow out drought</p>	<p>'i'</p> <p>i y</p> <p>in myth</p>	<p>'oo'</p> <p>oo ou u</p> <p>cook would put</p>
<p>'e'</p> <p>e ea ai ie</p> <p>bed bread said friend</p>	<p>'oy'</p> <p>oy oi</p> <p>boy soil</p>	<p>Ph o n o - G r a p h i xTM</p> <p>Vowel Sound Pictures</p>			

1-800-732-3868

From: McGuinness, C. & McGuinness, G., *Reading reflex: The foolproof phono-graphix method for teaching your child to read*. The Free Press, New York, 1998, p. 213.

Appendix 2: Consonant Sound Pictures

<p>'j'</p> <p>j jet g (e i y) gentle ge barge dge fudge</p>	<p>'s'</p> <p>s sip ss glass c (i e y) cent ce voice se house st casite sc science</p>	<p>'k'</p> <p>k kite c cat ck duck ch Christmas</p>	<p>'l'</p> <p>l lip ll full le sample el label il pupli al sabal</p>	<p>'qu'</p> <p>qu queen</p>
<p>'n'</p> <p>n no nn sinner kn know gn gnat pn pneumonia</p>	<p>'m'</p> <p>m man mm simmer mb numb mn Autumn</p>	<p>'d'</p> <p>d did ed tapped dd rudder</p>	<p>'t'</p> <p>t tab tt mitt bt debt pt pteradactyl</p>	<p>'g'</p> <p>g rag gg haggie gh ghost</p>
<p>'z'</p> <p>z zip zz buzz s is se choose ze snooze x xylophone</p>	<p>'sh'</p> <p>sh shop ch machine s sugar</p>	<p>'f'</p> <p>f fat ff stuff ph phone gh fough</p>	<p>'v'</p> <p>v very ve nerve</p>	<p>'p'</p> <p>p hop pp happy</p>
<p>'r'</p> <p>r rat wr write rr carry rh rhino re there</p>	<p>'h'</p> <p>h hot wh whole</p>	<p>'ch'</p> <p>ch chip tch match</p>	<p>'y'</p> <p>ch chip tch match</p>	<p>'b'</p> <p>b big bb rubber</p>

Ph o n o - G r a p h i c s™

Consonant Sound Pictures

1-800-732-3868

From: McGuinness, C. & McGuinness, G., *Reading reflex: The foolproof phono-graphic method for teaching your child to read*. The Free Press, New York, 1998, p. 214.

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Storytelling as vehicle to literacy

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Introduction

Why storytelling?

Stories should be a central part of all language teaching for children. They offer a constant source of language experience in the mother tongue and in the foreign language. Children always want to find meaning in stories. They listen with a purpose and apply strategies from their mother tongue to the foreign language to understand what's going on. Therefore they are motivated to improve their ability to understand further. Through story telling, children build up their listening and reading fluency, the skills for searching for meaning, predicting and guessing. Children can extend their language through stories because they help children become aware of the feeling and sound of the foreign language, introduce children to language items and sentence constructions without them necessarily having to use them productively, help to create drama, music, art and writing. Easy stories encourage responses through speaking and writing.

Authentic stories tell something about the culture, about the past, and contain a special content. Such stories may make it difficult to give definite indications for the level of each story but by modifying and simplifying an authentic story there is always the danger of losing some of the magic. Understanding authentic stories depends on how they are used, the amount of detail one goes into, the time available, and the pupils' conceptual level and concentration span. Given the difference in age, language level and time available for the current project each participating member adapted the stories according to the situation in class.

Why storytelling as vehicle to literacy?

A vehicle can carry a heavy load. Here the heavy load is language competence. Through storytelling language is transported: words, phrases, sentences, contents. Thus

children get the feeling for the intonation and rhythm of the foreign language. It is not hard work but it comes naturally. Storytelling supports listening and concentration skills; encourages creativity; motivates reading and writing even in the foreign language.

Storytelling is still something very special for children. It is different from watching TV, different from reading. Through storytelling children adapt strategies for understanding what's going on in the story. They hear words and phrases again and again, so they can store these words and phrases and later use them again. So learning English becomes fun, activity-related and enjoyable.

But children also forget easily. In order to get some results from storytelling a large number of follow-up activities are necessary. Follow-up activities can include:

- Role play (mini dialogues)
- Making something
- Researching a topic and gathering information
- Integrated skills work (writing....)
- Independent learning to pursue an area that interests the pupils
- Creativity (drawing, painting, cutting out shapes....)

Follow-up activities provide opportunities to bridge the gap between language study and language use and to link classroom learning with the world outside. The world beyond the classroom incorporates cultural studies and this aspect could be included through the project by learning about the countries from where the stories originated.

Objectives of the project

There were several objectives to be achieved from the project:

- Motivating children. When children listen to a story they want to find out what's going on, therefore they try hard to understand. They always want to do something meaningful. Besides, they are having fun following the action, watching the storyteller with his gestures and mime, and later engage in activities. They experience language learning as something special. Through storytelling we can arouse students' interest in literacy.
- Demonstrating that children would maintain their interest in the English language and enhance their way to FL literacy.
- Enhancing students' interest in cultural knowledge. They would want to hear about the countries where the stories come from, they would want to find out cultural,

historical and other interesting facts. Thus storytelling can contribute to multicultural competence.

- Finding out about children's interest in other countries and cultural knowledge.
- Investigating how self-directed learning works.
- Helping developing literary skills through self-directed learning. Students are motivated to look for and take books in their mother tongue and even in the foreign language. They develop strategies for understanding, because they are interested and develop interest in reading and writing, as they have a special purpose.
- Showing that children can easily do self-directed learning by drawing, making posters, doing role plays, before they can express themselves in a written form.
- Offering a variety of follow-up activities and finding out what kind of activities children like best. Appropriate activities can contribute to make the long path to literacy easier.
- Showing that learning a foreign language can be a lot of fun.
- Showing that the teacher can work with different language levels and still offer some interesting activities for every single student.
- Showing that all children are fascinated by traditional stories more than by regular course books.
- Showing that students apply strategies for understanding content. They develop these strategies in their mother tongue and adapt them to the new language.
- Showing that young language learners have a good ear for language. They imitate, learn and create something new; they can remember words and phrases easily.
- Investigating how the Internet works and how it can be incorporated.

Development of the project

Introductory phase

Having agreed on the title "Storytelling as vehicle to literacy", the participants' overall aim was to prove that storytelling is an important factor in teaching languages to children. The participants shared an enthusiasm for making English language learning an enjoyable and also rewarding experience for children. Given the extensive experience in language teaching, the results of a brainstorming session done to clarify how the project would be conducted, indicated that participants shared similar understandings about beginners. Yet there were many levels of beginners and differences in teaching systems across the various countries participating in this

project, namely Austria, Germany, Norway, Iceland and Estonia. It was very difficult to compare the teaching/learning of English as a foreign language.

- In Austria English is introduced to 6-year-olds, but children do not have a 'language course' in the traditional sense. English is integrated in all subjects and children are exposed to the foreign language every day for approximately ten minutes. They learn songs and rhymes as well as phrases and basic vocabulary. English is offered in a playful and enjoyable way. Later children have one English lesson per week, but oral communication is the most important aim. Reading and writing are not important for the early start. While children get used to the sounds and intonation of English, there are no tests or language assessments. By the age of 10, English is considered to be an important subject and students have 3 or even 4 lessons per week and have to study quite hard.
- In Germany there is the tendency to start out with English at an early age, similar to Austria, but the starting age for learning a second language varies from one Federal state to the next.
- In Iceland children start learning English at the age of 10 or 11.
- In Norway children start learning English from the first year, but they only have one lesson per week.
- In Estonia pupils start learning English at the age of 8 but then they have several lessons per week and a rather heavy workload to fulfil right from the beginning.

Initially, there were several ideas which were worth exploring and pursuing: evaluating what children remember after having worked with the stories; making an attempt at finding out about children's language learning by trying to record progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Other ideas included creating tests for aspects of language learning but all these projects and plans would take years to accomplish. The workshop in Graz gave the participants opportunity to work together for three days. It was anticipated that further communication would take place via discussion forum at the ECML from the participants' respective countries. But this did not work out and contact was lost for some time.

Each participant had an identical task to work on: design a story module together with additional follow-up activities. These five sets of stories and corresponding activities were to be exchanged among the participants when all were available. It had been agreed that each story should not be too difficult as they were intended for beginners of English with moderate speaking and comprehension skills. There were to be three versions of each story reflecting three levels of difficulty: easy, intermediate and advanced. Comprehension activities were to include:

- Word selection
- Multiple choice
- Vocabulary

- Sequencing
- Questions and answers
- Games
- Role play
- Free writing (for the advanced students)
- Matching sentences and pictures

By the end of the task, an assortment of language learning activities had been developed which demonstrated different approaches to language teaching and learning ranging from the traditional to the more innovative. Such diverse activities were required to meet the needs of children at various stages in their language education. Participants were free to experiment with a wide range of techniques depending on their teaching situation. There were several difficulties and differences the participants had to cope with. These included:

- variations in pupils' ages
- teaching styles of participating teachers
- language levels of pupils
- stages of literacy in FL of pupils
- number of lessons per week
- the way in which language teaching/learning is organised
- time available for the project
- amount of support material for the project (books, Internet access for pupils etc.)
- limited ways of communication about the project
- weaknesses of corresponding via e-mail

However, in spite of all these difficulties and some limitations, project participants shared their enthusiasm and confidence that some results could be achieved.

Stage 2: Finding solutions

It was quite difficult to receive and send all the stories, activities, pictures, and teacher's instructions via e-mail, but finally five story modules were available and accessible and the students could be introduced to the project. However, assessing the students could not be accomplished as it seemed too complicated and for a time, it seemed that that was the end of the project.

However, at another co-ordinators' meeting in Graz, the difficulties were discussed and a solution was proposed and agreed upon: pupils would not be tested, but invited to evaluate the storytelling project. This was great news for the project participants since time was running out and no end was to be seen with all the activities and endless testing that was originally planned!

Students were invited to choose the follow-up activities they wanted to do. They were also allowed to choose their preferred mode of working, whether in groups, pairs or individually. Owing to time constraints, it was also decided that rather than work with all five stories, a story could be introduced and the children could read on by themselves. For young learners who were not yet literate in FL, two stories and two countries of their choice would be selected. These modifications worked well with the students. They enjoyed the project very much indeed.

Stage 3: The Web page

All of a sudden the whole project came to life again: Lilja had put the project on the Internet by creating a web page for the Storytelling project. An example was included with her story. For example unknown words in the story were highlighted. In this way students could find pictures or explanations for the words. This helps to make the reading of a story very interesting indeed and it offers a completely new and exciting approach to language learning.

Having links on the website was another facility made possible through the use of the Internet. If students wanted to find information about some special facts, they could click on the word in the mindmap and would be connected immediately to a link from where they would get more information. For example, if pupils wanted to find out more about famous people in Austria, they could get the complete informative summary about composers. Information about Joseph Haydn would include a picture, his curriculum vitae and so on.

Especially for people interested in a special subject this is a fantastic new teaching tool. We are just in the beginning of a completely new way of teaching and learning! Here are some examples of how Lilja used the Internet for the project. The Web page for the storytelling project is: <http://www.ismennt.is/not/lj/Storytelling/>

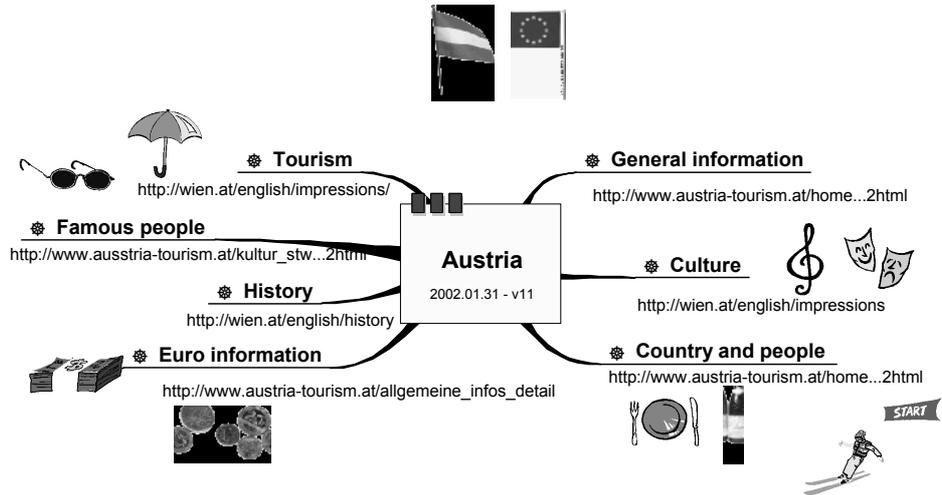
Students can click on information about the country or the story or the teachers' notes. The teacher does not have to copy hundreds of worksheets, but every student can download what s/he needs. Students can find additional information just by clicking on the word. Below are some examples to give an idea what the teacher can do on the Internet.

The Web page for the storytelling project

Storytelling as vehicle to literacy! Product from an ECML workshop in Graz, December 2000				
<u>Facts about Austria</u>	<u>Facts about Estonia</u>	<u>Facts about Germany</u>	<u>Facts about Iceland</u>	<u>Facts about Norway</u>
<u>The Star Talers</u>	<u>The story about the mouse, the mouse's tail the cat and some others</u>	<u>Hansel and Gretel</u>	<u>My Old Lady Wants Something for Her Whorl</u>	<u>The princess who always had to have the last word</u>
<u>The star Talers – Teachers guide</u>	<u>The story about the mouse, the mouse's tail the cat and some others – Teachers guide</u>	<u>Hansel and Gretel – Teachers guide</u>	<u>My Old Lady Wants Something for Her Whorl – Teachers guide</u>	<u>The princess who always had to have the last word – Teachers guide</u>

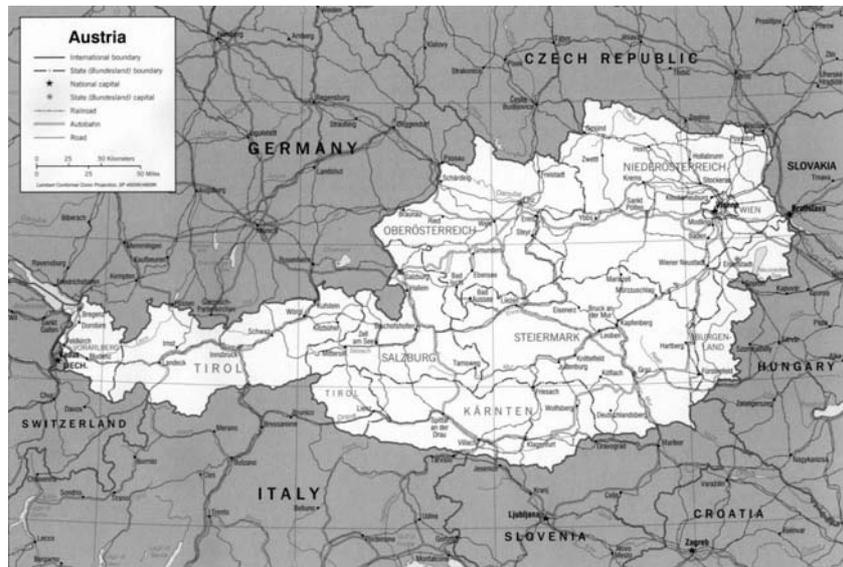
For students: activities evaluation

Mindmap of Austria



Austria

Austria (German *Österreich*), republic in central Europe, bounded on the north by the Czech Republic; on the northeast by Slovakia, on the east by Hungary, on the south by Slovenia, Italy and Switzerland; and on the west by Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and Germany. Austria is about 580km (about 360mi) long and has an area of 83,858sq km (32, 378sq mi). Vienna (Wien) is the country's capital and largest city.



Methodology

In presenting the project to the children, some principles and considerations had to be kept in mind. Below is a summary of the main principles and issues.

- Group size should be limited, large groups diminish the willingness of certain types of students to actively participate in the learning process.
- Possibilities for group, pair or individual work should be available. This allows the teacher to meet the needs of the different learning styles in the group.
- Students should be allowed to help each other. Language learning is a social event.
- Teacher has to use gesture and mime to help the students understand the story.
- There must be a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and students should feel free to express their feelings.
- Students need to understand the context. This enhances the language learning skills.
- Teacher has to use visual tools whenever possible.
- Instructions should be clear and simple for children to understand and follow.
- Teacher has to simplify texts and use everyday vocabulary whenever possible.
- Repetition and paraphrasing are essential to ensure understanding.
- Learner centred methods to use language in a meaningful way.
- Mistakes are necessary in the learning process, must be accepted.
- A large amount of preparatory work by the teacher is necessary to meet the needs of the students.
- Teacher has to adapt the length and complexity of the text to the language level of the students.
- Teacher has to adapt the text to the age of the students.
- Free access to the Internet, if possible.

Teachers do not only need linguistic competence and general qualities, but also flexibility, open-mindedness, inventiveness, enthusiasm and dedication to the project.

Project reports: Project report from Norway

The assessment was made with the help of Mrs Sissel Pettersen, teacher at Ulsmåg primary school where the project was tried out with a class of 9-year-olds.

Three fairy tales were tried out in a class of 9-year olds. These tales were *The Star Talers*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *The princess who always had to have the last word*. Since Norwegian pupils start to learn English from their first year of school, this was their third year of English. However since they only have one lesson a week during the first two years, it is important to bear in mind that in year three they are still beginners. Both myself (Norwegian project leader) and the class teacher and English teacher Mrs Pettersen agreed that expecting the pupils to work independently and to make their own autonomous choices concerning which fairy tales and which tasks they want to do was far too difficult at this stage. A successful outcome of this fairy tale project was dependent on the English teacher giving guidance and explanations and serving as a model for their language acquisition.

The English teacher's overall impression and the pupils' response were very positive. The pupils liked working with fairy tales very much. The English teacher used the tales in cross-curricular work, and thus included geography, arts and physical education in the project. The latter was included in outdoor school, which is a new priority in Norwegian schools. Outdoor school means teaching pupils subjects by giving them tasks and exercises to be performed in natural contexts, beyond the classroom walls. Mrs Pettersen found orienteering to be a vehicle for learning new vocabulary. The pupils were told in English in which direction the different posts were (for example post no 7 is to the north). They then had to find the post and report back in English which picture they saw at the post (for example "shoe sole"). They were then given a new number and the direction. This enabled the teacher to send the pupils to different posts at the same time. If a pupil did not know the word in English for the item in the picture, he or she asked the fellow pupils and thus got to know it. This proved to be very useful in helping pupils remember the new vocabulary.

In geography the pupils drew a big map of the country of the tale they were working with and this map was displayed in the classroom. In this way they also learnt words like capital, maps, country, town. While working with the Norwegian fairy tale, the pupils were asked to bring postcards of places they had visited in Norway, and they put them on the map. When working with the fairy tale from Austria, the pupils were asked to find information about Austria. Many of the pupils used the Internet with the parents help, and one pupil brought information about a very special architecture from Austria where the aim is to make the buildings fit into the landscape. This can mean asymmetrical windows for example. The class teacher recognized these buildings from work earlier done in arts and crafts and for the pupils this was an interesting discovery. During the work with the German fairy tale, the map of the German fairy tale route was pinned to the wall in the classroom and stimulated great interest in the pupils and even among the other teachers at the school. In arts the pupils drew large dolls of the

characters in the tales and displayed these on the wall. They loved making the drawings.

The English teacher found that they had very good instructions for the tasks and it was easy to identify the most important vocabulary. All the tales had keywords that were emphasized during the tasks and this was very useful. It was a good idea to have many different tasks to choose from.

The English teacher put up a sign on the door of the classroom saying “fairytale room” during the project period.

The Star Talers

As this story had very clear and concrete tasks, the English teacher chose to start the fairy tale project with this story. Austria is surrounded by a number of countries, and when drawing the map the pupils were very concerned about getting the names right for the surrounding countries. The pupils also learned the Norwegian and German name for the river (Donau). As suggested the pupils drew the different items in step 1, for example BREAD, HOOD and these drawings were displayed on the classroom wall. All the tasks proved to be very suitable for using in class. In step 4 where the idea is to give the pupils a jumbled up sentence and put it together again, the teacher chose to let the pupils sort out the sentences in groups. A second teacher in a parallel class also had a go with the project. She gave the pupils the whole text and used a yellow felt pen to underline the sentence which different pupils were supposed to learn by heart at home. The pupils loved saying their sentences aloud. In step 6 where the pupils were supposed to guess the words of the persons in their lives who look after them, the teacher was amazed to see how well they managed this task on their own. Task 11 proved great fun and again the pupils managed this one very well on their own and very quickly. The only problem was the mistake in one of the last lines, which caused a little confusion. Of the three tales this tale and its related tasks proved to be the one best adapted to the classroom.

Hansel and Gretel

The pupils were given a copy of the German map with indications of the major towns. They had to put the correct name to the towns. They enjoyed this activity very much. They started the story by looking at the pictures of the story and the vocabulary given below each picture on the overhead. Then they used only the pictures and tried to remember the vocabulary without seeing the words in writing. After this they matched the pictures and the words as a class activity using an overhead projector. The pupils loved the activity where they made their own pocket book. They wrote a sentence and drew a picture to go with each sentence. Because of the large amount of writing this was a challenging but fun activity for this age group.

All through the project the class used the song “The Witches”. The pupils drew the gingerbread house and the witch in large sizes and pinned the drawings to the classroom wall. In lesson three the pupils repeated the dialogue after the teacher. The pupils responded very well to the worksheet where they were supposed to connect the parts of the sentences. This was done as a classroom activity.

The princess who always had to have the last word

The English teacher chose to use the easiest version of the story. She used the opening gambit (lead-in-story) with great success with the pupils. She had made drawings of the items the Ash Lad found and took these out of a rucksack. The pupils told her that they did not believe that she had met the Ash Lad that morning, but it was obvious that they were not quite sure. She compared it to the pupils’ relationship to Santa Claus. Although they know that he is just someone in disguise, they believe in him. The pupils were given the nouns as homework. The pupils read the story during the following lesson. The teacher used only the dialogue between the princess and the Ash Lad as the whole story with the brothers proved to be too long for the pupils. She just told them in Norwegian about the brothers. They knew this story very well in Norwegian already. They did the task with true or false both indoors and outdoors in physical education. She made the pupils repeat the dialogue after her in chorus. She did not use the one sided dialogues as she felt this would need more time. She chose to exploit this fairy tale in arts and crafts with huge drawings of the princess, the castle and the Ash Lad. Another teacher at the school tried out this fairy tale and put more emphasis on making the pupils learn the dialogue. It worked very well given enough time and training. Some of the words, like ‘willow-hank’ and ‘wedge’ were difficult for the pupils to understand even in Norwegian. They had never seen these items in their life. Modern life has done away with old ways of making things and old tools. The English teacher said that half a year on each fairy tale would have given more time to learn the dialogues.

The teacher was asked if this fairy tale project was different from ordinary course books. She said that ordinary course books usually have a lot of pictures and little text at this stage. These tales had a lot of text. However, it was not a problem since the pupils knew the stories beforehand in their mother tongue except for the *Star Taler*. However this story has the same pattern as the other fairy tales so it was not completely new. The teacher’s own assessment of how she had worked with the texts was that she felt that she had needed more time to make the pupils learn whole sentences. If she were to do this project again she would aim at making the pupils learn more of the sentences. The German and the Austrian fairy tale were easy to use because they had concrete things happening.

Evaluation form

- Did you like the project? Definitely a smiling face here.
- What type of follow-up activity did you choose? *This question was impossible to answer since the storytelling project was teacher directed for the reasons explained at the beginning of the assessment. It is quite clear though that the pupils enjoyed drawing and completing geographical maps.*
- What did you like best in the project? *When asked what fairy tales they liked best they answered Hansel and Gretel because of the all the goodies and the gingerbread house and The Princess who Always Had to Have the Last Word because the princess was so beautiful (they had drawn her with a pink blouse) and there was a castle. This leads me to the conclusion that the pupils make up their opinion on the basis of content. The pupils also enjoyed making and filling in maps.*
- How did you learn best? Reading: 2; Writing: 5; Listening: 2; Searching: 0; Doing things: 6.
In the pupils' assessment there is a very clear tendency. 6 out of 15 pupils said that they had learned best by doing things. Five pupils said that they had learned best by writing.

To sum up, given sufficient time for learning, the texts will be important for future projects of this kind. Both pupils and the teacher(s) involved concluded that this was a very successful and enjoyable project.

Project report from Austria

The assessment was made in co-operation with the group's English teacher Mrs Hannelore Franklin at the ÜHS (Übungshauptschule of the Pedagogical Academy of the Archdiocese in Vienna).

The project was carried out with sixteen 10-year-old pupils. The students have three English lessons per week, but there are a number of tests every four weeks. As a result there was not too much time left for the project.

The teacher presented the five stories to the students and they could then choose two for the follow-up activities. The students did not want to choose *Hansel and Gretel*, because they all knew that story from their kindergarten days. They wanted to choose stories that were not familiar to them.

Initially, the teacher presented the information about the countries associated to each of the stories and from the questions being asked, the students seemed to be very

interested in finding out about the different cultures. Then the English teacher started telling the stories, but stopped after a while, and let the students continue reading the stories by themselves. Following the reading, students were eager to do the exercises in the activity books. While students were reading, writing and guessing, the teacher had enough time to help the weaker students with their problems.

The students were allowed to use the computer room. They tried to find more information about the countries they had heard about. They showed quite some experience with research. Some of the students collected the information and printed out little booklets for all the members in the group. Others wanted to make a big class poster. They all helped each other and they even tried to use English during their work. The poster group collected bits and pieces and worked very hard to complete their artistic poster. One group worked on vocabulary. They looked up words in the dictionary and tried to find related words. Another group retold the story and drew some pictures according to the sentences. Yet another group had the idea of acting out one of the stories. They wanted to invite the 6-year-olds. They even did very elaborate work for the stage decoration.

These students were accustomed to very strict/traditional lessons. So they thoroughly enjoyed doing activities of their own choice.

Project report from Estonia

The idea of the project was great – the information on each country, the follow-up exercises. The idea on how to develop and teach the stories was useful and allowed each teacher to do what she felt was most beneficial for the group. The students were interested in the topic and also how it was presented. They seemed to really like the information given on each country. The variety of follow-up exercises reinforced the important points and made learning more meaningful.

The making of the booklets allowed each student to develop her/his ideas in their own way. It allowed the students to show their artistic touch and also indicate what they really learned. This also reinforced many of the ideas and facts that were presented in the classroom and they were able to put them into proper use.

From a teaching perspective, it seems that the level of work would be difficult for a grade 3 class to handle. In fact, the grade 6 class were able to cope with it. At the grade 3 level students in Estonia are just starting to learn the language and they would only know a few words. They certainly would not be able to cope with the project as it is now. Had the project dealt only with listening, it would have been easier. Children are used to listening when stories are read to them but this has been all in their mother tongue. Also they are used to dealing with the past tense, but the future is tricky since Estonian really does not have the tense.

The participating students found the stories a little difficult. Not only did they have to read them, but they also had to study and understand them and that was hard for most of them. They all liked the project, especially the information on the countries. Their favourite follow-up activity was the crossword. They found that the best way of learning was doing things.

Having simpler stories with lots of repetition would have made it easier for children to remember phrases and words. However, having all the information at hand definitely made life easier and everybody's input is truly appreciated.

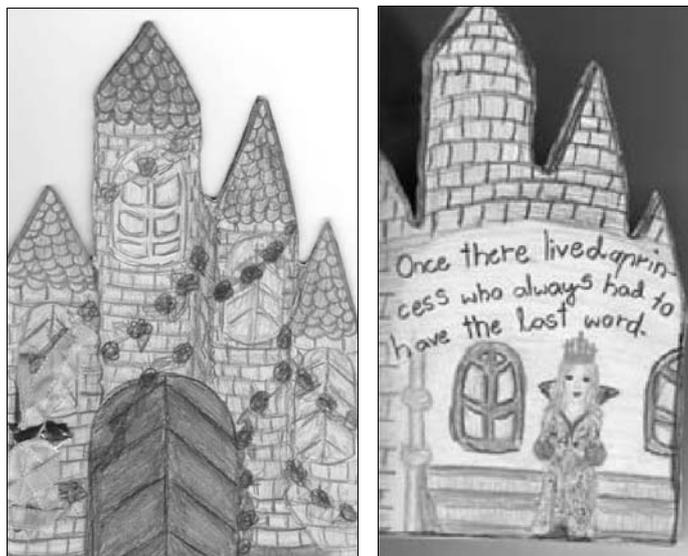
Twelve 12-year-old students took part in the project. They all liked it very much.

Work in the classroom involved individual work, pair work and group work. The students were told the story and then they did the follow-up exercises. Their favourites were the word search, matching the halves and matching pictures and sentences. They thought that the most interesting part of the project was the information on the countries. In the classroom we had a map of Europe where the countries of the project participants were marked with their national flags. According to the students, the best way of learning was by doing things that is writing storybooks. They also liked acting the stories.

In addition to the project report there are examples of the artistic storybooks of the students and also the reports about the various countries. The students collected the information and made a summary.

Examples of artistic story books

The Princess who always had to have the last word



Hänsel and Gretel



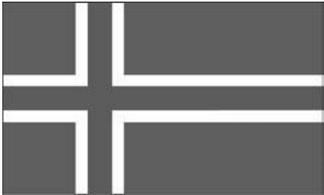
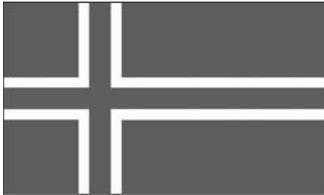
The Mouse and the cat

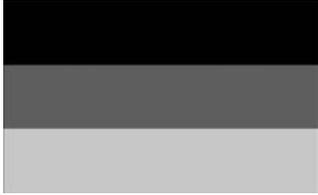


The Startalers



Examples of country reports

NORWAY		ICELAND	
			
Capital:	Oslo	Capital:	Reykjavik
Population:	4 million	Area:	39,578 sq. km
Language:	Norwegian	Population:	230 000
Famous people:	Skari Bente Bjorn Dahlie King Harold	Language:	Icelandic
Norwegian Story:	The Princess Who Always Had the Last Word	Famous people:	Jon Arnar Magnusson, Björk
		Icelandic story:	My Old Lady Wants Something for Her Whorl

GERMANY		AUSTRIA	
			
Capital:	Berlin	Capital:	Vienna (Wien)
Population:	82 million	Population:	7 550 000
National dish:	Sausages and sauerkraut	Language:	German
Famous people:	Adolf Hitler, Michael Schumacher, Kanzler Schröder	Famous people:	Haydn, Hermann Mayer (Olympic winner), Mozart
German Story:	Hansel and Gretel	Austrian Story:	The Star Talers by The Grimm Brothers

Project report from Germany

The pupils enjoyed the storytelling project ever so much. It was a great success. The children did not only hear stories from different European countries they also learned quite a lot about the countries, a fact that should not be underestimated at a time when Europe is growing together. It was a great help to have all the stories and the follow-up activities by hand. It was like having a treasury full of ideas. The stories themselves provided a lot of information about the different countries and their tradition.

It was also quite interesting to see that our ways of approaching the subject are very similar within the different countries. A problem for the German pupils was the fact that they had only started learning English in August and that they had only two lessons a week, sometimes less because of illness of some teachers and substitution lessons and so on. Consequently, the text versions had to be altered according to the level of the pupils. This was followed by the preparation of the activity books as previously planned and described in the follow-up activities. Solutions were included so that the pupils were able to check their work.

After a short brainstorming the pupils were usually given information about the country of the story, e.g. maps, facts, books, information from the Internet. Later the pupils looked for information themselves. The teacher then told the children the story. Subsequently, pupils worked on the follow-up activities. Most of the time one story took longer than four lessons to work with. To work through the activity book the pupils preferred to work in pairs since that gave them more confidence. They could help each other and they were able to compare their work. They worked in groups

while acting out the stories and they worked on their own when they created little storybooks or vocabulary booklets with pictures or drew pictures and wrote the chosen words. Where possible they used English to talk to each other. Alternatively they used their mother tongue. There are no pupils who have a second language.

At the end of the project, an evaluation was conducted. All twenty participating pupils liked the project. They knew the fairy-tales of the Grimm brothers (*Hansel and Gretel*, *Star Talers*) and did not consider them to be so interesting. They liked the stories from abroad much better.

As follow-up activities 18 pupils preferred working through the activity book. Many of them loved to do the word search. Another favourite task of all the children was making their own storybook. Ten children enjoyed writing a wordbook with the new vocabulary and an identical number of children gave importance to acting out the story. The children loved to play the story over and over again. They enjoyed taking on a special role and speaking in English. It is much easier to talk in a foreign language when one takes on a role. After acting out the story several times the pupils knew the text inside out. Therefore reading was not a problem at all. Later on this year the stories are going to be performed during a parents' evening.

Only five pupils went to the Internet to get information about the country. As yet, the school is not equipped with computers and there is only one computer with Internet access. All pupils loved looking up information in special books brought purposely by the teacher.

Nine pupils liked the free choice of activities best and another nine enjoyed learning about the foreign countries. When asked to identify in which way they learned best, ten emphasized reading, eight referred to searching or doing things on their own and seven identified listening. It was interesting to see that a number of children did not only give one answer but a combination of two or three possibilities, e.g. two children mentioned listening and reading, two referred to listening, writing and doing things, two to writing and doing things and one child mentioned reading and writing. Most learners needed to focus on several senses to learn best.

All the children were very receptive to the foreign language. They like English as a subject and they are eager to learn the language. They use all their spare time to look at English picture- and storybooks, they try to read the sentences, they recognize vocabularies, some of them transfer their knowledge from one language to the other. They are always busy copying words from storybooks or dictionaries. After the project it was necessary and worthwhile to give them the opportunity to get to know a lot of English children's books for 'Early Learners'. They have a much more motivation and are much more interested in the foreign language than before.

Project report from Iceland

At the end of the workshop in Graz, a group of teachers decided to put together stories and accompanying teachers' material to teach English to young learners of English as a foreign language. It was agreed that teaching would be done through authentic text and that the students' work would be enjoyable for every student. One of the objectives of the ECML is to promote cultural awareness among students in the European countries. Consequently, this aspect was included in the project by providing students with stories from different countries. In addition, among the suggested activities, research on the Internet was included for finding out information about the countries.

Each participant agreed to find stories in English from her home country, develop teachers' material to go with the stories and include some information about the country. This part of the project was crucial. In the Icelandic context it is very difficult to find material in English suitable for young learners. Nothing is published to meet the exact needs of teachers because of the limited population. No publisher could afford to do this. The reading material used is that which is published in UK or USA for beginner readers who are 5 years younger than English-beginners in Iceland. Some publishers do make books for English as a foreign language but that is not enough.

The chosen stories had to be public domain so some form of tale was selected by most of the participants. Modern stories would be interesting for the students and they would learn more about the countries but permission from the authors and publishers would have had to be obtained.

The teaching material put together by the participants was truly excellent and indeed it is a privilege to work with such highly skilled teachers who put so much effort in their work. Once all the material had been sent, it was put on one website for everyone's convenience. The URL for the website is: <http://www.ismennt.is/not/lj/Storytelling/>

Now it was time to try to use this material. My problem was that I was not teaching English this year. It is often hard to get teachers to use new material. Teachers in Iceland find their work very time consuming and they are rather hesitant to put more work in their daily routine than they need to. I was about to ask a couple of teachers to use this material when a teacher assistant came to our school. She is an English teacher from Finland. She stayed in our school for four months on a Lingua programme sponsored by the European Union. She was very willing to use this material.

Two groups, each consisting of eleven students were formed. In the first group students were aged 10-11 years. They were doing their first and second year in English. Using Microsoft Publisher a booklet with all the stories and the evaluation sheet was prepared together with the activity booklets. Unfortunately there was not enough time for the second group to complete the evaluation sheet.

The students had to choose their favourite activity. They then worked individually or in groups both in school and at home. When using the story of *The princess who had to have the last word* they searched for similar words in the original language and in

English and then they tried to find different words in the original language and in English. Another group made a poster about Germany. The information they found on the Internet was put on a big sheet of paper. Sentences and pictures were the starting point for a new story. As starting points, they used *The princess who always wanted to have the last word* and *Hansel and Gretel*.

The group evaluated the work as follows:

Did you like the project		What type of follow-up activities did you choose										What did you like best in the project.				How did you learn best				What new did you learn in this project		
Yes	no	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	stories	activities	information	free chose	reading	writing	listening	searching		doing things	
X		x		x	x							x									x	Learned a lot
X		x	X	x								x		x							x	Words and writing
X			X	x	x		x						x	x		x		x				I don't know
X		x	X		x							x				x		x				To learn
X		x		x	x							x									x	About the countries
X		x		x		x						x				x						English and about countries
X					x				x			x	x							x		
X			X	x						x		x				x	x				x	
X		x		x	x							x									x	About courtiers
X			X	x	x								x								x	I learned many many things

The overall experience with this work was enjoyable for teachers and students. It is planned that this material will be used again in the near future when teaching English to 10- and 12-year-old students. The stories will be recorded on CD's so the students can hear them repeatedly and even take them home and improve their pronunciation.

Interpretation of results

Participating countries:	Austria, Estonia, Norway, Iceland, Germany
Number of students' evaluations:	78
Age of students:	8-11
Level of language competence in FL:	Beginners
Area of investigation:	Enhancement of literacy in FL and L1, cross-cultural interest

Text of the students' evaluation of the storytelling project

1. Did you like the project?
 2. What type of follow-up activity did you choose?¹
 3. What did you like best in the project?

STORIES – ACTIVITIES – INFORMATION – FREE CHOICE

4. How did you learn best?
 By: reading – writing – listening – searching – doing things

Question 1: Did you like the project?

All 78 students answered yes.

Question 2: What type of follow-up activity did you choose?

Pupils decided on single work, pair work or group work. Pupils decided what they want to do:

¹ The teacher had to explain the 10 possibilities.

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Activity book</i>	<i>Acting out the story</i>	<i>Drawing pictures & Writing sentences</i>	<i>Collecting material about country</i>	<i>Writing about the hero</i>	<i>Finishing the story in your way</i>	<i>Finding similar stories</i>	<i>Going to the Internet</i>	<i>Making a story book</i>	<i>Comparing words</i>

Abbreviations:

SW- single work

PW – pair work

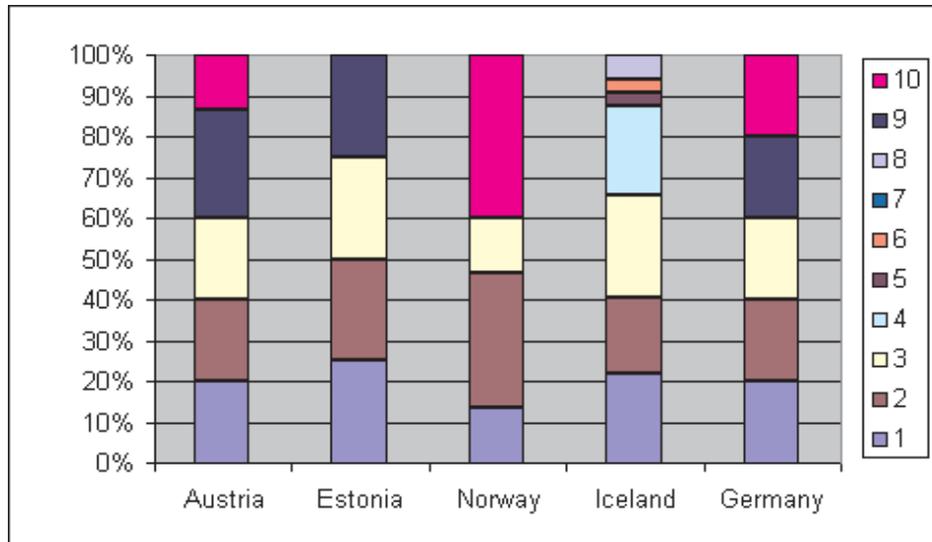
GW – group work

FL – foreign language

L1 – mother tongue

1. Working through the activity book (SW/FL)
2. Acting out the story in a group (GW/FL)
3. Drawing pictures and writing sentences (GW/PW/SW, FL)
4. Collecting material about the country of the story of your choice and making a poster (GW/PW/SW, FL, L1)
5. Writing about the hero of the story (FL, L1/FL)
6. Finishing the story according to your imagination (FL/L1)
7. Finding similar stories in your own language – compare them (FL/L1)
8. Going into the Internet and finding information about country, collecting material, writing a report (GW, FL)
9. Making a story book (GW/PW/SW, FL)
10. Comparing words of the two languages (GW/PW/SW, L1/FL)

Follow-up activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Number of students
Austria	3	3	3						4	2	15
Estonia	3	3	3						3		12
Norway	2	5	2							6	15
Iceland	7	6	8	7	1	1		2			11
Germany	4	4	4						4	4	20



This was the most complicated question, because the results were not clear-cut.

Pupils could not decide what they really liked best, so they ticked off several numbers. In order to get a result the general trend was considered.

Working through the activity book was the most popular choice, followed making storybooks and writing sentences and drawing pictures.

Here we can find some similarities between Austria, Germany and Estonia.

In Iceland there is a balance between activity book, writing sentences, acting out the story and making a storybook.

None of the students chose finishing the story. It is obvious that beginners cannot do that in FL, but they also had the choice of using their mother tongue. The reason probably is that during the foreign language session students are eager to do everything in the new language.

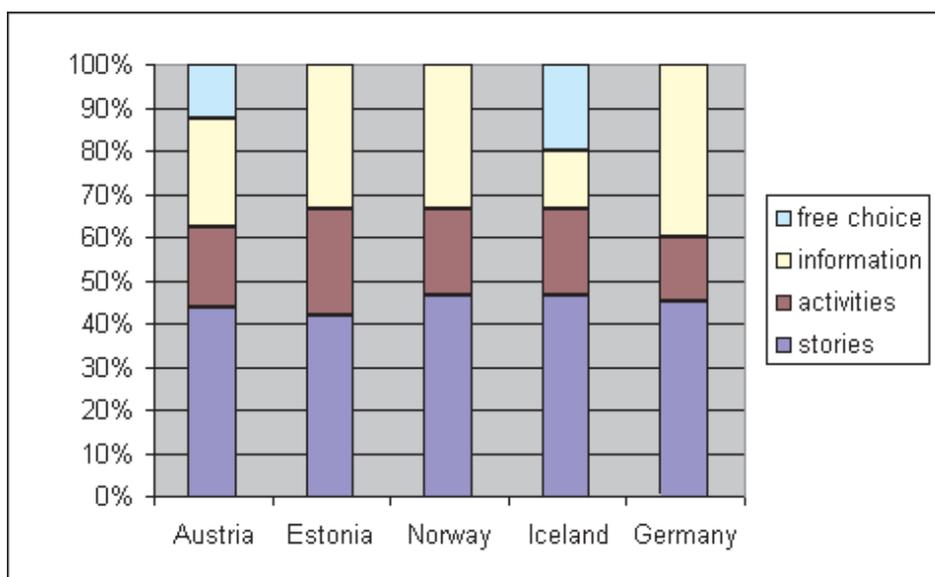
Finding similar stories was not popular. Once again the reasons could be the same as in finishing a story in their own words.

Using the Internet depended on the free access to the Internet. This was not possible in some of our English classes.

Question 3: What did you like best in the project?

Stories – Activities – Information – Free choice

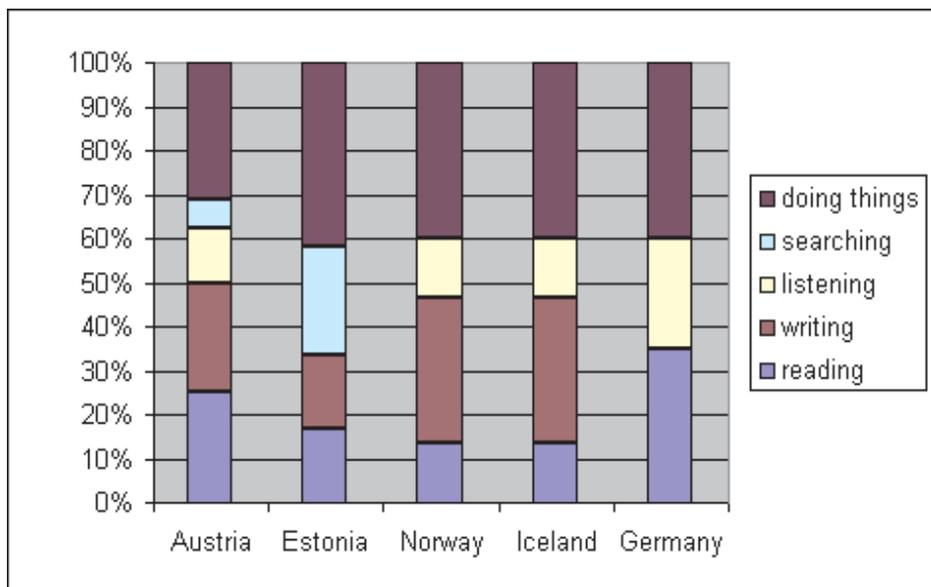
Liked best	stories	activities	information	free choice	Number of students
Austria	7	3	4	2	16
Estonia	5	3	4		12
Norway	7	3	5		15
Iceland	7	3	2	3	15
Germany	9	3	8		20



This graph again shows the general trend since clear-cut results were not obtained. But there is no doubt that the most popular activities were the stories. The first runner up in four countries was the information about the countries. In Austria and Iceland pupils had free choice of the Internet, and this might account for differences among the pupils choices. Pupils got the information by searching through various web pages.

Question 4: How did you learn best? By reading – writing – listening – searching – doing things?

Learn best	reading	writing	listening	searching	doing things	number of students
Austria	4	4	2	1	5	16
Estonia	2	2		3	5	12
Norway	2	5	2		6	15
Iceland	2	5	2		6	15
Germany	7		5		8	20



Here again clear-cut results could not be obtained, so comments are made about general trends. The most popular way of learning according to the students is doing things. This suggests that at this age children are interested in all kinds of things, to have fun with the language in a playful way. They just want to be involved. Searching is very popular in Estonia and also, to a lesser degree, in Austria. Writing seems to be very common in all countries except Germany. That is clear, because the German group were the youngest English language learners, and they do not start out with writing in the new language.

Résumé

We all were satisfied to find out that the students all met our expectations.

We tried very hard to carry through the project, it was fun in many ways and rewarding, but we also found some weaknesses. Therefore we want to sum up and suggest a few things:

- Constant communication is important for the success of a project. It should be possible for the participants to meet from time to time in order to discuss details of the project. Having personal contact is completely different from receiving and sending e-mails.
- Students should be allowed enough time for learning the texts for future projects of this kind.
- After the project it is necessary and worthwhile to give the children the opportunity to get to know a lot of English children books for 'Early Learners' because they have a much bigger motivation and are much more interested in the foreign language than before.
- The overall experience with this work was enjoyable for teachers and students. I intend to use this material again next year. I will be teaching 10- and 12-years old students English. Then I will have the stories read for me on CD's so the students can hear them again and again and even take them home and then learn the pronunciation better.
- While we were working on the project we all agreed on the idea that we want to continue this project with the students. We want to install a kind of "storybank" on the Internet. We will try to continue producing "story modules" in the way we started the project. Students who participated in our project really would enjoy that and probably more and more students will get involved.

We hope that our contribution to the literacy project will encourage teachers in their use of authentic story material as well as culture studies, even for very young learners. Children always want to do meaningful things. They apply strategies for understanding, speaking, reading and writing from their mother tongue to the foreign language and they want to use the new language in many different ways. They also want to choose the follow-up activities according to their interests and talents.

Literacy development in a second language

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Introduction

In today's Europe most countries are involved in the effects of globalisation and migration due to wars and economic difficulties around the world. People leave their countries of origin in order to seek a better and safer place for themselves and their families. The recipient European countries have to consider how to welcome and integrate the arriving adults and children. Some European countries have found it necessary to develop special programmes for reception and development of language and academic knowledge for the children of refugees and asylum seekers.

The Netherlands and Sweden are two countries in Europe that have received a great number of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers for the past thirty years. In both countries various organisations and structures have been built to cater for the reception of these people and their children. Difficult decisions have been made in an attempt to answer questions like: Should the children be put in special classes? If so, for how long should they be in these classes? How should the instruction be organised? Where special reception classes have been organised new questions have arisen namely: what are the consequences for the children's language and academic development? Is there an advantage whether the children are literate in their first language or not? How long will it take to prepare the children for entering regular classes?

This project focuses on children acquiring their first or second literacy in their second language. During the Workshop 12/2000, "Literacy as correspondence: an integrated approach to multi-literacy", in Graz in December 2000, this strand brought together the participants from the Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden. After formulating a plan of action (see Appendix) the participants from the Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden started to work on the project in January 2001. Early in the working process the delegates from Slovakia were not able to participate further. The project continued with the participants from the Netherlands and Sweden.

Theoretical background

Au (1993) defines literacy as:

The ability and the willingness to use reading and writing to construct meaning from printed text, in ways which meet the requirements of a particular social context (Au 1993: 20).

As an example of *willingness* to use literacy Au (1993) asserts that this corresponds with the tasks children are asked to do. One example is when a teacher asks her third grade students to complete a textbook exercise that requires them to write a friendly letter and the students show little ability to compose these letters. A few days later, however, the teacher announces that she has arranged for everyone in the class to have a pen pal. Now, with a real audience for their writing, the students show a great deal of letter-writing ability. The teacher notices that students have a sense of the information their pen pals will find interesting, and that they know how to write a greeting and a closing for their letters.

Student's literacy ability might appear very different depending on the nature of the literacy activity. The textbook exercise might show the old familiar pattern of teaching literacy as a set of skills in isolation, apart from useful communication. To have students write to pen pals is an example of a more beneficial pattern based on teaching literacy in a meaningful context, with an authentic purpose for communication. That instruction puts emphasis on meaningful, rewarding activities is beneficial to all students. To the success of students of diverse backgrounds it may be critical. Au (1993) states that literacy is not just a matter of skill or cognitive strategies. It is also a matter of will or feelings and emotions.

Reading and writing are both processes of composing meaning from text. Together with the other language areas, listening and speaking, all four are closely connected and have a crucial role in student's literacy development. For bilingual or diverse students it is valuable to use strengths in their first language as the basis for becoming proficient in literacy in the second language. For example, students might read a text in the second language but discuss their ideas in their first language.

According to Au's definition (1993) reading and writing are used to *construct meaning*. This view is consistent with research, which suggests that meaning does not reside in the text, but in the interaction among the reader, the text, and the social context. Viewing reading and writing as constructive processes also reminds us of the importance of the background knowledge that students bring to the task. Readers' background knowledge strongly influences their interpretation of a text. In multicultural classrooms, teachers may find that students arrive at what appear to be unusual interpretations of a particular text. These varying interpretations may result, not from careless reading, but from differences in the background knowledge or cultural schemata students bring to the reading task.

Teachers need to encourage students to explain their interpretations of text so that the reasons behind their interpretations become evident. In some cases, the cultural schemata of students from diverse backgrounds may give them insights about a text that the teacher and other students do not have.

In this definition (Au 1993), literacy is tied to *printed text* that is to a person's ability to work with printed text, to read and write, speak and listen about a text. Consider a situation in which students are discussing a story read aloud by the teacher; here the students are using their ability to interpret a text. Or consider a situation in which two students are working together to compose a story. One of the students is coming up with new ideas, while the other is writing the words down on paper. Are they both or is only one showing literacy? Students need to be involved in all four aspects of literacy both individually and together with peers. In settings outside of school, literacy is often carried out in a collaborative manner.

Finally, the definition of literacy states that reading and writing are used in ways appropriate to the requirements of a particular *social context*. A social context is any of the situations someone may experience in settings such as the school, home, neighbourhood, workplace, shopping mall, or elsewhere, whether alone or with other people. When someone reads or writes, those acts of literacy are taking place in some social context. The reading of a newspaper at home, while surrounded by family members, is an example of literacy taking place in a particular social context. Taking notes at the library on information needed for a term paper is another example of literacy in a particular social context. Still another example is seen when two young students read a book together in the classroom library corner.

The idea of social context is especially important when it comes to the literacy instruction of students of diverse backgrounds. The social contexts of the home and community often prepare students of diverse backgrounds to learn in ways quite different from those expected by the school. Also, students of diverse backgrounds often experience literacy in social contexts vastly different from those typically found in schools. The teacher's goal is to enable students of diverse backgrounds to use literacy successfully in mainstream social contexts, as well as in the contexts of their homes and communities. This will call for culturally responsive instruction involving change of the social context of instruction so that lessons can be more effective for students of diverse backgrounds. Conclusively, it would of course be best for the child to acquire first literacy in his or her strongest language.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to investigate literacy development in a second language and focus on children of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who are studying in reception classes in the Netherlands and Sweden. The research questions of the project were: For how long are the children staying in these classes? How is the

development of the children's language proficiency and academic knowledge? Is there an advantage whether the children are literate in their first language or not? Two hypotheses were formulated:

- Students who are literate in L1 will go faster through the process of becoming literate in L2.
- The result of the literacy process in L2 is more influenced by an integrated approach¹ than by the fact of different starting points for the children.

In order to answer the research questions and to confirm or reject the hypotheses the project collected data from 5 children in the Netherlands and 5 children in Sweden who studied in reception classes.

The reception of migrant children in Sweden

In Sweden some schools in some municipalities have organised reception classes for newly arrived students with mainly refugee status. The aim of these classes is to teach Swedish to the children, to introduce them to the Swedish school and society and to keep up their cognitive and academic development and eventually to transfer them to regular classes. This process is usually allowed to take one year, but in the school described below it is not uncommon for the children to stay for one and a half years in the reception class.

Methodology

The material for this study has been collected in a reception class for newly arrived migrant children in Uppsala, by their teacher Gunilla Östergren. The material consists of daily observations of the children and recollections of interactions between children and teacher. The teacher has also gathered various literacy materials from the children to support the assessment of their development. The material was collected between January 2001 and June 2001. For some children there is a follow-up report from December 2001.

¹ The project group defined "an integrated approach to literacy acquisition" as being an approach where second language development and literacy development is parallel and interactive.

Results

A case study of five students in a reception class in Uppsala, Sweden

Four students started in the reception class for grade 1 to 3 at the beginning of 2001. The fifth student that will be reported on here had already started in October 2000. Altogether there were 25 students in the class instructed by two teachers and one preschool teacher. Teachers in a reception class seldom know in advance when new students are to arrive. They might just arrive suddenly without any notice. These five students were the ones arriving at this specific period. None of the five students knew Swedish upon arrival but some of them, it turned out, were literate in their mother tongue.

Name of child:	Ya
Gender:	An only girl, born in China
Age:	9 years (grade 3)
L1:	Mandarin
History:	Stayed in England for 1 year; knows basic English
Previous schooling:	1 year in England
Comments:	Does not participate in L1 instruction

January 2001

Literacy: Ya is literate in English and is believed to have some literacy knowledge in Mandarin.
She knows all the Swedish letters and her motor capacity is well developed, i.e. she can easily form letters and words.

February

Language: Ya has learned about 50 verbs and nouns in Swedish. They comprise school words, family related word, food words, numerals, colours and simple phrases like "I like x", "I don't like x" etc. At this time Ya only speaks when addressed to, says a few words when she is playing Memory, when she has to present her homework and during similar school situations.

Reading: Ya reads without hesitation texts in Swedish that are built on the vocabulary she has learnt (mentioned above). She reads fluently and with a Swedish pronunciation.

Writing: Earlier Ya has copied diary texts that the class formulates together and the teacher writes on the blackboard. Now she writes

spontaneously for the first time in her diary in Swedish and finishes off the sentence in English.

March

Language: The vocabulary of Ya now also comprises words for clothes and adjectives for descriptions. As for her Swedish grammar she knows the genitive, pronouns, plural endings of nouns and how to compare adjectives. Ya is a very quick learner. She is working on two workbooks to develop her vocabulary. Orally she is still rather withdrawn and answers questions and speech directed to her in a quiet way.

Reading: In the workbooks Ya reads all the instructions herself and fulfils the tasks. Connected to the workbooks are two readers, which Ya reads together with simple story books. While reading she writes down new words in a word book. She also borrows books and brings them home to read.

Writing: Ya now writes her own texts in the diary. She has a command of temporal expressions and knows the past tense of both regular and irregular verbs. She uses the Swedish word order correctly and her spelling is correct most of the times.

June

Because of Ya's independent way of working, her learning strategies and working tempo and because of the help she is getting from her parents with translation of new words, it is decided that Ya should be moved to a grade 4 class, i.e. an age adequate grade for Ya.

Ya has also shown to be very advanced in mathematics and during these months she has followed the courses in mathematics for grade 4 and 5. In history and geography she has studied according to the curriculum for grade 3. Ya has herself chosen the books she wants to read and specified what tasks she wants to fulfil. She has clearly expressed that she wants to be challenged by her work. The task for the teacher has mainly been to find suitable material for Ya.

Orally Ya is still not expressing herself spontaneously, but she answers in class and she is able to account for the tasks she has been working with. She also does not spontaneously address her friends in the class, but she participates in the games they play and she does not seem to be left out. One crucial reason for moving Ya to a regular class is that she will still get instruction in Swedish as a second language by a skilled teacher.

December

Ya is in a regular grade 4 class and she follows the instruction very well, especially mathematics and natural science. She is not one of the most talkative students in class. She is in fact rather quiet in class, but always answers when someone addresses her. In smaller groups, as when she gets instruction in Swedish as a second language, she speaks more. The teacher also notices that she speaks with her classmates. Linguistically her Swedish vocabulary and grammar is nearing the level of her native speaking classmates. She makes very few grammatical mistakes. She handles temporal changes, congruence, plural endings and spelling. Ya reads and understands age adequate books and she writes texts both on fiction and facts as for example book critiques. A non-native feature is that she has some difficulties with prepositions.

Comments

Ya is coming from a very intellectual and study motivated home. Both parents are researchers at Uppsala University. Ya has subsequently grown up in a “paper and pen home” getting the parents undivided attention and help with her studies. The stay in an English school in England for one year prepared her for the Swedish school. In the English school she learned the Latin alphabet, got acquainted to a language with longer words and another pronunciation and direction of script than Mandarin. She was also fortunate to get instruction in Swedish as a second language from a skilled teacher. Her quietness is obviously not a result of language difficulties, Ya has always been a quiet child, according to her parents. The parents have consulted a psychologist for Ya’s quiet behaviour, but been assured that it is nothing to worry about. The teacher believes that her quietness in class might have more to do with the classroom culture she has been accustomed to earlier.

Name of child:	Hi
Gender:	Girl, born in Kurdistan in Turkey, two siblings in Sweden, and two older siblings left in Kurdistan
Age:	8 years (grade 2) but seems to be older
L1:	Kurmanci
L2:	Turkish (used at school)
Previous schooling:	2 years in the Turkish school
Comments:	Participated in L1 instruction during autumn 2001, spring 2002

January 2001

Literacy: Hi reads and writes Turkish.

February

Language: Hi has learned about 15 verbs and school related nouns in Swedish. She can name four colours and the adjectives big and small. It is difficult for her to remember words. Hi does not name the objects in the Memory game and to some extent she seems confused.

Reading: Hi reads without difficulty texts in Swedish constructed by the vocabulary she has learnt. The texts comprise simple phrases like: "Hello, my name is... I come from..." On the whole she can decode these texts, but she does not understand it all.

Writing: Hi is copying diary texts from the blackboard. She writes nice letters on the rows. Her motor capacity is good.

March

Language: Hi is still working with the first simple verbs and school related words. She is also expanding her vocabulary with food words and family words. She seems to understand very little of what is going on in the classroom and her contacts with the classmates during recess are mainly by pushing or hitting them.

Reading: Hi reads very simple texts built on her vocabulary in Swedish. She is able to decode and read them fluently, but her comprehension is limited.

Writing: Hi now writes her own text in the diary by using the words she works with. She writes for example "I jump, I paint, hello mummy" etc.

June

Hi still has difficulties to understand what is going on in the classroom. She might be interpreted as out of initiative. Her way of

playing with her friends is still aggressive. Slowly her vocabulary is growing. At this point it is easy to misjudge her literacy level since she can decode texts fluently, but has a limited comprehension.

Hi has a difficulty in mathematics and she seems unfamiliar with both addition and subtraction. At the moment she is following the curriculum of mathematics for grade 1, which means that she is working with very simple tasks in addition and subtraction. In the autumn she will continue in the reception class.

December

During the autumn semester of 2001 Hi has developed a lot. She has been instructed in a smaller group of grade 2 students in the reception class who all advanced far in their acquisition of Swedish and who all are going to leave the reception class after Christmas. The groups level of Swedish has been above Hi's productive level, but it has been thought to be a suitable input +1 for Hi. As for mathematics she has recovered her knowledge and quickly passed through the curriculum for grade 2. Hi is going to stay for one more semester in the reception class and that third and last semester will be used for the grade 3 curriculum in mathematics, natural and social science and to develop her writing. Grammatically Hi needs to work more on temporal expressions and connectors to bind texts together. Slowly Hi is taking more initiatives for her own work and the relations with her classmates have improved.

Comments

Hi had a very slow start with her schooling in Sweden, which might have been caused by the involuntary move to Sweden. When she came she was reunited with her father, whom she had not seen for two years. She has also expressed her longing for her big sister and brother who were left in Kurdistan when the rest of the family moved. Hi has told her teacher about the police violence that the family was subjected to after the father disappeared. The worry, lack of concentration and confusion she showed at the beginning has slowly decreased, which is something also the rest of the family is experiencing. The father, who has nine years of schooling, tries to help Hi with her schoolwork, but is not always allowed. According to the father, Hi and the father experience a slight alienation towards each other. Hi's teacher expect Hi to start in a regular grade 4 class in the autumn of 2002. This is an age adequate placement and is also due to the fact that Hi looks rather grown up. During the autumn semester of 2001 and spring semester of 2002 Hi has got instruction in her L1, Kurmanci. She will need continuing instruction in Swedish as a second language and subject instruction in Kurmanci in grade 4.

Name of child:	Si
Gender:	Boy, born in Kurdistan in Turkey, two siblings in Sweden, two older siblings left in Kurdistan. Si is the brother of Hi.
Age:	10 years (grade 4) but seems to be much older
L1:	Kurmanci
L2:	Turkish (used at school)
Previous schooling:	4 years in the Turkish school
Comments:	Participated in some L1 instruction

January 2001

Literacy: Si reads and writes Turkish.

February

Language: Si has learned about 15 verbs and a few school related nouns in Swedish. Si is working independently and uses a Turkish-Swedish dictionary. He has quickly found out what is going on in the classroom and can follow the activities. Si names the objects in the Memory game and tries to talk. He is also making contact with the teacher.

Reading: Si reads texts in Swedish building on the vocabulary he has learnt. Mainly he can decode the whole text, but not always understand everything. He is however, making use of the dictionary.

Writing: Si is copying diary texts from the blackboard, but is also writing his own texts in Turkish. He writes nicely and his Turkish writing shows that he has knowledge about how to write, i.e. to use punctuation, capital letters, to construct sentences and paragraphs etc.

March

Language: Si has learned a vocabulary in Swedish of about 50 verbs, school words, family related word, food words, numerals, colours and simple phrases like "I like x", "I don't like x" etc. He is a fast learner and interacts orally in Swedish with teachers and classmates. Si is also working on interrogative constructions like "What is x doing? What has x been doing? How much? How long? How old?" etc.

Reading: Si reads texts built on his vocabulary in Swedish. He reads them fluently, but his attention has to be drawn to the pronunciation of Swedish long vowels in order to overcome his staccato pronunciation at the moment.

Writing: Si writes his own texts in the diary. He has a connecting main thread in his stories and he uses temporal expressions and past tenses forms as well as correct word order.

April

Si has now moved to the reception class for grade 4-6 in order to be together with students of his own age. He looks much older than a grade 4 student. He is getting instruction in mathematics in Turkish.

December

According to the teacher Si has developed a lot during the autumn semester of 2001. Just like his sister Si has been instructed together with a group of students who all advanced far in their acquisition of Swedish. The groups level of Swedish has been above Si's productive level, but also for him the language level has had the function of input +1, i.e language input that is just above the learners language level at the moment. Si will stay another semester in the reception class, but the teacher plans for him to start grade 7 during the autumn semester 2002. Si is getting instruction in mathematics in Turkish and gets mother tongue instruction in Kurmanci.

Comments

According to the teachers Si's fast language development depends on his solid school background from Turkey. He has acquired literacy in Turkish and he has acquired a great deal of school knowledge. The adaptation to the Swedish school and environment has not been as dramatic for him as for his sister, even if he too has been witnessing police violence. Unlike his sister he had strong memories of his father and of the relationship with the father. Somehow, Si also seems to be on more intimate terms with the father than his sister is. The father is very proud of Si's school success. One important reason for the decision to place Si in a grade 7 class in the autumn semester of 2002 is that he probably is older than what is officially stated. It is his mature way of working and his learning strategies along with his language development in Swedish and other subjects that speaks for a placement in grade 7. He will need continued instruction in Swedish as a second language as well as subject instruction in Kurmanci.

Name of child:	So
Gender:	Boy, born in Kurdistan, Iraq
Age:	years (grade 3)
L1:	Sorani
Previous schooling:	none
Comments:	L1 instruction in Sorani, both language and subject instruction

January 2001

Literacy: So has had no contact with school literacy.

February

Language: So has a vocabulary in Swedish of about 15 verbs and nouns comprising school words, family related word, food words, numerals, colours and simple phrases like “I like x”, “I don’t like x” etc. So tries to speak Swedish.

Reading: So reads simple text in Swedish building on the vocabulary he has learned. He reads simple text according to the whole-word principle, i.e. he can read the whole word, but not the individual letters.

Writing: So has learned to write, pronounce and recognize 5 letters. He is copying diary texts from the blackboard, but is also trying to write his own text. When he copies text from the blackboard the letters are written on the lines of the paper, but when he writes on his own the letters are written in between the lines. This might indicate that So has a certain idea about how his L1, Sorani, is written, but it might also indicate that when he is composing his own story his productive capacity is all used up for the content and the burden to care about the form is too heavy to carry at the same time. At this point So writes simple phrases which he is also practising orally like, “Hello, my name is So. I come from Kurdistan. I live in Sweden.”

March

Language: So is still working on the same vocabulary as in February, expanded with some words for clothes, simple adjectives (big-small) and positioning words (under, on, in).

Reading: So is good at reading prepared text in a reader and he performs whole word reading with some elements of sounding.

Writing: So has learned to write, pronounce and recognize 8 letters. He writes his own text in the diary by using sentences, texts, lists of names and other things that are put up on the classroom walls. From the middle of March he produces his own thoughts in the diary. In this writing

he mixes capital and small letters, but he writes the letters on the lines and there are clear spaces in between the words. Apparently So has acquired certain basic linguistic knowledge connected to writing.

June

So has learned to recognize, write and pronounce the whole Swedish alphabet. During this semester his family moves far away from the school and since So is also passing a certain age limit he has to start using the bus to school, together with his siblings in the grade 4-6 reception class. In the autumn the teacher wants to place So in this reception class because he will have more friends of the same age in that class. His parents however, want to place him in a school nearer to the home.

During the spring semester So has received a lot of subject instruction in L1. Once a week he has got instruction in mathematics as well as natural and social science in Sorani together with other Sorani speaking students. The teacher believes that this instruction have strengthened So's self-confidence which in turn has been positive for his Swedish language acquisition which is improving. Finally So moves to another reception class in a school nearer to his home. He is placed in a grade 4 class, which is adequate for his age. It is assumed that So will need at least two semesters more in the reception class before he can move to a regular class.

December

There is no further record of So's schooling and development.

Name of child:	Im
Gender:	Boy born in Syria
Age:	10 years (grade 3)
L1:	Arabic
L2:	Turkish (used at school)
Previous schooling:	4 years in an Arabic school
Comments:	Participated in L1 instruction in Arabic

January 2001

- Literacy:** Im speaks, reads and writes Arabic, but is not familiar with the Latin alphabet.
- Language:** Im has a vocabulary in Swedish of about 50 verbs and nouns comprising school words, family related word, food words, numerals, colours, pronouns and simple phrases like “I like x”, “I don’t like x” etc. Im tries to use his language with the teacher.
- Reading:** Im reads texts in Swedish that are built on the vocabulary he learned. He also reads simple, well-prepared storybooks. At home his parents help him with the translation of words. He reads in a whole-word manner and by sounding.
- Writing:** Im uses all letters when writing, but he is also doing special work on specific letters in order to learn to write and pronounce them. Orally Im knows how to recognize and pronounce nine Swedish letters. He is copying diary texts from the blackboard and he writes his own diary texts in Arabic. Im is forming beautiful Latin letters, but the writing looks a bit childish and instable. His Arabic writing, on the other hand, is very beautiful and clear, something the Arabic teacher also confirms.

February

- Language:** Im stabilizes and works on his vocabulary in Swedish. He is naming the objects at Memory games although he is not speaking much and seems a bit shy and embarrassed when talking. In recess he speaks Arabic with his friends.
- Reading:** Im reads simple texts in Swedish building on the vocabulary he has learned, but he needs more training of his pronunciation, both concerning vowels and consonants (o-a, i-e, ä-a, p-b). Im also reads well-prepared storybooks. At home his parents help him with the translation of words.
- Writing:** Im can read simple instructions in a Swedish workbook and work

independently according to these instructions. He is starting to write his own Swedish text in the diary.

March

- Language: The vocabulary of Im is now expanding to ordinals and adjectives and he knows how to compare adjectives, especially the ones connected to mathematics (big-bigger-the biggest, small-smaller-the smallest). He is doing work on different auxiliaries and main verbs in the infinitive. He does not talk very much in Swedish and he has some difficulties with Swedish pronunciation. Im still seems a bit embarrassed and shy when he speaks, but is starting to demand help from the teacher. His Arabic-speaking friends are also translating and helping him.
- Reading: Im reads prepared text in a reader together with other simple books that have been prepared beforehand.
- Writing: Im now writes his own texts in the diary and tries to use his spoken Swedish. He shows that he understands different temporal expressions, but uses the present tense for all tenses. He also tries to express his own opinions in writing.

June

During spring semester Im's family moves to a new apartment far away from the school and since Im is also passing a certain age limit he has to start using the bus to school instead of taxi. His parents want to place him in an Arabic free school in the autumn, near the home, instead of letting him continue in the suggested reception class in grade 4 at the present school. The teacher's suggestion to place Im in the grade 4 reception class is done for two reasons. First, in order for him to have more friends of the same age and secondly because the teacher believes that he needs at least two more semesters in the reception class to develop his Swedish up to a level that will make it possible for him to enter a regular age-adequate class.

During the autumn of 2001 Im starts in the Arabic free school. After a month in that school, the parents and Im himself want him to move back to the reception class. According to the Arabic school the reason is that he knows too little Swedish (sic!) to study in the Arabic free school. At this point in time there is no longer room for him in the reception class, because all the places have been filled during summer.

December

There is no further record on Im's schooling and development.

Conclusion

This case study has reported on a group of five students who started attending a reception class in Uppsala, Sweden almost at the same time. According to a first estimation of their age and prior schooling, three of them are placed in grade 3, one in grade 2 and one student in grade 4. All except one of the students have prior schooling experience and these four are literate in their mother tongue or in a second language (school language). The students varied experiences with language, literacy and schooling enforces upon the teacher in the reception class to individualize according to the prerequisites of each child. Furthermore, some of the children have had traumatic experiences in their countries of origin and these experiences have to be dealt with before learning can take place. The child with no prior schooling experience despite his age will need more time to achieve academically in the new language Swedish. Some of the children were found to be bilingual and when they were also literate they were able to work relatively independently with dictionaries to build a new vocabulary in Swedish. This emerging language competence could relatively quickly be used for individual work with literacy tasks. These students enter a positive learning spiral.

Of the five students described above only one was assessed to have acquired enough Swedish in order to move to a regular Swedish class after one semester, i.e. 5 months. It might be assumed that this student, Ya, has a special talent for language and mathematics. However, it is also the case that Ya is a member of an intellectual home with academically educated parents who take a great interest in their only child's academic progress. To grow up in a "paper and pen home", to have parents who use text for their daily work and to have had the opportunity to get acquainted with a foreign language has probably contributed a lot to this child's fast language development.

For Hi and Si, who are siblings, the time in the reception class has functioned very well as a preparation for the transfer to regular age-adequate classes. During the three semesters the children have spent in their respective classes there has been time and expertise to capture and deal with their special personalities, problems and competencies. The work during the one and a half year in the reception class has mainly, on an individual basis, been focused at regaining lost knowledge, filling some gaps in their academic knowledge and adding new knowledge and primarily to develop their Swedish. Slowly Hi and Si have achieved their age- and knowledge level. For Si an important part of his development has been the instruction he has got in mathematics in Turkish.

The student Im, who moved to a Swedish-speaking Arabic free-school soon experienced difficulties. It turned out that the school expected him to have a higher proficiency in Swedish in order to be able to follow instruction. Furthermore the school could not offer instruction in Swedish as a second language. One can imagine the frustration this must have created in the child and that this easily could lead to a negative attitude towards schooling. If it would have been possible for this student to

have most of his education in Arabic his academic knowledge could have been shown and further developed and also supported his development of Swedish.

The student So had had no prior schooling or contact with literacy when he came to Sweden and the school. His progress during the year in the reception class was slow, but steady and it was important that he could continue in another reception class nearer to his home. So needs to continue developing his basic literacy at his own speed. With the help of his growing literacy and through support from mother tongue instruction he will eventually be able to transfer to a near age-adequate grade.

The students entering a reception class all have their individual backgrounds, experiences, languages and knowledge's. It is up to the teachers of these children to find out as much as possible about them and to create a positive atmosphere and a supportive and learning climate in order to help develop the children further.

In this specific classroom the work can be described as student centred and interactive. The classroom represents a literate environment where the components speaking, listening, writing and reading are equal in building the children's languages and knowledge. The basis is thematic work with accompanying textbooks and other resources functioning as transportation and stops between the different themes. The various themes keep the student group together, but at the same time it allows for a varied and individual way of working. The teacher sees it as her task to create a creative environment for learning, an environment where the students enjoy acquiring language and knowledge.

The reception of migrant children in the Netherlands

The educational process of children of asylum seekers in the Netherlands

For a good understanding of the educational process it is necessary to describe the procedures involved in seeking asylum and the process of housing during this procedure. Both influence the educational process very strongly.

The procedure of getting asylum is divided into three stages: First, there is the so-called 'Aanmeldcentrum' (AC). Within the initial 24 to 72 hours an elementary check of the story of the asylum seeker will take place in this centre. At this stage there are only facilities for sleeping and eating. The check ends with a negative or positive decision: if the reply is negative the asylum seeker has to leave the country, if positive, s/he gets the allowance to go to a 'Opvang en onderzoekscentrum'(OC). Over the next 4 to about 18 weeks the story of the refugee will be investigated. Children between the ages of 5 to 17 have the right and duty to go to school. For children under the age of 4 year, schooling is not compulsory although about 99% attend. If a positive decision is taken during this second procedure, the children and the parents are taken to a 'Asielzoekerscentrum' (AZC) which could even be located on the other side of the

country. This final procedure can take quite a long time, often more than a year. Consequently, the total amount of time of being 'out of society' during the whole process could take up to 4 years. On average the process takes about 1 year and 9 months. The procedure ends with a decision to leave or to stay permanently in the country. In the last case local authorities are asked to help the family in the field of housing and work.

Schools are available in the neighbourhood of the earlier mentioned centres, except during the first 24 to 72 hours. Sometimes schools are located within the area of the centre but often they are in the village or city. It's the local authorities' responsibility to make education available (as a part of their agreement with COA, a task organisation for 'bed, bread and bath'), but the school board (public or private) is the institution, which organises special classes for these children. There are no special schools for these children but special classes are part of a so-called 'mother school'.

During the process of seeking asylum it is normal for children to come in contact with more than one school. In fact, during this time some children come across three or more schools. In a countrywide network of schools there are identical agreements to ensure that education institutions share the same goals and procedures. These agreements state that:

- all schools use 'Meer dan taal alleen. Totaalleerplan voor het eerste opvangonderwijs' (More than language alone) as a leading guide for their educational programme; 'More than language alone' was developed as an educational programme for the first year after arriving into the Dutch school system (primary education)
- to report systematically about children who are leaving the special classes there are reports ('OKR') available for the 4-6 years olds and the 6-12 years old. There is a shorter document for the children who are leaving the OC-centre (after 4 to 18 weeks).
- a guide was developed to follow the process of learning (LOWAC-LVS). The guide includes a timetable for measuring results after 3, 6 and 12 months. Tests are available in the field of reading and writing, vocabulary, grammar (building words and sentences), spelling, arithmetic and social behaviour. There is also some information for the observation of the young children (4 and 5 years).

Although these instruments help to set the conditions for offering good education, there is no guarantee of an on-going process without interruptions. In the coming years there will be a change in the procedures which have to be shortened (to last anything from 6 to 12 months) and concentrated in one centre. Moving from the centre will only occur at the end of the procedure, that is when the asylum seeker is either asked to leave the country or is granted a temporary stay of three years prior to obtaining a permanent permit.

Being ‘literate’ in the context of Dutch education for children of asylum seekers

In principal there is no difference between the goals for primary education and the goals in the special classes for children of refugees and asylum seekers. Becoming ‘literate’ is part of the ‘kerndoelen’, which are legal standards for all schools.

The main goal in the field of ‘Dutch language’ is ‘to develop skills to use language in an efficient way in daily situations’. To give a definition of the concept of ‘being literate in Dutch language’ it is necessary to answer the question ‘what are the daily situations where children in special classes will come across written language?’ Can one become a full participant of the Dutch society in time or is the future of the children so unclear that it is impossible to take decisions in a particular direction?

In the educational guide ‘More than language alone’ there is a clear statement about teaching children to be in a position to reach the regular goals and so develop skills to use the new language in daily situations. This is the goal that has to be achieved by the end of primary education. The process in the special classes could be seen as preparatory in the sense that the children need this language to learn all the other subjects in primary education.

The educational guide provides a set of goals that are interrelated. Goals for listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, spelling and grammar are divided in 10 weekly units. On the basis of these units, teachers can develop a programme for about 1.5 years, which effectively means 15 months. This is considered to be the average time necessary to be sufficiently ‘prepared’ to go to a regular class. By the end of this time, learners are expected to be able to:

- listen and speak in a meaningful way in daily situations in a regular group
- participate in the reading lessons in a regular group
- participate in writing lessons in the regular group
- spell words correctly comparable to the regular group.

Developing vocabulary and the use of grammatical rules is an important part of the development of the oral and written competence.

The educational programme for each of these global goals is divided into 6 periods. Depending of the age and maturity of each child there are sub-goals for all (see Appendix 1). Some goals are only for the more mature children. Example: ‘the learner knows all the sound-letter combinations’ (for all children) and ‘the learners can read texts on level AVI-9 correct and fluently (group 6-8). AVI is a measure for complexity of sentences (length and syntax/grammar) and a measure for the level of understanding the text. AVI-9 means that the child is able to read texts with a high amount of information, for instance in the field of science-education (illustration of text complexity: see Appendix 2).

The educational guide is restricted to 6 to 12-year-old children. For 4 to 5-year-old children, the 'Nederlandse Taalunie' recently presented a document. This is an organisation set up by the minister of Education of the Netherlands together with the Flemish colleague in Belgium to stimulate the co-operation in the field of the Dutch language. In the document early literacy refers to early second language acquisition (Referentiekader vroege tweede taalverwerving) and is described in terms of four related competencies: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These competencies are described on a macro and micro levels. On a macro level, the child should be aware of the different functions of written language whereas on a micro level, the child can discriminate the different sounds of the Dutch language.

Methodology

Going faster through the process

The hypothesis that 'being literate in L1 positively supports becoming literate in L2' can only be tested for the children who are already literate in L1. To test the level of this literacy upon arrival in the new country, teachers use a booklet with texts in 25 various languages. The child has to read a simple text with a context that is attractive for all ages. In addition the child has to read the alphabet of his/her L1. Pronunciation of the sounds-figures and explanation of the meaning of the text is provided for the teacher.

Tests are available to follow the process of becoming literate. Some tests are part of the programme, some are independent of the specific method the teacher is using. Testing the reading proficiency is mostly done by the so-called 'AVI-kaarten' (AVI-cards from level 1 till 9; see Appendix 2 for some examples). Furthermore there are sound-figure tests and tests to measure correctness and speed in reading single words.

To investigate the language skills in general (because of the mutual dependency of literacy and the other languages skills) there is in addition to the practice of formal tests a broad practice of the so-called 'handelingsgerichte observatie' (simple action-research in daily class situation: working with the children, stimulating them and recording the progress). Based on the work of Joan Tough (1976, 1977) many teachers are familiar with this way of following the language acquisition process. In addition to the reading test mentioned above, a lot of information can be gathered about the linguistic skills without the psychological pressure of a test situation. This way of observing children is also practical for the younger children who are not literate in L2, but are preliterate in L1 (refer to definitions of macro/micro levels above).

For the older children who are literate in L1, going faster means reaching the goals for reading within or after a year (average time is 1.5 years). Alternatively, the results are achieved in a process that needs half of the time of instruction since one of the important programmes for reading is available in two versions: a normal and a fast one.

Going faster for the younger children who are sometimes already pre-literate in L1 can either refer to reaching the minimum goals in a shorter time or the conditions for becoming literate are better fulfilled. These specifications compare children against national (not legal) standards. However, there are some debatable issues, namely whether the formulated goals are achievable under normal conditions, that is 10 months of education in special classes for 25 hours a week with a ratio of one teacher to 15 learners. The government is spending more on providing extra teachers during the first year after arrival in the Netherlands and not during the first year of education! Maybe in the near future the National Institute for Curriculum Development will produce a document having legal status.

In the absence of a formal document defining 'going faster' objectively, currently teachers judge children depending on:

- their impression of the average results of the group
- the progress each child makes (comparing current results against those obtained earlier by the same child).

Both judgements have shortcomings: in the first case the teacher risks losing/lowering the level that is needed for entering regular classes. In the second case it assumes that the teacher has made a concrete plan with goals so that expected results can be compared to real results.

Results

Background and starting position of 5 children in the Netherlands¹

For the purpose of this project one school² was contacted and asked to randomly select 5 children who had been in Dutch education for about one year. The school could deliver a lot of information because of their well-organised system in caring for every child. The description will be given in terms of age, arrival in the Netherlands, school history and some information about family and mother tongue. Starting position will be described on the basis of the intake form the school is using. The form is filled in after the first week of being in the school.

¹ Information for this report was gathered end of November 2001 and the first six months of 2002.

² Thanks to the headmaster of 't Palet Almelo the Netherlands for her contribution to this project.

Case study 1	Child A – Boy
Date of birth	24-10-1996
Age	5 y 1 m 6 d
Arrival in Netherlands	30-12-1999
Pre-school	None
Date when starting primary education	31-10-2000 ('t Palet Almelo)
Land of origin	Iraq (Kurd)
Mother tongue	Arabic, Kurdish
Other relevant information	Father was already in the Netherlands. A arrived together with his mother. Educational level of the parents: some years of primary education. Pedagogical perspective of the parents: A should become a freedom fighter. Problems for the mother in raising the child. At the start of the school the teachers mentioned that behaviour in school was bad, possibly a child with special educational needs (maybe also in a school for special education).

Results after intake-period (5 days)

Social behaviour	Has to learn the rules of being together with other children, hurts other children in free play.
Motivation	Short concentration, well motivated, has to learn a lot of simple techniques.
Level of L2	First stage (become familiar with the school and the situation), knows some high frequent L2-words; A. succeed in non-verbal communication about his needs.
Motor Skills	Large movements normal. Has to start with fine movements.

Case study 2	Child B – Girl
Date of birth	15-3-1990
Age	11 y 8 m 15 d
Arrival in Netherlands	13-2-2001 (OC Ommen)
Pre-school	None
Date when starting primary education	11-4-2001 ('t Palet Almelo)
Land of origin	Iraq (Badnaja)
Mother tongue	Galdic / Arabic
Other relevant information	No information about educational level in the country of origin. She went to an Arabic school. Arabic was a well-spoken language of the mother (and therefore for the child). Had to care for a long time for her mother (terminal cancer), even before leaving the country. Mother died in February in the Netherlands. Mother was a widow. Child being raised by her aunt.

Results after intake-period (5 days)

Social behaviour	B is very quiet. Makes little contact with other children.
Motivation	Attitude for work is good, a little bit slow but motivated to learn.
Level of L2	B has an antenna for new meanings/words.
Motor Skills	Performing according to age level, no problems to foresee.
Literacy	Starting level (Course 1 VLL/Lezen doe je overal); high level of activity, pronunciation in L2 is below normal.
Arithmetic	Level group 4, writing the numerals 1 to 100 partly in Arabic. There are no indications that B needs additional, special attention.

Case study 3	Child C – Girl
Date of birth	1-1-1991
Age	10 y 10 m 30 d
Arrival in Netherlands	20-7-2001 (during summer holiday)
Pre-school	None
Date when starting primary education	20-8-2001 (after summer holiday at 't Palet Almelo)
Land of origin	Turkey (Kayseri)
Mother tongue	Turkish
Other relevant information	C and two siblings were raised by their grandmother in Turkey while the parents were living in the Netherlands. Mother followed lower vocational education (economical/secretary), father also lower vocational training. C went to a Turkish school for 4 years. Following family reunion the mother had a lot to do with the raising of the children and gave this task to C as the eldest daughter.

Results after intake-period (5 days)

Social behaviour	She likes talking to other children, especially to her niece and brother (in Turkish).
Motivation	Concentration for a longer period is problematic. Asks many times for confirmation.
Level of L2	First stage: seems to learn in a good way, problems with the pronunciation of double vocals.
Motor Skills	Large and fine movements are below average to normal.
Literacy	Is able to read short words, will follow the short track of the reading process (Lezen doe je overal).
Arithmetic	Level middle group 4 (normally children of 7,8 or 9 years). There are no indications that C needs additional, special attention.

Case study 4	Child D – Boy
Date of birth	23-4-1991
Age	10 y 7 m 7 d
Arrival in Netherlands	7-12-2000
Pre-school	None
Date when starting primary education	14-12-2000 ('t Palet Almelo)
Land of origin	Romania
Mother tongue	Romanian
Other relevant information	D and his mother came to the Netherlands as asylum seekers. In the meantime mother married a Dutch man. D raised by his grandparents in a middle-class town. Mother has a middle vocational level. There is no information about the biological father. D attended a Romanian school for 2.5 years. He can read and write in L1. He taught himself English by television (understanding, speaking and reading). Starting level of L2: first stage. There were a lot of pronunciation problems. His competence in mathematics is according to his age level (group 6: 1 st test a DLE of 32; to interpret this score / measure see further).

Results after intake-period (5 days)

Social behaviour	D is a quiet boy who does not ask for attention. There is normal contact with other children.
Motivation	Good attitude towards work. Very attentive and alert to new information.
Level of L2	Language acquisition is going very well and fast (because of his knowledge of English as an additional language).
Motor Skills	Fine movements are normal. Gross movements are less developed because of his weight and figure.
Literacy	Because of his reading ability in English, the reading of the Dutch signs is not a problem.
Arithmetic	According to age level.

Case study 5	Child E – Boy
Date of birth	29-3-1990
Age	11y 8 m 1 d
Arrival in Netherlands	3-1-2001
Pre-school	None
Date when starting primary education	2-2-2001
Land of origin	Iraq
Mother tongue	Kurdish and Farsi
Other relevant information	Mother is from Iran & father is from Iraq. Children were raised up bilingual in Teheran. Father came to the Netherlands with 3.5 years ago with two daughters for. Mother came later with two sons. They ‘travelled’ for 16 months in the Mediterranean area. No school was attended during this period. E got 3 years education in Farsi. Low initiative from the father to send the children to school.

Results after intake-period (5 days)

Social behaviour	E is a quiet boy who is close to his brother. At the end of the first week he communicated with other pupils.
Motivation	Attitude to tasks is positive. Concentrates on his work and is attentive.
Level of L2	At the first level: he understands some words although speaking is difficult.
Motor Skills	He is doing well in writing although he is not familiar with painting. Large movements are good.
Literacy	Started in first course. He is doing well.
Arithmetic	Counting forward and backward 1 to 100 is not so easy.

Instruments used to follow-up the children

Education should follow the development of the child. Teachers in the special classes are or should be familiar with this dictum. They need the support of instruments, which enable them to follow-up the children. Some of the instruments and procedures in place are used across the country. What follows is a description of the instruments used at the school attended by the children.

During the first 5 days of the child's arrival at the school, the teacher follows the child in all his activities. Some specific tasks are given to the child, depending on his age and information about the educational background. This information is obtained from the parents, the reports of the former school (which are obligatory in the Netherlands), and when possible from the child itself. In reading, each child has the specific task of reading a text in the mother tongue ('Lezen over grenzen heen. Een leestoets in 25 talen' refer to Appendix 3). The result gives the teacher a global impression of the child's ability in reading. When the child is entering the school from another school in the Netherlands, a report is normally available and this includes the result of reading tests.

't Palet' uses a guide that was developed for the special classes to follow the children's development (LOWAC-LVS). The guide includes a timetable for obtaining results. Tests are available in the field of reading and writing, vocabulary (passive and active knowledge), grammar (building words and sentences), spelling, arithmetic, social behaviour and some advice with what to observe for the 4 and 5 year-old children.

A certain level on vocabulary, understanding oral spoken texts, constructing sentences and words are seen as 'conditions' for good results on reading. In this field the school is using the 'Taaltoets allochtone kinderen' (Language test for foreign children).

The most important tests for reading competence are:

- AVI-charts
- DMT (Three minute test)

The test can be used during and at the end of the special classes. These tests are important in order to:

- identify what kind of problems there are in reading
- diagnose and decide on the required level of education
- report to teachers in regular classes

At the end of the first year (four periods of ten weeks):

- a child of group 3 (6/7-year-old) should reach an AVI level of 1 and 2
- a child of group 4 (7/8-year-old) should reach an AVI level of 3, 4 and 5

- a child of group 5 (8/9-year-old) should reach an AVI level of 6 and 7
- a child of group 6-8 (9/12-year-old) should reach an AVI level of 8

In the next period of 20 weeks an AVI level of 9 is necessary for children of group 6 till 8.

All the scores can be ‘translated’ into DLE-scores. A DLE-score tells the teacher about the results of the process, whether the score is based on ‘educational level’ (x-months of education) or not. So a score of +10 means an average score after a year of education. Point 0 is at the start of the process in group 3. For the younger children the scores are negative. A score for understanding words of –5 means an average score for a child of 5.5 year old. The results are written up in a so-called ‘profiel kaart’ (profile chart; see appendix 4). As from next year, a computer program will be used to facilitate the whole process of following-up children and assessing their achievement. The translated scores take into account the fact that these children are not following a normal route (starting in group 1 and taking the time to grow and learn). The route can be compared to a ‘formula 1 race’, a short track to be ‘schooled’ for the regular classes.

All the results of the whole duration in the special classes are reported to the next school. These include the so-called ‘profiel kaart’ by the previously mentioned ‘OKR’.

Results for Child A¹ obtained during the first year of education

The results reported for Child A were obtained from assessment conducted on three occasions: 11-2000, 2-2001 and 6-2001.

Social behaviour	Normal
Play & work behaviour	Going up
Motor Skills	According to age level
Cognitive development	Auditory: according to age level Visual-spatial: according to age level Temporal sequences: according to age level Language/thinking: below expected level
Results on the LVS 1-2 (Thije de Vos)-scale after 1 year	Average; educational level 4.11

¹ The results of all children are in the profile chart available in Appendix 5.

Result LVS-LOWAC after 1 year 3 months & 1 year 6 months

- Vocabulary (passive): DLE -1 and DLE +3
- Vocabulary (active): DLE 0 and DLE +9
- Understanding sentences: DLE -2 and DLE +27
- Morphology ('constructing' words in the right form): DLE -2 and DLE +4
- Making sentences (repeat sentences with the right grammatical constructions): DLE -1 and DLE +11
- Understanding texts: DLE -6 and DLE +12

Overall result: As mentioned earlier, there are no standards in the educational guide for 4 and 5 year-olds. However, in the LVS-LOWAC, scores on several tests can be compared with the results of a special investigation in 1995 under the same target group. The result can be 'translated' in DLE-scores, providing a measure for this age group.

After a full year of education all the sub-results should be minimal on a DLE level of -14 (compare line 5:00 on the right side of the profile chart). At that time no results were available. Three months later the child was tested, the expected level was DLE-12. All results were better than expected. After 1.5 years the minimal conditions were sufficient to start with the reading and writing process. Normally a child of this age would have had to continue the kindergarten programme for another year if born after the 1st October.

Results for Child B obtained during the first year of education

The results for Child B are based on the tests of the LOWAC-LVS conducted in June and October 2001, February and June 2002. The scores are given in DLE terms (educational age-level in months)

Social behaviour Doing better than in first week considering the home situation

Result LVS-LOWAC

- Vocabulary (passive): DLE -20, -1, +11
- Vocabulary (active): DLE -16, -7, +3
- Understanding sentences: DLE -9, -2, +29
- Transforming words (for grammatical reasons): DLE- 24, -8, -2
- Making sentences: DLE - 11, +3, +10
- Understanding texts: DLE - 17, +9, +19
- Literacy-level L2 by measuring reading words in rows within 3 minutes: DLE +3
- Literacy-level L2 by measuring reading and understanding texts: +8 (February 2002), +12

Mathematical level by measuring different types of mathematical task within a certain time limit: DLE +11, +25

Mathematical level by measuring the level in year groups: DLE +21, +24

Overall result: tendency is clearly forwards although the gap between the results and the average level of her age group is still enormous. Owing to her family situation the child will stay in reception class for another year before starting secondary education.

Results for Child C obtained during the first year of education

The results are based on the tests of the LOWAC-LVS conducted in October 2001, February and June 2002; scores in terms of DLE (educational age-level in months)

Social behaviour Normal

Result LVS- Vocabulary (passive): DLE -20, -2, +37

LOWAC Vocabulary (active): DLE -16, +3, +34

Understanding sentences: DLE -12, +1, +37

Transforming words (for grammatical reasons): DLE-12, -8,+34

Making sentences: DLE -11, -13, +40

Understanding texts: DLE-24, -10, +40

Literacy-level L2 by measuring reading words in rows within 3 minutes: DLE +11 (October 2001)

Literacy-level L2 by measuring reading and understanding texts: DLE+7, +16, +32

Mathematical level by measuring different types of mathematical task within a certain time limit: DLE +24, +32

Mathematical level by measuring the level in year groups: DLE +27, +37, +31

Overall result: Improving in mathematical and language competence and reading ability. The difference when compared to Dutch children arises from a slow start within a year brought back to 1.5 years.

Results for Child D obtained during the first year of education

The results are based on the tests of the LOWAC-LVS taken in February, June and October 2001; scores in terms of DLE (educational age-level in months)

Social behaviour Normal, no special points of attention

**Result LVS-
LOWAC** Vocabulary (passive): DLE-1, DLE +40 (in comparison with Dutch norm group: DLE +12)
Vocabulary (active): DLE+21, DLE+40 (in comparison with Dutch learners: DLE +14)
Understanding sentences: DLE+18, DLE+40 to DLE +31
Transforming words (for grammatical reasons): DLE+6, DLE+40 to DLE+40
Making sentences: DLE +11, DLE+40 to DLE+40
Understanding texts: DLE +40, DLE+40 to DLE +40
Literacy-level L2 by measuring reading words in rows within 3 minutes: only a score in February of DLE +25
Literacy-level L2 by measuring reading and understanding texts: DLE +22, DLE +27 to DLE +40 (AVI-level resp. 6, 7 and 9)
Mathematical level by measuring different types of mathematical task within a certain time limit: DLE +45 (already in February)
Mathematical level by measuring the level in year groups: DLE+37, DLE +46 to DLE +50

Overall result: A very special case!! This child left the reception class in May 2002 after 1 year, 4 months.

Results for Child E obtained during the first year of education

The results are based on the tests of the LOWAC-LVS taken in February, June, October 2001 and February/June 2002; scores in terms of DLE (educational age-level in months)

Social behaviour Normal

**Result LVS-
LOWAC** Vocabulary (passive): DLE-23/-17, -2, -4, +27
Vocabulary (active): DLE-24/-6, -4, +10, +40
Understanding sentences: DLE-12/-2, +30, +27, +40
Transforming words (for grammatical reasons): DLE-24/-8, +12, +12, +34

Making sentences: DLE -17/-13, +6+10, +17

Understanding texts: DLE - / +8, +12, +32, +40

Literacy-level L2 by measuring reading words in rows within 3 minutes: DLE +10 (June 2001)

Literacy-level L2 by measuring reading and understanding texts: DLE +7 (AVI1a), +9 (AVI 2a), +14 (AVI 3A), +17 (AVI 5a) (NB: other scores available for spelling (DLE+4/+6) and understanding texts (DLE+9))

Mathematical level by measuring different types of mathematical task within a certain time limit: DLE +22/+42 (February/June)

Mathematical level by measuring the level in year groups: DLE+24/+28, +22 (test showed a translation problem)

Overall result: The progress is strong in all fields, but not enough for the 8th group level.

Conclusive discussion

The purpose of this project on literacy development in a second language was to focus on reception classes for children of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands and Sweden. The project focussed on the following questions:

- How long did the children stay in the reception classes?
- How long does it take to prepare the children to enter a regular class?
- How did their language proficiency and their academic knowledge develop?
- Was there an advantage if the child was literate in the first language?

The project also formulated two hypotheses, which stated:

- Students who are literate in their L1 will go faster through the process of becoming literate in their L2.
- The result of the literacy process in L2 is influenced more by an integrated approach than by the fact of different starting points of the children.

Stay and level

The data collected from 5 children in the Netherlands and 5 children in Sweden show that the amount of time spent in the reception classes ranges from 5 months to 20 months.

Name	Age	Time	Continuation	Level of reading
Child A	5:8	1:8		Ready for regular class, Age-adequate
Child B	10:6	1:0	Regular class	Age-adequate
Child C	12:3	1:5	1 year rec. class	Regular class, secondary education
Child D	11:6	0:10	Regular class	Not an age-adequate level
Child E	12:3	1:5	?	Not an age-adequate level

Table 1. Length of stay in the reception class and prospects of children in the Netherlands

Name	Age	Time	Continuation	General academic level
Ya	9	0:5	Regular class	Age-adequate
Hi	8	1:6	Regular class	Age-adequate
Si	10	1:6	Regular class	Age-adequate
Im	10	0:6	Regular class Arabic school	Not an age-adequate level
So	10	1:0	Other rec. class	Not an age-adequate level

Table 2. Length of stay in the reception class and prospect of children in Sweden

Preparing the children for entering a regular class took between 5 months and 18 months for four of the children. The other six children will need special attention within or outside the reception for a longer time.

Name	Years of schooling in country of origin	Literate in L1	Literate in another L2	Literate in Dutch / Swedish after staying in the reception class
Child A	0	no	no	Starting
Child B	2:5	Rumanian	English	At age level
Child C	unknown	Arabic	Galdic?	Not at age level
Child D	4:0	Turkish	no	Not at age level
Child E	3:0	Farzi	no	Not at age level
Ya	unknown	Mandarin	English	At age level
Hi	2	No	Turkish	At age level
Si	4	No	Turkish	At age level
Im	4	Arabic	no	Not at age level
So	0	No	no	Not at age level

Table 3. Advantage of L1 in the process of becoming literate in L2

Four of the five “Dutch” children developed within a short period a certain level of literacy. This time was shorter than what teachers need to develop basic literacy in L1. Of the Swedish children four of five were literate in another language before they came to Sweden. Only So was without literate knowledge and he is after one year in the reception class staying on in another reception class. It is therefore difficult, according to this limited data, to answer the third question of the project, as mentioned earlier.

In the Dutch study claimed that acquiring literacy fast was equivalent to 18 months. Only one child, Child D achieved this goal and even did it in one year. Child D was literate in Rumanian and English before coming to the Netherlands. For Child D the first hypothesis can be confirmed. This is also the case for the Swedish student Ya who reached her age level after 5 months in the reception class. It seems that in Ya’s case there are two main supportive factors namely, the educational level of the parents and the help Ya got from the parents with explanations and translations. Furthermore if the Swedish students Hi and Si are assessed with the Dutch measures they would also be considered fast literacy acquirers since they learned Swedish and were at age level after 18 months.

The data show that all ten students in the Netherlands and in Sweden were taught language and literacy in an integrated approach. It is therefore not possible to either confirm or reject the second hypothesis since no control group is available.

The data indicate that the progress the children made with language and literacy development could be due to different factors such as the educational status of the parents, the number of school years they had spent in their home country, whether they were literate in another language, whether they had been exposed to traumatic experiences, the kind of world knowledge they possessed, their learning strategies, whether they received instruction in their mother tongue and finally if they were instructed by a teacher educated in second language acquisition and literacy.

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List of Appendices

1. Goals for reading
2. AVI-charts 1A, 3A, 6A, 8A
3. *Reading over the borders. A reading test in 25 languages. Example: Greece.*
(Original title: Lezen over grenzen heen. Een leestoets in 25 talen. Partners Training en Innovatie, 1998 ISBN 90-75074-82-4, Handleiding en leerlingmateriaal)
4. Profile chart
5. Results of the Dutch children in graphic form

Appendix 1: Goals for reading

Period 1 (first 10 weeks)

Elementary reading:

- the learner manages the reading conditions (group 3-8)
- the learner meeting the functions of written language (3-8)
- the learner knowing all the letter-sound combinations (3-8)
- the learner can read pure consonant-vowel-consonant words by spelling (3-8)
- the learner can read sentences and words on level AVI 1 and 2 (3-8)

Only learners who are not literate have to follow the whole programme of period 1. The other learners can stop when the goals are being reached.

Period 2 (next 10 weeks)

Elementary reading (continue the process for group 3)

Technical reading: reading text on AVI level 3 and 4 fluently and correct (group 4-8)

Understanding reading (group 4-8)

Period 3 (another 10 weeks)

Elementary reading (continue the process for group 3)

Technical reading: reading text on AVI level 5 fluently and correct (group 4-8)

Technical reading: reading text on AVI level 6 fluently and correct (group 5-8)

Understanding reading and reading for learning subjects (group 4-8)

Period 4

Elementary reading (continue the proces for group 3)

Technical reading: reading text on AVI level 7 fluently and correct (group 5-8)

Technical reading: reading text on AVI level 8 fluently and correct (group 6-8)

Understanding reading and reading for learning subjects (group 4-8)

Period 5-6

Technical reading: reading text till an AVI level 9 fluently and correct (group 6-8)

Understanding reading and reading for learning subjects (group 6-8)

Appendix 2: AVI-charts

niveau 1A

naar het bos

pa leest een boek.
ma zit in de tuin.
en wat doet tom?
hij kijkt uit het raam.

wat is het hier saai, roept tom.
ik wil naar het bos.
pap, ga je mee?
nee, ik lees al, zegt pa.

tom loopt naar de tuin.
mam, ga je mee naar het bos?
ja tom, dat is leuk.

ma komt het huis in.
ze geeft pa een duw.
ga jij ook mee? zegt ze.
pa kijkt wat sip.

dan rent pa naar de hal.
hij pakt zijn pet.
ik ga naar het bos, roept hij.
het is hier veel te saai.
wie gaat er mee?



Illustratie: Danny Juchtmans

niveau 3A

De hond van Ans is niet bang

Ans heeft een lieve hond.
Hij heeft zwart haar en heet Tim.
Het is een poedel.

Elke dag laat Ans hem uit.
Dan gaat ze naar het park.
Samen lopen ze het park een keer rond.
Soms staat Tim stil.
Hij ruikt dan aan bomen of doet een plas.
Na een poosje trekt Ans even aan de riem.

Laatst kwam ze Liesbet tegen.
Zij heeft ook een hond.
Dat is een grote Duitse herder.
Tim blafte naar hem en trok aan de riem.
Ans liet de riem los.
Tim sprong naar de Duitse herder.
Die schrok heel erg en begon te janken.

Doe die hond weg, riep Liesbet.
Hier Tim, kom bij de baas, riep Ans.
Maar het geblaf hield niet op.
Ans pakte Tim bij de riem en ging naar huis.



Illustratie: Denny Juchmans

De spreekbeurt

Mijn naam is Wilma en ik ben acht jaar.
Ik zit in groep vier van de Wegwijzer.
Zo heet mijn school.

Om de beurt mogen wij iets vertellen.
Dat noemen wij een spreekbeurt.
De andere kinderen mogen dan vragen stellen.

Mijn spreekbeurt ging over konijnen.
Mijn konijn woont in een hok in de tuin.
Veel konijnen leven in het bos of op de hei.
Ik heb verteld hoe ze leven en wat ze eten.

Een spreekbeurt houden is erg leuk.
Zo leren wij veel van elkaar.

Een jongen uit mijn groep heet Mahoed.
Hij komt uit Marokko, een land in Afrika.
Mahoed vertelde over het leven daar.
Hij weet veel over het land en de mensen.
Ook liet hij ons een foto zien.
Je zag een wit huis met kleine ramen.

Hij woont nu in Nederland omdat zijn vader hier werkt.
Ik vind dat fijn, want Mahoed is mijn vriend.

Koeien op de heide

Op de grote stille heide dwaalt een herder eenzaam rond ...
Zo begint een oud Hollands liedje. Misschien kennen je ouders dit nog van vroeger. Kinderen van nu leren heel andere liedjes.

Een herder met een kudde schapen was vroeger heel gewoon. De heide werd door de schapen afgegraasd. Op die manier werd de hei kort en gezond gehouden.

Maar de herder met zijn schapen is al lang verdwenen. Met het houden van schapen is de kost niet meer te verdienen.

Om de heide toch in goede staat te houden, moet men deze nu afsteken en afbranden. Maar door de zure regen gaat er steeds meer gras groeien. De hei begint meer en meer op een weiland te lijken. Men moet dus iets doen om de heide te redden.

Hier en daar keert de herder met zijn schapen weer terug. Maar voor veel heidevelden is dat te duur.

Een ander idee is om koeien op de hei te laten grazen. Die eten bijna alleen maar gras. Bomen en struiken laten ze staan. Er is dan geen herder nodig, maar alleen een goede omheining. Die moet er voor zorgen dat de koeien niet weg kunnen lopen.

Zo kunnen koeien op de heide voor goedkoop onderhoud zorgen!

Appendix 3: Reading over the borders. Example: Greek language

Grieks

De taalsituatie Het huidige Grieks wordt Nieuwgrieks genoemd. Dit wordt buiten Griekenland ook gesproken in onder andere Cyprus, Zuid-Albanië, Zuid-Bulgarije en de Sovjet-Unie.

De taal Het Grieks is een Indo-europese taal die een lange geschiedenis kent. Het moderne Grieks wordt anders uitgesproken dan het klassieke Grieks. De klinkers worden kort en helder uitgesproken. Het Grieks heeft drie naamvallen. Ook het lidwoord heeft drie naamvallen en daarbij drie uitgangen. De uitgang van een woord wordt bepaald door het geslacht van de spreker.

Het schrift Het alfabet heeft 25 symbolen, 7 klinkers en 4 dubbelklinkers die meestal als 2 klinkers worden uitgesproken.

Verschillen met het Nederlands De woordvolgorde van het moderne Grieks ligt minder vast dan die in het Nederlands. De zinsstructuur in het Grieks wordt door naamvallen bepaald.

<i>Alfabet</i>	letter	naam	uitspraak
	α	(alfa)	(als Ned. a in 'man')
	η	(ita)	(als Ned. ie in 'niet')
	χ	(chi)	(vóór e- en i- klank ch als in Duits 'ich', elders als ch in Duitse 'ach')
	μ	(mi)	(als Ned. m)
	γ	(gama)	(j vóór e- en i- klank, g vóór verige klinkers en medeklinkers)
	ψ	(psi)	(als Ned. ps)
	ζ	(zita)	(als Ned. z)
	ο	(omikron)	(als Ned. o in 'kop')
	ω	(omega)	(als Ned. o in 'kop')

Grieks

letter	naam	uitspraak
β	(wita)	(tussen Ned. v en w in)
λ	(lambda)	(dune l)
ϕ	(fi)	(als Ned. f)
ξ	(xi)	(als Ned. x)
κ	(kapa)	(als Ned. k , vóór e - en i -klank meer kj)
υ	(ypsilon)	(als Ned. ie in 'niet')
ϵ	(epsilon)	(als Ned. e in 'gek')
ρ	(ro)	(tongpunt r)
σ -ς	(siegma)	(scherpe s , ook tudssen twee klinkers z vóór β , γ δ ζ λ μ ν ρ)
τ	(taf)	(als Ned. t)
δ	(dhelta)	(als als stemhebbende Engelse th in 'that')
ι	(jota)	(als Ned. ie in 'niet')
ν	(ni)	(als Ned. n)
π	(pi)	(als Ned. p)
θ	(thita)	(als stemhebbende Engelse th in 'with')

Grieks

Tekst **Το σπίτι μας.**

Στο σπίτι μας μένουν οκτώ άνθρωποι.
Ο πατέρας μου και η μητέρα μου μένουν στο σπίτι μας πολύ καιρό.
Μετά απο ένα χρόνο γεννήθηκα εγω.
Μετά απέκτησαν οι γονείς μου ακόμη τρία παιδιά.
Μετά απο λίγο καιρο ο παππούς μου και η γιαγιά μου ήλθαν να μείνουν μαζί μας.
Τότε είμαστε οκτώ.
Μου αρέσει να μένω στο ίδιο σπίτι με τόσους πολλούς ανθρώπους.
Υπάρχει πάντα κάποιος στο σπίτι για να μιλήσης.
Μερικές φορές δεν μου αρέσει.
Εαν υπάρχει καβγάς στο σπίτι, θέλω να ειμαι μόνος.
Τότε πηγαίνω έξω.

Uitspraak **To spítie mas**

Sto spítie mas menoen okto antropie. Oo paateras moe ke ie mieteraa moe menoen sto spítie mas polie kero. Metaa aapo enaa grono jeniethiekaa ego. Metaa aapektiesan ie gonies moe aakomie trieaa pedieaa. Metaa aapo liego kero oo pappoes moe ke ie jaajaa moe ielthaan naa mienoen maazie mas. Tote iemaste okto. Moe aaresie naa mieno sto iedio spítie me tosoes poloos antropoes. Iepargie pandaa kaapjos sto spítie jaa naa mieliesis. Meriekes fores den moe aaresie. Eean iepargie kafgaas sto spítie, theloo naa iema moonos. Tote piegeno ekssoo.

Vertaling **Ons huis**

In ons huis wonen acht mensen. Mijn vader en moeder wonen al heel lang in ons huis. Toen ze er een jaar woonden, werd ik geboren. Daarna kregen mijn ouders nog drie kinderen. Na een tijdje kwamen oma en opa bij ons wonen. Toen waren we met zijn achten. Ik vind het leuk om met zoveel mensen in huis te wonen. Er is altijd wel iemand thuis om mee te praten. Soms vind ik het niet leuk. Als er ruzie is in huis, wil ik het liefst alleen zijn. Dan ga ik maar naar buiten.

Appendix 4: Profile chart (example)

Profilchart

Name:

Date of birth:

Start reception class:

Leaving reception class:

Level regular class	DLE													Age:									
8	60															12;00 group 8							
	58																						
	56																						
	54																						
	52																						
7	50															11;00 group 7							
	48																						
	46																						
	44																						
	42																						
6	40															10;00 group 6							
	38																						
	36																						
	34																						
	32																						
5	30															9;00 group 5							
	28																						
	26																						
	24																						
	22																						
4	20															8;00 group 4							
	18																						
	16																						
	14																						
	12																						
3	10															7;00 group 3							
	8																						
	6																						
	4																						
	2																						
2	0															6;00 group 2							
	-2																						
	-4																						
	-6																						
	-8																						
1	-10															5;00 group 1							
	-12																						
	-14																						
	-16																						
	-18																						
	-20															4;00							
	-22																						
	-24																						
Results after:	5																						
Subtest:	day mth mth	V	P	V	A	U	S	C	W	M	S	U	T	R	W	R	T	M	T	L	M	Y	L

Notex/99219

Appendix 5: Results of the Dutch children in graphic form

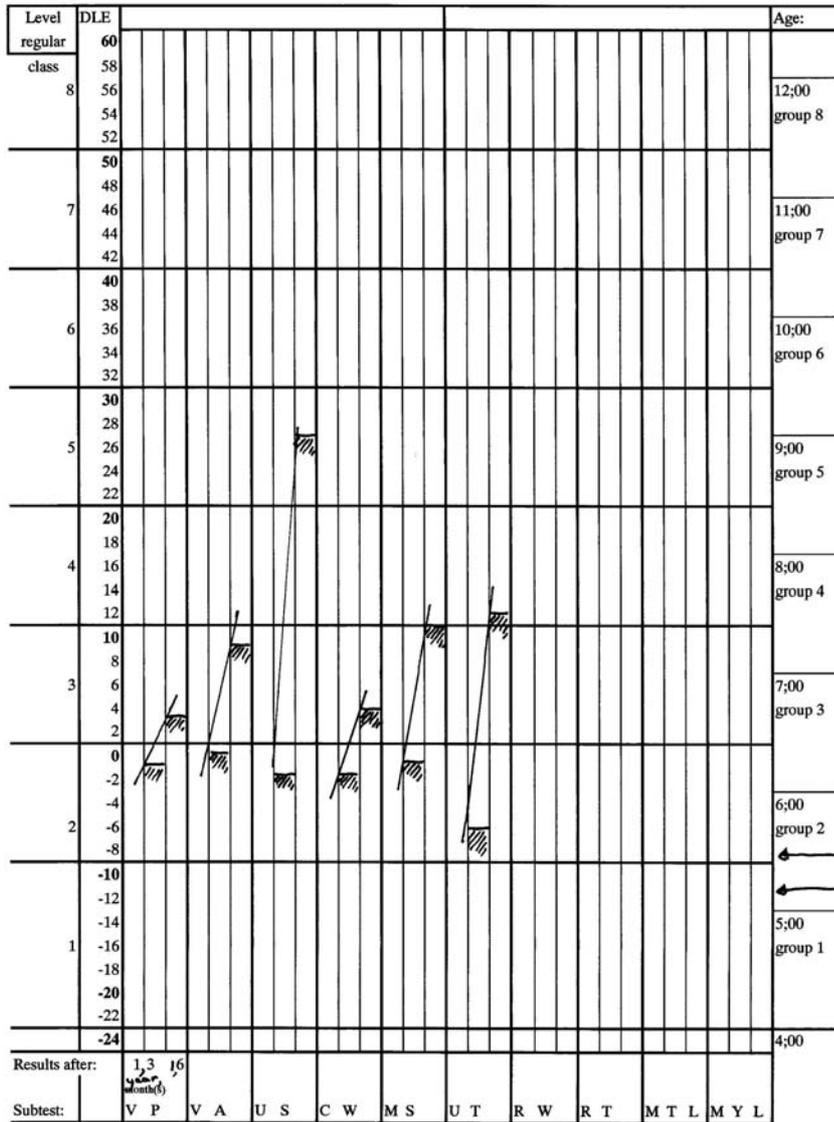
Profilchart

Name: A

Date of birth: 24-10-1996

Start reception class: 31-10-2000

Leaving reception class: still there



Notex/99219

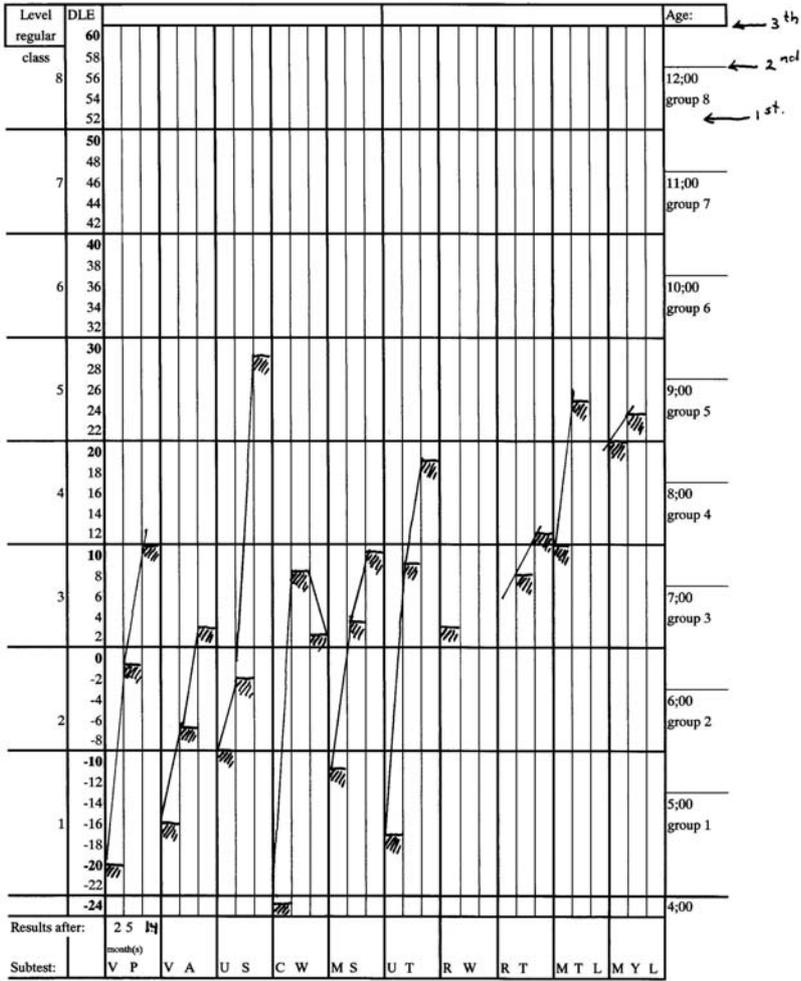
Profilchart

Name: **B**

Date of birth: 15-3-1990

Start reception class: 13-2-2001 / 11-4-2001

Leaving reception class: August 2002 (planned)



Notex/99219

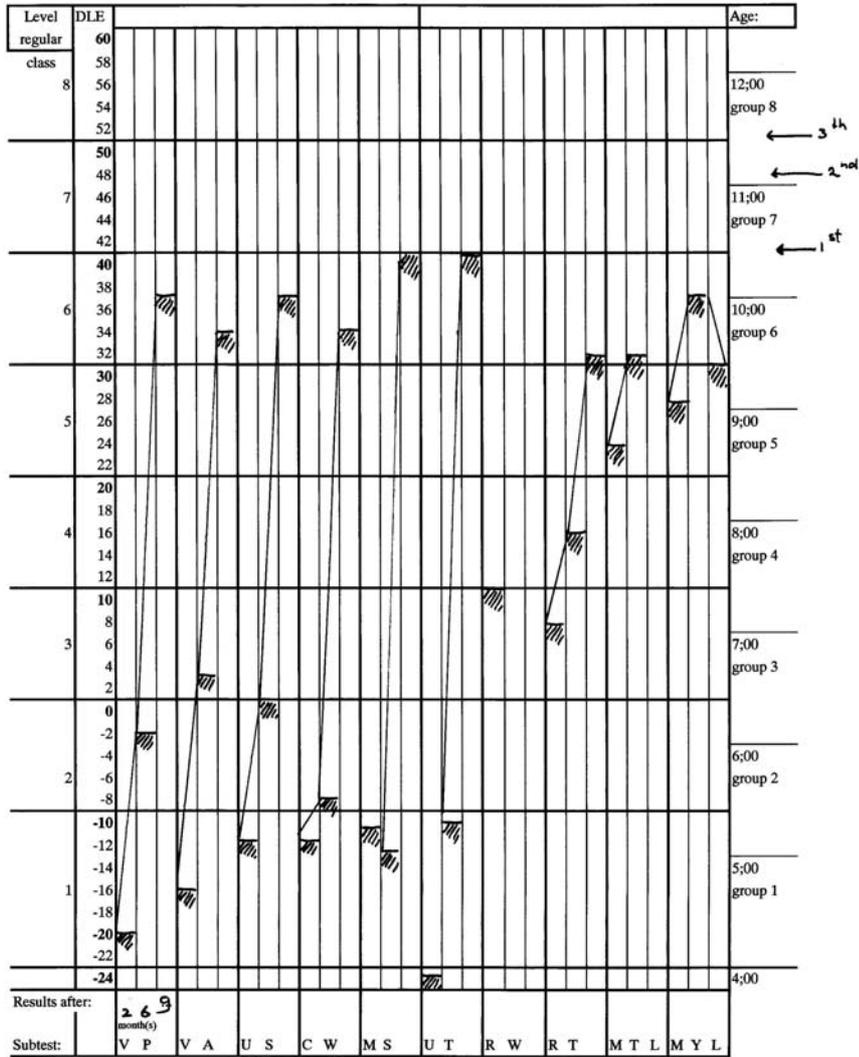
Profilchart

Name: C

Date of birth: 1-1-1991

Start reception class: 20-8-2001

Leaving reception class: ---



Notex/99219

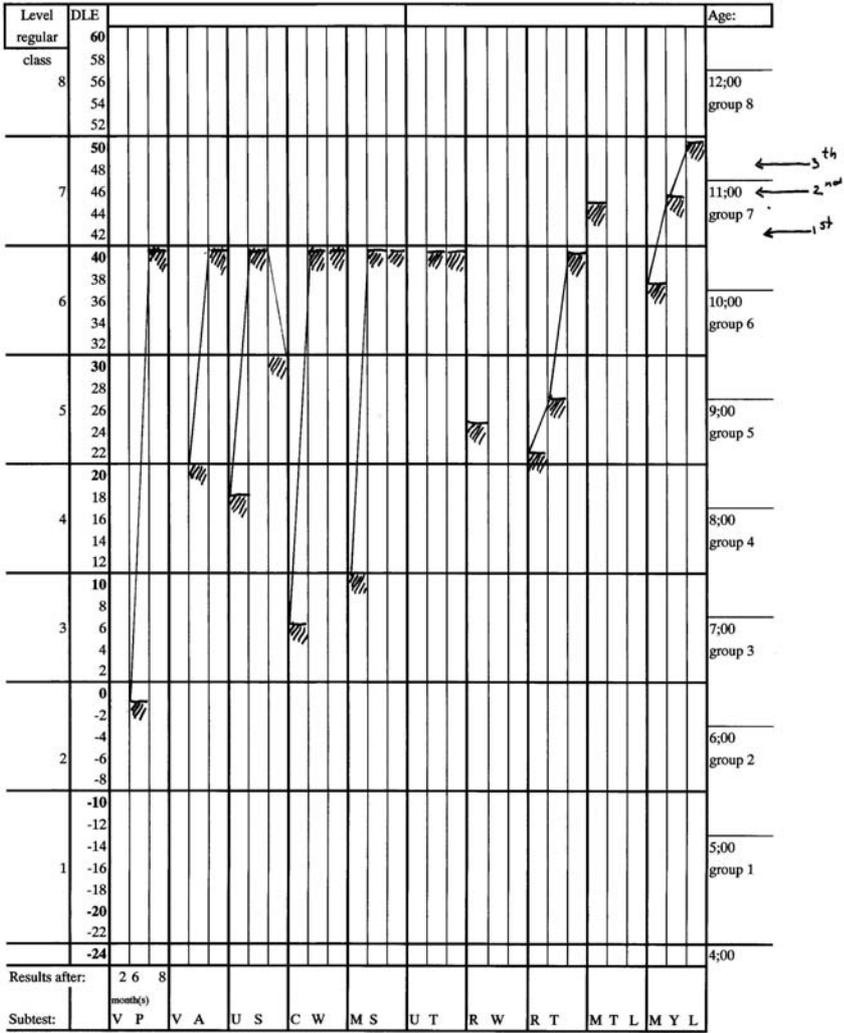
Profilchart

Name: **D**

Date of birth:23-4-1991

Start reception class: 14-12-2000

Leaving reception class: ----



Notex/99219

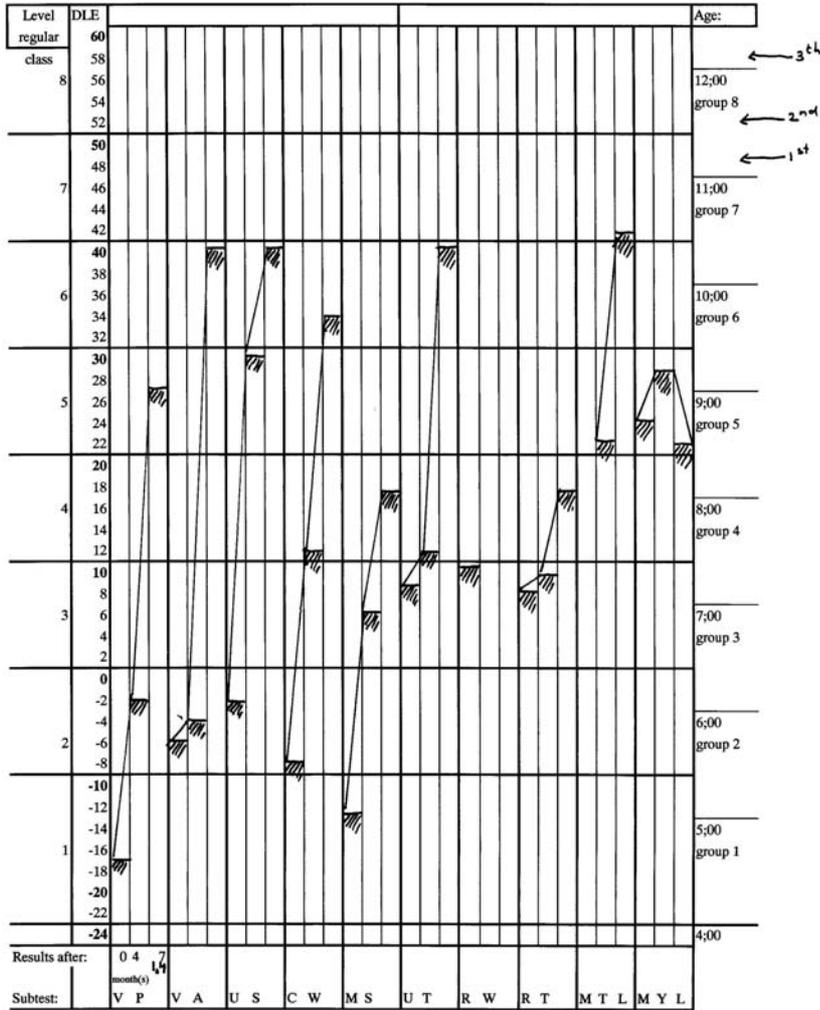
Profilchart

Name: **E**

Date of birth: 29-3-1990

Start reception class: 2-2-2001

Leaving reception class: ---



Notex/99219

Young learners' reading and writing experiences of a second/foreign language: the Maltese and Finnish context

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Introduction

The case study presented in this chapter focuses on reading and writing activities and events experienced by a group of 9 to 12 year-old children learning English in Malta and Finland. The objectives of the case study were to:

- find out about teachers' classroom practices related to reading and writing in English as a second/foreign language;
- collect information about children's reading and writing experiences in the second/foreign language provided within the classroom context;
- compare language learning experiences in both countries.

It was anticipated that having collected information from teachers and children, insights into children's English reading and writing experiences would be obtained and compared to claims teachers make about the language experiences provided. From such information, one could tentatively infer how the language environment and experiences being offered to children can help them use the second/foreign language beyond the classroom context.

Literature review

Research has indicated that children's success at learning second/foreign languages depends on a gamut of factors which are inter-dependant (Sollars, 1996). From a teaching perspective, factors which are modifiable, rather than constants are those which are of particular interest since the teaching environment can be altered to suit the needs of the learners. In the current study, the two crucial factors relevant to the case study include the age of the children and the environment set up by the teachers. The age group teachers are working with cannot be altered but as a consequence of the age, the teaching environment should be set up accordingly.

The children's age and implications for teaching

Considering that in both the Maltese and Finnish contexts second/foreign language teaching is introduced with young learners, one must consider the age of the children not so much from a linguistic perspective which some claim contributes towards "better absorption" but more from the point of view that because they are young learners, the methodology adopted in class is crucial. This is so irrespective of whether a language or any other subject is being taught in a classroom context. Young learners possess certain characteristics which cannot be ignored in any teaching situation. Children have a short attention span, enjoy variety, and want to make sense and see meaning in what they are doing. Children prefer being active where they can try things out for themselves rather than learn by vicarious experience. Relevant, purposeful and meaningful activities are therefore highly recommended where language teaching is the focus. Activities can aim at these characteristics if they are challenging, open-ended, are cognitively and conceptually appropriate for children's age and are linguistically suitable without being too easy or too difficult (Williams, 1991). Halliwell (1992) believes that children come to class with an ability to grasp meaning, make creative use of limited language resources, have a capacity for indirect learning, an instinct for play and fun as well as an instinct for interaction and talk. Vale & Feunteun (1995) suggest that successful, language learning occurs when children:

- study activities which have practical educational value;
- are motivated and interested in what they are studying;
- are introduced to a wide range of natural English;
- are taught in the target language; and
- are not introduced to language in an artificially, pre-determined sequence of grammatical structures or functions.

Taking these characteristics into consideration would suggest that the language teaching curriculum and programme offered to young language learners should promote stimulating and motivating activities. However, several issues are raised as a result of the demands of such a programme. How can curricular demands accommodate for activity-based learning? How can the language classroom be organised to incorporate such activities? What resources are necessary?

The learning environment

In order to stimulate, motivate and encourage children towards second/foreign language learning, the teachers' planning and preparation together with the organisation of the classroom environment are of utmost importance. "Effective teaching begins when the teacher has got things organised" (Smalley & Morris, 1992, p. 14). Teachers are responsible for organising the classroom at various levels, namely:

- the children themselves – will they be engaged in whole class, group or individual activities?
- the range of resources available, the amount and accessibility of these resources; the appeal which the resources have for the learners; how and when the resources are used. Teachers need to locate, adopt, adapt and integrate resources during the planning stages to enrich the delivery of activities.
- the physical space and classroom furniture available – can these be arranged or moved around to cater for the learning activities?
- time management – how is children’s time in class organised to ensure that they get the most out of the planned activities?

Like all other learning which goes on within a classroom, language learning in class should aim to equip children with skills and strategies that they can use independently when the need arises, away from the classroom context. However, as has been briefly outlined, the success of language teaching and learning depends on several variables, some of which are transient, consequently amenable to change; others are more constant. Teachers can work on those variables which are modifiable. In other words, they need to capitalize on factors which can be changed to suit the needs of the children in class. It is within this context that the results obtained from the case study are examined.

Prior to describing the instruments, procedures and results of the case study, brief descriptions of the language teaching contexts for Malta and Finland are presented.

The Maltese background

Maltese & English are both official languages of the island. Consequently, they are compulsory from the first year of formal education at the age of 5. In the state-school¹ system, the medium of instruction is Maltese. Most children come from families where they are spoken to in Maltese at home and almost all children attending such schools are Maltese. For several children, English is a foreign rather than a second language since the exposure to and opportunities for using the language beyond the classroom or school are rather limited in spite of the availability of local, daily newspapers in English, local radio stations which broadcast in English, TV productions and films, as well as unlimited access to reading material.

A curriculum and syllabus are available for the teachers to follow. In state schools, children are given textbooks at the beginning of the year. These books are on loan to the children. Some textbooks are in Maltese, others are in English. Basal readers are

¹ In the Maltese context, parents can choose whether to send their children to state, church or private schools. For the purposes of this chapter, some information about state-schools is provided in the preamble since the data were collected from two state schools.

used for both languages. A set number of readers have to be completed during the scholastic year for English. In addition to the basal readers, children in the upper years of primary school have another textbook, *Pathway*. This book is presented in units each of which presents a grammatical aspect to be practised, new vocabulary and short comprehension passages presented in comic-style layout, that is, with pictures having blurbs for the dialogue among the characters involved.

In the introductory years of schooling, English is generally introduced through the 'look & say approach'. Teachers are encouraged to expose the children to oral and spoken language prior to literacy. Some schools have introduced the 'English-speaking day' in an attempt to get children accustomed to the language.

Many schools have recently invested in interesting reading material in English suitable for young learners. This reading material is finding its place in class libraries. Children are also indirectly being exposed to literacy in their second language through ICT since every classroom has 3 or 4 computers available and most of the software available is in English. Schools also participate in international projects and this too can serve to promote the use of the English language.

English lessons are done on a daily basis and last anywhere between 45 minutes to 1 hour. Children in Malta are in primary schools for 6 years, between the ages of 5 and 11 years. School starts at 8.30 am and finishes at 2.30 pm. The maximum number of children in any class is 30.

The Finnish Background

Foreign language learning in the Finnish context has a long tradition and it is highly valued. Education is compulsory from the age of 7. English is not an official language in Finland but most students begin English at the age of 9 as a foreign language. Although a range of languages is offered in bigger schools in the cities, English is the most popular choice among the students. The majority of Finnish children attend state schools. Among the students, most have Finnish as their mother tongue but a small percentage of children come from families which have other mother tongues such as Swedish or Russian. At some stage in their education, most children learn Swedish as their second language. The children participating in this study are attending a state school and have Finnish as the mother tongue.

In the first years of exposure to the English language, emphasis is given to oral practice although reading and writing cannot be neglected. All textbooks are in Finnish except the ones used during language teaching which naturally are in the language being taught. Schools and teachers are free to choose the teaching material they use with their pupils. This includes high-quality study books and work books which are specifically prepared for the Finnish speakers learning English. The former includes excerpts for reading whereas the work book contains the grammar, language activities and the glossaries with lists of vocabulary from Finnish to English and vice versa. The study

book is loaned to the children but the workbook can be taken home at the end of the school year. In addition to these books, teachers are expected to use audio-cassettes and software specifically designed for the teaching of language. Internet is also widely used in Finnish classrooms and this too promotes the use of and exposure to English as a result of the international projects schools are engaged in.

English language teaching is almost entirely conducted by language teachers who are English language graduates who are trained in language teaching and pedagogical issues. Across schools in Finland, a common framework/curriculum (which is currently being updated) is applied but each school develops this curriculum according to its needs.

English is very popular in Finland and the children are highly motivated to learn it. Children have lots of opportunities to be exposed to the language in society, through the Internet, TV and reading material. At school, children have formal English language lessons twice a week, each lasting 45 minutes. The maximum number of children in one language class is 20.

In the Finnish context, the children's duration in schools varies. 10 year olds are in school for 5 hours a day, between 8.00 am and 1.00 pm whereas 11 to 12 year olds can be in school for 5 to 6 hours.

Methodology

Sample

For the purposes of this case study, the Maltese sample was made up of 127, 9 and 10 year-old children from 5 different classrooms attending 2 average-sized state schools. The study was conducted with children in the A, B and C stream of one school, and stream A and B in the second school.¹ The children in the lower streams were omitted as it was thought that the questionnaire in English would be too difficult for them to understand and answer. For the participating children, this was the 5th year that they were being exposed to English at school.

Data were also collected from the 4 teachers responsible for teaching the participating children. In one of the participating schools, one teacher is responsible for teaching English to all children at a specific grade level. This is not the norm in the local context. Normally, one teacher is responsible for teaching the core subjects² in one class for the entire school year.

The Finnish sample was made up of 150, 10-12 year-old children from 3 different averaged-sized state schools having 400 to 500 children. There is no streaming in the

¹ In the state education system children in the final two years of primary schools are grouped in classes by ability. Children are streamed according to results obtained in end of year national exams.

² In the primary school there are 8 core subjects: English, Maltese, Mathematics, Religion, Social Studies, Science, P.E. & Expressive Arts.

Finnish system so children are in mixed-ability groups. The participating children were in their 2nd, 3rd or 4th year of learning English. Data were also collected from the 4 teachers responsible for the teaching of English at primary level.

In both countries, no attempt was made at selecting schools in any systematic or random order. Schools were selected purely because of convenience. Consequently, data can in no way be generalised to the student population within the participating age range.

Research instruments

Two questionnaires were designed to obtain information from the teachers and the children respectively. Copies of the questionnaires are attached in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

To facilitate children's understanding of the questions, 9 broad questions, each with several closed-ended statements were set. Each of the statements required a yes/no answer. There were three open-ended questions where children were asked to describe a reading and writing event they had enjoyed participating in and also list activities considered important for reading and writing in English.

The teachers' questionnaire focused on their own personal definitions of reading and writing and the learning environment they try to create in teaching English to young learners.

Procedures for administration

The questionnaires with the children were administered to whole classes as groups. In this way, data were collected in a relatively short time to keep disruptions to normal classroom lessons to a minimum. Identical instructions were given to the children in every group. Children were informed about the purpose of the questionnaire and it was reinforced that this was not a test or exam of any sort. They were instructed not to write their names on the sheets provided. It was emphasized that their personal feeling/opinion was as correct as that of the child sitting next to them and therefore, they should not worry about correct/incorrect answers. The researcher who conducted the administration of the questionnaires read each question and the corresponding statements one by one, allowing children time to write down their answer. Each administration in class lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Teachers were allowed a few days to complete the questionnaire. Owing to time constraints, there was no time to discuss the questions prior to or following their completion. However in the Maltese context, class teachers remained with the children when the latter were completing their questionnaire so they knew what the research was about.

Results and discussion

Prior to the presentation of the results, it needs to be emphasized that this case study should be looked at as an exploratory one where the results should be interpreted with caution. As mentioned earlier, the sample was one of convenience and there is no indication of it being truly representative of either the Maltese or the Finnish student population. Secondly, as a result of cultural differences some items in the questionnaire could have been interpreted differently by the children.

Enjoyment and dislikes in reading and writing experiences in English

Children claim to enjoy or dislike reading and writing experiences in English for a variety of reasons (Tables 1 to 8). The results presented in the tables below indicate that Finnish children give more importance to finding information and reading about their favourite topics in English than their Maltese counterparts (Tables 1 & 2). The difference in proportions test indicates that these results are statistically significant ($z = 3.50$; $p < .001$ for finding a lot of information in English and $z = 3.59$, $p < .001$ for reading about favourite topics in English). These results could be attributed to the fact that the English speaking culture and language are desirable within the Finnish community especially young people. There is a strong feeling of being associated with the English speaking cultures. Within the Maltese school context, children tend to consider and accept English as another subject which they do along with a host of others and ways in which English can be utilised beyond school may not be very clear for children.

Another statistically significant result which appears between the two participating cohorts concerns the improvement in reading which comes along with practice. Although 80.3% of the Maltese pupils claim that they enjoy reading because they get better, the Finnish counterparts appear to believe more firmly in the value of practice (98.7%) ($z = 5.13$, $p < .001$). One possible reason why this might occur is provided in the reasons given for not enjoying reading in English (Tables 3 & 4).

Reasons why children enjoy reading in English	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Fun & enjoyable	107	84.3	20	15.7	127	100
I become better by practising	102	80.3	25	19.7	127	100
It helps with my studies	114	89.8	13	10.2	127	100
I find a lot of information in English	87	68.5	40	31.5	127	100
I can read about favourite topics	83	65.4	44	34.6	127	100

Table 1: Distribution of reasons why Maltese children enjoy reading in English

Reasons why children enjoy reading in English	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Fun & enjoyable	120	80	30	20	150	100
I become better by practising	148	98.7	2	1.3	150	100
It helps with my studies	136	90.7	14	9.3	150	100
I find a lot of information in English	129	86	21	14	150	100
I can read about favourite topics	126	84	24	16	150	100

Table 2: Distribution of reasons why Finnish children enjoy reading in English

Reasons why children do not enjoy reading in English	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
It is difficult because I don't know many words	29	22.8	98	77.2	127	100
I often do not understand what I am reading	34	26.8	93	73.2	127	100
I am not interested in learning the language	10	7.9	117	92.1	127	100
The school books are boring	18	14.2	109	85.8	127	100
I do not have exciting reading material around me	30	23.6	97	76.4	127	100

Table 3: Distribution of reasons why Maltese children do not enjoy reading in English

Reasons why children do not enjoy reading in English	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
It is difficult because I don't know many words	31	20.7	119	79.3	150	100
I often do not understand what I am reading	28	18.7	122	81.3	150	100
I am not interested in learning the language	8	5.3	142	94.7	150	100
The school books are boring	21	14	129	86	150	100
I do not have exciting reading material around me	13	8.7	137	91.3	150	100

Table 4: Distribution of reasons why Finnish children do not enjoy reading in English

Whereas 8.6% of the Finnish children claim that they do not have exciting reading material around them, 23.6% of the Maltese children complain about a lack of exciting material ($z = 3.43$, $p < .001$).

Reasons why children enjoy writing in English	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
To write to friends and relatives abroad	106	83.5	21	16.5	127	100
I can write my own stories	94	74.0	33	26.0	127	100
I can write my tests or exams in English	95	74.8	32	25.2	127	100
I know how to write with very little spelling mistakes	54	42.5	73	57.5	127	100
I enjoy doing homework & school work	72	56.7	55	43.3	127	100
I find it easy to write in English	89	70.1	38	29.9	127	100

Table 5: Distribution of reasons why Maltese children enjoy writing in English

Reasons why children enjoy writing in English	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
To write to friends and relatives abroad	104	69.3	46	30.7	150	100
I can write my own stories	140	93.3	10	6.7	150	100
I can write my tests or exams in English	143	95.3	7	4.7	150	100
I know how to write with very little spelling mistakes	123	82	27	18	150	100
I enjoy doing homework & school work	125	83.3	25	16.7	150	100
I find it easy to write in English	121	80.7	29	19.3	150	100

Table 6: Distribution of reasons why Finnish children enjoy writing in English

Upon comparing reasons for engaging in and enjoying writing in English (Tables 5 & 6), the Finnish children appear to be more confident about their performance in the foreign language than the Maltese counterparts. This is evident by the statistically significant difference expressed in children's ability to write their own stories (74.0% and 93.3% of Maltese and Finnish children respectively; $z = 4.42$, $p < .001$) as well as the concern they have about knowing how to write with very little spelling mistakes. 42.5% and 82% of Maltese and Finnish children claim that they know how to write in English with very little spelling mistakes ($z = 6.82$; $p < .001$). Finnish children also appear to be more accepting of the work they are assigned; 83.3% in contrast to 56.7% of the Maltese children claim that they enjoy doing homework and school work ($z = 4.87$; $p < .001$). In the Finnish context, homework is assigned in a range of subjects but children can still complete their work within an hour. In the Maltese context, homework in two or three subjects is assigned on a daily basis and children are reported to spend considerable time doing their work after school hours.

Reasons why children do not enjoy writing in English	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Don't have anyone to write to	15	11.8	112	88.2	127	100
I do not like writing	29	22.8	98	77.2	127	100
I do not know enough words	43	33.9	84	66.1	127	100
I make lots of spelling mistakes	53	41.7	74	58.3	127	100
I do not enjoy doing schoolwork & homework	41	32.3	86	67.7	127	100
It takes me a long time to think & write something	46	36.2	80	63.0	126	99.2

Table 7: Distribution of reasons why Maltese children do not enjoy writing in English

Reasons why children do not enjoy writing in English	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Don't have anyone to write to	55	36.7	95	63.3	150	100
I do not like writing	23	15.3	127	84.7	150	100
I do not know enough words	26	17.3	124	82.7	150	100
I make lots of spelling mistakes	29	19.3	121	80.7	150	100
I do not enjoy doing schoolwork & homework	29	19.3	121	80.7	150	100
It takes me a long time to think & write something	31	20.7	119	79.3	150	100

Table 8: Distribution of reasons why Finnish children do not enjoy writing in English

The impact of an exam-oriented system in the primary school is apparent in Maltese children's claims that they do not enjoy writing in English because they do not know enough words (33.9% compared to 17.3% of Finnish participants) and their concern that they make lots of spelling mistakes (41.7% compared to 19.3% of the Finnish sample) ($z = 3.17$, $p < .01$ and $z = 4.07$, $p < .001$ respectively). Finnish children could be interpreted as having a high self-esteem and are confident in communicating in English without fear of making mistakes. In the Finnish context, teachers transmit the message that mistakes are an acceptable aspect in communication as long as meaning is understood. Testing in the Finnish classrooms is a class affair to assess children's learning and to obtain feedback for teachers and parents. In contrast, children in Malta are examined in English in annual, nationally-set exams in addition to school-based tests and half-yearly exams. Considerable emphasis is given to accuracy especially where writing is concerned. These results also reinforce claims made by the children about their reading habits (refer to Tables 1 to 4). Research has clearly shown that the language skills develop concurrently and are inter-related (Teale, 1986). Development in any one area influences development in other areas. Engaging in reading is one source of acquiring and increasing vocabulary and definitely contributes to successful writing experiences.

The picture which emerges thus far suggests that considerably more Finnish children than Maltese children enjoy reading in English because they find a lot of information or can read about their favourite topics and have access to exciting reading material. It

thus appears logical that more Maltese children feel that they do not enjoy writing because they do not know enough words and they make lots of spelling mistakes as they read less and have less access to exciting material.

English reading and writing activities and resources used at school

Where choice of reading activities is concerned, Maltese and Finnish children report similar activities going on in their respective schools, with comprehension passages being the most popular activity in classrooms. Reading poems and letters appear to be almost equally popular activities across both contexts. Statistically significant differences appeared in children's claims about reading of stories, recipes and articles in newspapers and magazines (Tables 9 & 10). In all three instances there were statistically significant differences ($z = 2.73$, $p < .01$ for stories; $z = 5.94$, $p < .001$ for newspaper articles and $z = 4.86$, $p < .001$ for reading recipes). It has to be pointed out that in the Finnish context, rather than reading newspaper articles directly from newspapers, it is highly likely that children were referring to newspaper articles in their textbook. The textbook includes a variety of texts including stories, newspaper articles and recipes.

English reading activities at school	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Comprehension	124	97.6	3	2.4	127	100
Stories	115	90.6	12	9.4	127	100
Poems	114	89.8	13	10.2	127	100
Articles in newspapers & magazines	40	31.5	87	68.5	127	100
Recipes	32	25.2	95	74.8	127	100
Letters	106	83.5	21	16.5	127	100

Table 9: English reading activities in Maltese classrooms

English reading activities at school	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Comprehension	145	96.7	5	3.3	150	100
Stories	147	98	3	2	150	100
Poems	132	88	18	12	150	100
Articles in newspapers & magazines	101	67.3	49	32.7	150	100
Recipes	81	54	69	46	150	100
Letters	136	90.7	14	9.3	150	100

Table 10: English reading activities in Finnish classrooms

Where English writing activities are concerned, in both contexts, writing stories/compositions appears to be the most popular activity (Tables 11 & 12). Children in the Maltese classrooms report substantial engagement in writing poems and articles for newspapers, contributing to statistically significant results between the children of the two countries ($z = 5.17$, $p < .001$ for poems; $z = 3.30$, $p < .001$ for writing newspaper articles). This difference can possibly be attributed to the fact that at least in one of the participating Maltese schools, children are encouraged to submit contributions for the school publication which is in effect the school newspaper. It consists of a variety of contributions including poems, letters, jokes and anecdotes, competitions and short stories.

English writing activities at school	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Stories/compositions	125	98.4	2	1.6	127	100
Poems	105	82.7	22	17.3	127	100
Articles for newspapers & magazines	70	55.1	57	44.9	127	100
Recipes	30	23.6	97	76.4	127	100
Letters	114	89.8	13	10.2	127	100

Table 11: English writing activities in Maltese schools

English writing activities at school	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Stories/compositions	146	97.3	4	2.7	150	100
Poems	80	53.3	70	46.7	150	100
Articles for newspapers & magazines	53	35.3	97	64.7	150	100
Recipes	57	38	93	62	150	100
Letters	133	88.7	17	11.3	150	100

Table 12: English writing activities in Finnish schools

English reading resources used in schools	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Grammar books	99	78.0	28	22.0	127	100
Storybooks	117	92.1	10	7.9	127	100
Dictionaries	65	51.2	61	48.0	126	99.2
Handouts	125	98.4	2	1.6	127	100
Reference books	65	51.2	61	48.0	126	99.2
CD-Roms	92	72.4	35	27.6	127	100
Internet	71	55.9	56	44.1	127	100
Newspapers	21	16.5	106	83.5	127	100
Magazines	58	45.7	69	54.3	127	100

Table 13: Resources used for English reading by Maltese students in schools

Where resources are concerned, there seem to be several significant differences in what is used for English reading activities in the participating Maltese and Finnish schools (Tables 13 & 14). Storybooks and handouts seem to be equally popular in both contexts but there are statistically significant differences in the use made of grammar books ($z = 5.53$, $p < .001$), dictionaries ($z = 9.10$, $p < .001$), reference books ($z = 5.95$, $p < .001$), the Internet ($z = 2.55$, $p < .05$) and newspapers ($z = 5.93$, $p < .001$). These results suggest a greater variety of material used for reading activities in the Finnish

classrooms. What is interesting to note among the Maltese respondents is the greater variety of reading material they claim to engage in at home with significant increases in the use of dictionaries, reference books, newspapers and magazines (Table 13 & Table 15). Within the Finnish group, less children claim to use dictionaries and handouts, CD-Roms and the Internet at home than at school.

English reading resources used in schools	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Grammar books	148	98.7	2	1.3	150	100
Storybooks	138	92	12	8	150	100
Dictionaries	147	98	3	2	150	100
Handouts	149	99.3	1	0.7	150	100
Reference books	127	84.7	23	15.3	150	100
CD-Roms	122	81.3	28	18.7	150	100
Internet	106	70.7	44	29.3	150	100
Newspapers	76	50.7	74	49.3	150	100
Magazines	85	56.7	65	43.3	150	100

Table 14: Resources used for English reading by Finnish students in schools

When comparing the reading resources used at home by both groups, there are also some statistically significant differences in the resources used by the children (Table 15 & 16).

English reading resources used at home	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Grammar books	82	64.6	44	34.6	126	99.2
Storybooks	119	93.7	8	6.3	127	100
Dictionaries	107	84.3	20	15.7	127	100
Handouts	76	59.8	51	40.2	127	100
Reference books	104	81.9	23	18.1	127	100
CD-Roms	74	58.3	53	41.7	127	100
Internet	66	52.0	61	48.0	127	100
Newspapers	68	53.5	59	46.5	127	100
Magazines	83	65.4	44	34.6	127	100

Table 15: Resources used for English reading by Maltese students at home

English reading resources used at home	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Grammar books	140	93.3	10	6.7	150	100
Storybooks	144	96	6	4	150	100
Dictionaries	136	90.7	14	9.3	150	100
Handouts	127	84.7	23	15.3	150	100
Reference books	124	82.7	26	17.3	150	100
CD-Roms	114	76	36	24	150	100
Internet	122	81.3	28	18.7	150	100
Newspapers	90	60	60	40	150	100
Magazines	88	58.7	62	41.3	150	100

Table 16: Resources used for English reading by Finnish students at home

Statistically significant differences resulted in the use of grammar books ($z = 5.89$, $p < .001$), the use made of handouts ($z = 4.65$, $p < .001$), and in the use made of

CD-Roms and the Internet ($z = 3.15$, $p < .01$ and $z = 5.21$, $p < .001$ respectively). The high proportion of Finnish children who refer to the use of grammar books reflects the teaching of language in a structured albeit communicative way. In the Maltese context, grammar is also taught although teachers are encouraged not to do this in isolation and children do not generally have books which deal exclusively with grammar. Grammatical items are generally couched within language units which would also incorporate short comprehension passages, new vocabulary and a poem, song or rhyme.

The differences in use made of CD-Roms and the Internet could possibly be explained by the amount of time such resources have been available. In the Finnish context, such resources have been in use for about 5 years. In the Maltese classrooms, access to the Internet is being introduced gradually and the past year was the first year that Internet was accessible in the classrooms. Where CD-Roms and software are concerned, although the group of participating children had experience of computers in their class from the first grade at school, for the teachers, this was their second year of having computers available for their grade 5 pupils. Recent statistics published by the National Statistics Office show that use of the Internet among the Maltese population is on the increase. Results from information collected among people aged 16-65 indicate that 53.5% of 16-24 year olds and 42.4% of 25-34 year olds report using the Internet daily or several times a week.

English writing resources used in school	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Pen & paper	126	99.2	1	0.8	127	100
Computer	97	76.4	30	23.6	127	100
Reference books	60	47.2	67	52.8	127	100
Dictionaries	66	52.0	61	48.0	127	100

Table 17: Resources used for English writing by Maltese students at school

Contrary to results reported for reading resources, there is no statistically significant difference in computer use for writing activities at school (Tables 17 & 18). In both Maltese and Finnish classrooms, computers are available and accessible and substantial numbers of the participating pupils claim that they are used for their English writing activities. However, there are statistically significantly more Finnish pupils who report using the computer for English writing activities at home ($z = 3.35$, $p < .001$) (Tables 19 & 20).

Finnish children also claim that they use more reference books and dictionaries than their Maltese counterparts when engaging in writing activities at school ($z = 7.62$, $p < .001$ and $z = 7.69$, $p < .001$ respectively). These differences are also present in resources children claim to use at home for English writing activities ($z = 4.53$, $p < .001$ for use of reference books at home; $z = 2.12$, $p < .05$ for the use of dictionaries at home). The Maltese pupils reported much more use of reference books and dictionaries at home than at school when engaging in English writing activities. There are no differences in the frequency with which Finnish children report using particular resources for writing activities at school or at home (Tables 18 & 20).

English writing resources used in school	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Pen & paper	144	96	6	4	150	100
Computer	124	82.7	26	17.3	150	100
Reference books	134	89.3	16	10.7	150	100
Dictionaries	139	92.7	11	7.3	150	100

Table 18: Resources used for English writing by Finnish students at school

English writing resources used at home	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Pen & paper	125	98.4	2	1.6	127	100
Computer	87	68.5	40	31.5	127	100
Reference books	84	66.1	43	33.9	127	100
Dictionaries	103	81.1	24	18.9	127	100

Table 19: Resources used for English writing by Maltese students at home

English writing resources used at home	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Pen & paper	145	96.7	5	3.3	150	100
Computer	128	85.3	22	14.7	150	100
Reference books	133	88.7	17	11.3	150	100
Dictionaries	135	90	15	10	150	100

Table 20: Resources used for English writing by Finnish students at home

The overall pattern of results obtained for resources used in reading and writing activities at home and at school suggest that in both contexts, emphasis is given to storybooks and reading material on teacher prepared handouts. Pen and paper activities are also predominant for writing activities at home and at school. There appear to be differences in the availability and use made of dictionaries, reference books, CD-Roms and the Internet with the Finnish students claiming to make more use of such resources than the Maltese children for their reading activities. Maltese children claim to make more use of dictionaries, reference books, newspapers and magazines at home rather than school for English reading activities. Within the school environment, the use of handouts, followed by storybooks are the more popular resources for reading activities for the Maltese children. According to the Finnish children, within the school environment, handouts, grammar books and dictionaries constitute the most popular resource material for reading.

Factors which help school participation	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Physical space	67	52.8	59	46.5	126	99.2
Availability of resources	100	78.7	27	21.3	127	100
Parents	104	81.9	23	18.1	127	100
Friends in class	72	56.7	55	43.3	127	100
Teacher-prepared activities	118	92.9	9	7.1	127	100

Table 21: Factors which help Maltese students participate in English activities

When children were asked to consider factors which influence their learning in class (Tables 21 & 22), statistically significant differences emerged on all but one factor, that is the teacher-prepared activities. On this issue, both Maltese and Finnish pupils agree that the teacher prepared activities help them participate in English activities conducted in school. The two factors on which there seems to be most discrepancy between the Maltese and Finnish pupils are the physical space available ($z = 7.84, p < .001$) and the friends in class ($z = 6.67, p < .001$). Considering the number of children in each classroom together with the furniture and resources available, classrooms in some Maltese schools are rather small and as a result, teachers tend to prefer preparing and delivering whole class activities, individual work or pair work. Although group work is encouraged and does take place from time to time, children are restricted in their mobility. Teachers too admit that there are restrictions imposed by limited space.

The restricted space and lack of mobility may also have led the Maltese children to consider friends in class as a factor which does not contribute positively to their learning English. On the other hand, given that the number of children learning English in a Finnish classroom appears to be around 20 (see interview responses of Finnish teachers), it would seem that there is more opportunity for children to communicate among each other. Also, three of the four Finnish teachers mentioned that they have large enough classrooms with sufficient space.

Factors which help school participation	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Physical space	141	94	9	6	150	100
Availability of resources	147	98	3	2	150	100
Parents	146	97.3	4	2.7	150	100
Friends in class	137	91.3	13	8.7	150	100
Teacher-prepared activities	143	95.3	7	4.7	150	100

Table 22: Factors which help Finnish students participate in English activities

Enjoyable reading and writing activities

Children were asked to write about reading and writing activities which they enjoyed participating in. They were also asked to list events/activities they consider important for learning English. In spite of the confidence and self-esteem children appeared to have when answering specific questions in the questionnaire, on the whole, children

found these tasks of identifying positive experiences rather challenging. The answers of the Maltese participants were heavily influenced by their classroom experiences. Thus, when referring to a reading event which they enjoyed, 16 children from one of the classes, referred to *A little princess*. This was obviously a shared reading event, still fresh in their memories. Similarly, 12 children in another class referred to an *Aladdin* and *Ali Baba* story book, again strongly suggesting a memorable shared, reading event. A handful of children referred to the textbooks which they are given at the beginning of the school year.

Most of the children gave very terse responses and very few made an attempt at describing what they had enjoyed reading. Two such examples are included below:

It was about Polly's P Q; This p and q means because she don't say thank you all times so she is PQ but one day she said thank you and then her mother rub off the P & Q

(School B: Child ID 102)

A book about a dog. He was hungry and there was butchers and he took him a bone and he ran and ran but the butcher didn't get him. Then he had to pass over a bridge and he saw his reflection and he wanted that bone too and he barked and the bone fell in the river and he didn't have any bone

(School A: Child ID 36)

In referring to an enjoyable reading event, several children referred to animal stories, witch-craft and wizardry, with some very specific mentions of *Harry Potter* as well as a host of other well-known tales such as *Sleeping Beauty*, Enid Blyton books, *The wooden horse of Troy*, *Peter Pan* and *Black Beauty*. Children also drew on their reading experiences at home, as well as experiences within school, referring to different genres of reading. References were made to poetry books, adventure books, funny books, books about different countries around the world and their customs and even the script in connection with the prize day play.

Last year we had a musical for the prize day. It was called The emperor's new clothes. I enjoyed reading the script as we had to learn it by heart.

(School B: Child ID 94)

A story about bees, how they live, eat and help... At school, once we read about Japan, how they live and what is their hobby.

(School A: Child ID 43)

In response to identifying an enjoyable writing experience, most of the Maltese participants mentioned titles assigned for composition writing. Several children just

wrote composition without specifying a title which they preferred over others. Where topics/titles were mentioned, they were quite varied and these included:

When we had to write a composition and the title was a film I enjoyed watching

(School A: Child ID 26)

I really enjoyed writing about Heidi that she was an orphan girl who lived with her grandfather

(School A: Child ID 49)

A composition: "Imagine that for a day you had been changed into a witch"

(School B: Child ID 82)

... witnessing a robbery, when I told the police about the robbery

(School B: Child ID 85)

I liked writing best "The Haunted House"

(School B: Child ID 124)

Several children mentioned that they enjoy writing poetry as well as letters. Three children even referred to the writing on the computer and sending of emails.

I enjoyed best when we all went on the computer and wrote emails

(School B: Child ID 92)

In their attempts at trying to answer what activities are important to be successful in reading and writing in English, the Maltese participants appeared to rely on what they had just read in the questionnaire as well as classroom experiences they have been exposed to repeatedly over the years at school. Most of the children listed compositions, comprehensions and grammar as important activities which are necessary for becoming good at reading and writing in English. Some even specified the grammar exercises they thought are most helpful with children mentioning past tense, pronouns, negative, singular and plural. Practising and studying were another two activities mentioned by several children, without their going into detail about what or how to practice or study. Emphasis was also given to spelling and the acquisition of vocabulary.

The writing – the spellings; the reading that you read clearly

(School A: Child ID 45)

To be good in reading and writing in English, study and when we study we want to see the letters, how the words are written

(School B: Child ID 107)

Some children considered the importance of being able to read and write in English.

I think it's important to learn English because you can talk with English people, write letters to English people & get information for composition

(School B: Child ID 92)

That you can read so in a test paper if you make a composition it would be much better

(School B: Child ID 119)

The Finnish children found it difficult to describe one English reading experience which they enjoyed. A summary of the results obtained indicates that 25 of the participants mention an interesting book, 27 referred to a lesson or lessons in the storybook, 5 enjoyed doing a reading comprehension whereas 7 reported enjoying a magazine. Two children enjoyed reading the poems written by their classmates.

When asked to write about enjoyable writing experiences, 45 Finnish children reported that they like to write their own stories whereas 12 Finnish children were motivated by their success in a written test at school.

Teachers' responses

Teachers' responses to the questions set in the questionnaire are presented in Table 23 & 24. There are three crucial differences which need to be emphasized in comparing the responses of the two teachers. Maltese teachers teaching at primary level are not necessarily language specialists and they are responsible for teaching the class for the entire year, for the whole range of subjects which have to be taught at primary level. One of the teachers happens to be working in one state school, where single subject teaching is being promoted in the core subjects at the upper grades in primary school. In the Finnish context, the participating teachers were all language graduates.

In the Maltese context, teachers have very little say in the curricular demands and the syllabus. These are determined by the local, centralised education division as are the textbooks. However, some schools are making use of additional course work to supplement the activities in the compulsory books. In contrast, in the Finnish schools, teachers are expected to develop their own curriculum and syllabus according to a given framework. This would suggest that the Finnish teachers have more freedom in deciding what to do with the children.

Thirdly, the number of children in a group/class varies. In the Maltese context, teachers can have a maximum of 30 pupils in a group whereas in the Finnish context, there are 20 children on average for language learning sessions.

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
<i>Definition of reading</i>	A means of enjoyment; a form of communication & independence; a means of acquiring knowledge	Understanding written material	One of the most important skills in everyday life. The act of interpreting printed and written words	Reading is an activity which one can enjoy doing where it can be amalgamated with projects, story telling & drama.
<i>Definition of writing</i>	A means of communication & self-expression	Expressing one's ideas in one's own personal style	Expressing one's ideas on paper	Writing is how to express your ideas into words. It involves expressions, grammatical concepts and correct usage of punctuation. Spelling is of utmost importance.
<i>English reading activities children are exposed to at the beginning of the scholastic year</i>	Listening to stories read by teacher; listening on cassette; reading of stories (excerpts from books); drama – learning the script in English; guiding children towards certain books	Library books, textbooks, computer, group reading, comprehension text, silent reading, poetry	Story telling; comprehension tests; poetry; group reading; silent reading; use of class library; use of school library	Conversation lesson; drama; changing the beginning/ending of a story; summary.

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
<i>English reading activities later on in the school year</i>	Children choose their own library books; reading their own stories to class; reading interesting articles children themselves have found	Stories as handouts; finding information and reading it to the whole class; newspaper articles	Encouraged to read newspaper articles; to find information about certain topics and read that info to the whole class. Also encouraged to write a short summary of a book they enjoyed reading and sharing summary with their group.	As we have to assess children's level through exams, the time span can be a problem but I make it a point to involve drama, conversation and summaries in the reading lesson.
<i>English writing activities children are exposed to at the beginning of the scholastic year</i>	Stories about pictures; sentence stories, that is each child contributes sentence to story to make it up.	Composition; writing sentences	Picture compositions; guided compositions; letter writing; writing of sentences	Listening to cassettes; sound effects (eg. Storm), pooling of ideas; proverbs; expressions
<i>English writing activities later on in the school year</i>	Children need to be guided to write in sequence and to use interesting adjectives	Writing conversations, dialogues, stories, letters, descriptive compositions, writing for the school magazine	Dialogues, letter writing; descriptive compositions; writing short stories for the school magazine; role playing	It does not change as in every composition, the teacher introduces the title and definition and helps them to pool ideas.
<i>Resources to encourage reading in class & at home</i>	Library corner, computer, newspapers	School magazine; use of general knowledge books; use of picture dictionaries; pictures	School magazine; use of encyclopaedias; use of dictionary; pictures	In class: computer, books, dictionary At home: charts, encyclopaedia, historical background of story telling etc.

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
<i>Resources to encourage writing in class & at home</i>	Pictures; word banks; music – to write what they feel when they listen to it; drama; dialogue	Picture compositions; letters to friends; writing a letter for a newspaper	Picture compositions; letters to pen-friends; letters to local council; letters to the school magazine	In class: ideas, cassettes, monitor, drawings
<i>An ideal reading/writing lesson</i>	Children read/discuss type of text. Group/pair work on given handout to practise type of writing, e.g. narrative, summary, poetry. Sharing of work in class leading to individual work	When children understand what is going on, obtain new ideas and have fun.	When children understand what they are doing, acquire new ideas, broaden their interests and obtain personal pleasure.	Reading: Fiction, story enriched with drama Writing: Imagining things
<i>Are you providing learners with ideal lessons?</i>	I believe so but am pressed for time due to vast syllabus; not enough time can always be spent on reading/writing activities	I do my best by providing the necessary environment	I try to do my best	Yes, I think I am trying to motivate the children because they look forward to it every week. They really enjoy it
<i>Factors that help/prevent delivery of lessons: physical space</i>	Not enough space for many groups	Space is limited	Space is very limited	Limited space. Classes are too small
<i>Number of students in a group/class</i>	No answer	Too many in class	I think 29 is a very large group	
<i>Student motivation & interest in language learning</i>	When motivated it helps	Depends	Very good	

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
<i>Availability of resources</i>	Good availability	Good	Quite good	Textbooks; library books; CD-Roms; videos
<i>Syllabus/curriculum demands</i>	Prevent	Very demanding	Very demanding	Time limit
<i>Parental pressure</i>	Prevent	I have none	I have none	
<i>Colleagues</i>	Help/Prevent	We help each other	Very helpful	
<i>School authorities</i>	Help	Very helpful	Very helpful	Helpful
<i>Time</i>	Prevent	Limited	Limited	It is a problem especially after the half yearly exams

Table 23: Maltese teachers' views about reading and writing in second/foreign language

In spite of the fact that Maltese teachers are with their children all day long, the lack of time available is still a crucial factor especially when the demands of the syllabus are taken into consideration. Finnish teachers too complain that there is always too much to do in the time allowed for English lessons.

All participating teachers strive to provide their pupils with a variety of experiences through a range of media. Computers and Internet, library books, teacher-prepared materials, reference books and course books were some of the resources mentioned by teachers. In referring to activities done in class, teachers referred to the importance of grammar, structure and sequence but also believe in striking a balance across the four major language skills.

The ideal reading/writing lesson is one where the children are active in expressing their thoughts. It is considered very important that every child is active in his/her own way and capacity, and the teacher tries to help everybody. The children should use the second/foreign language as much as possible during the lessons to become more fluent in reading and writing. This is especially important because both native languages (Maltese in Malta and Finnish in Finland) are phonetic languages. Maltese teachers also emphasized the idea that children should be enjoying themselves while they are engaged in a shared reading activity and gaining new knowledge, skills and information.

The children in Finland are motivated to learn English. It makes teaching and learning easier and the teachers really think the children improve the language capacity by studying more. Foreign language skills are regarded important because Finnish is spoken only in Finland. English is regarded as a proper way of communication in Europe. Parents usually motivate their children sometimes even press the teacher or the child. In this regard there are some similarities with the Maltese context: Maltese is used only on the island; English is the second official language of the country. Partly because of exams but also because of the opportunities which can be gained by meaningful exposure to the language, virtually all children, parents and teachers acknowledge the importance of learning English.

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
<i>Definition of reading</i>	Mechanical competence and understanding of the text	To be able to understand written text	Skill when you understand written thoughts of another person	To understand the thoughts of someone else in a written form
<i>Definition of writing</i>	Be able to express oneself by writing	To be able to express oneself by writing	Skill to express own thoughts by letters and sentences	Written speech, not so spontaneous and with more rules
<i>English reading activities children are exposed to at the beginning of the scholastic year</i>	Reading comprehension, summaries of texts	Reading comprehension, many activities at the same time they are practising something else	They read some text every lesson, reading comprehension, read own sentences, summarizing a text	They get used to reading English text aloud or silent in many exercises
<i>English reading activities later on in the school year</i>	More words in the text	The activities have more words, they are longer	More vocabulary, longer sentences, longer paragraphs	The exercises have more vocabulary and structures as time goes...
<i>English writing activities children are exposed to at the beginning of the scholastic year</i>	They write words and their own sentences & short stories	They begin writing short sentences and little by little the sentences grow longer	Homework is often writing, creating own sentences, summaries of a text in a written form	They write words, sentences, short stories. Mind maps, summaries

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
<i>English writing activities later on in the school year</i>	The sentences & stories become longer	The activity book has also many activities which the children write at home	The sentences get longer and the whole text as well	The exercises become longer with more vocabulary
<i>Resources to encourage reading in class & at home</i>	Reference books, Internet, libraries	Class: Internet, ICT, stories Home: Internet, libraries, ICT	Class: A lot of different exercises, texts of songs Home: Internet	Class: textbooks, songs, posters, Internet. Home: Internet, TV, stories
<i>Resources to encourage writing in class & at home</i>	Very little in class, mostly at home Pair exercises; sentences, stories at home	Class: activities in the workbook Home: Own stories	Class: to make notes, exercises on the board Home: different types of exercises, writing as homework	Class: vocabulary, mind maps, posters Home: dictionaries, Internet, motivating homework
<i>An ideal reading/writing lesson</i>	Children express their thoughts and their sentences are shared e.g. they are written on the board	A lesson when all the sides of language are practised	There should be all sides of language- both written & oral- during every lesson for the children to get as much exercise as possible	Not only R&W but also listening & speaking- all these support each other
<i>Are you providing learners with ideal lessons?</i>	Mostly yes, because they are improving.	Quite often, because the children are learning and they like English	Hope so. Reading & Writing exercises are esp. important in English because it is not a phonetic language like Finnish	Don't know. I try to give them many kinds of activities.

Question	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
<i>Factors that help or prevent delivery of ideal lessons: physical space</i>	Yes, a lot	Helps a lot	Quite a big classroom for English lessons for different grouping	Prevent – too small a classroom
<i>Number of students in a group/class</i>	Yes, a lot	Extremely helpful	Maximum 20	Maximum 18
<i>Student motivation & interest in learning the language</i>	Yes, a lot	Extremely helpful	Help a lot	OK. English is popular
<i>Availability of resources</i>	Not so much in the work, only in motivation	Quite a lot	Help – easily available	Good. A lot of material available
<i>Syllabus/curriculum demands</i>	Of course	Extremely helpful	Help – we create our own curriculum on certain basis	OK. We make our own syllabuses
<i>Parental pressure</i>	Parental motivation very much, but no pressure	Helps a lot	Rather parental motivation, helps a lot if it is not pressure	Sometimes too hard, usually motivating
<i>Colleagues</i>	Yes quite a lot	Quite a lot	Usually helpful	Mostly supportive
<i>School authorities</i>	Yes a lot	Helps a lot	Mostly helpful	Mostly OK
<i>Time</i>	Yes a lot	Extremely helpful	Always too little	Too few lessons (2 lessons/week)

Table 24: Finnish teachers' views about reading and writing in second/foreign language

Conclusion

The overall results suggest that Finnish children have a higher self-esteem and more positive perceptions about their English reading and writing experiences. They also claim to have a greater variety of resources available and accessible to them. These results cannot be considered as necessarily reflecting the 9-11 year olds of either the Finnish or Maltese population. In addition to constraints mentioned earlier and the lack of randomness as regards choice of participants, this case study made no attempts at comparing children's proficiency in using the language. The responses given were children's claims and perceptions which do not necessarily reflect how well individual children would perform on any of the four major language skills.

The range of experiences teachers claim to provide for their children are varied and this is somehow corroborated by the resources children claim to make use of for their English reading and writing experiences. This suggests that teachers do make attempts at presenting children with experiences that simulate events which individuals engage in beyond the classroom context. Possibly, Finnish teachers have more freedom to be flexible in what they choose to do with the children in class since it is up to them to develop a syllabus and learning programme following the guidelines suggested in the curriculum. In the Maltese context, teachers do not enjoy as much freedom. However, in spite of the clearly established curriculum and syllabus, how this gets translated into classroom practice depends a lot on the teacher and the students, to mention but two factors.

Given appropriate resources or having access to a range of resources is also a great asset in promoting literacy in a second/foreign language. Such resources allow for greater variety in the activities children engage in as well as offer possibilities for using literacy for real purposes.

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Appendix 1: Teachers' questionnaire

1. What is your own personal definition of reading?
2. What is your own personal definition of writing?
3. What English reading activities/experiences are your children exposed to at the beginning of the scholastic year? (List)
4. How does this change as the year goes by?
5. What writing activities/experiences are children exposed to at the beginning of the scholastic year?
6. How does this change as the year goes by?
7. What resources do you use to encourage reading:
 - In class?
 - At home?
8. What resources do you use to encourage writing:
 - In class?
 - At home?
9. What is an ideal reading/writing lesson?
10. In your opinion, are you providing learners/children with ideal lessons for reading/writing in English? Why?
11. To what extent do the following conditions help or prevent you from delivering ideal lessons?
 - a. Physical space
 - b. Number of students in a group
 - c. Student motivation & interest in learning the language
 - d. Availability of resources (textbooks, literature from magazines, newspapers, library books, CD-Roms, videos, audio-cassettes)
 - e. Syllabus &/or curriculum demands
 - f. Parental pressure
 - g. Colleagues
 - h. School authorities
 - i. Time
 - j. Others (specify)

Appendix 2: Children's questionnaire

DO NOT write your name on the paper. This is not a test but it is important that you put down what you think about reading and writing in English. Write **yes** or **no** next to each reason/question.

1. I like to read in English because...

	It is fun and I enjoy it
	I become better at reading by practising
	It helps me with my studies in school
	I find a lot of information in English (books, Internet, magazines, newspapers)
	I can read about favourite topics (hobbies, sports, people, pop-stars, fashion)
	Other reasons (specify)

2. I DO NOT like to read in English because...

	It is difficult because I don't know many words
	I often do not understand what I am reading
	I am not interested in learning the language
	The school books are boring
	I do not have exciting reading material around me
	Other reasons (specify)

3. I like to write in English because...

	I can write to friends and relatives abroad
	I can write my own stories
	I can write my exams/tests using English
	I know how to write with very little spelling mistakes
	I enjoy doing the school work and homework
	I find it easy to write in English
	Other reasons (specify)

4. I DO NOT like to write in English because...

	I don't have anyone to write to in English
	I do not like writing
	I feel I do not know enough words in English
	I make lots of spelling mistakes
	I do not enjoy doing the school work and homework
	It takes me a long time to think and write something in English
	Other reasons (specify)

5. Do you have these English reading activities at school?

	Comprehension passages
	Stories
	Poems
	Articles in newspapers/magazines
	Recipes
	Letters
	Others (specify)

6. Do you have these writing activities in English at school?

	stories/compositions
	Poems
	articles in newspapers/magazines
	Recipes
	Letters
	Others (specify)

7. Do you use these resources for reading in English?

In class				At home			
	grammar books		CD roms		grammar books		CD roms
	storybooks		Internet		storybooks		Internet
	dictionaries		newspapers		dictionaries		newspapers
	handouts		magazines		handouts		magazines
	reference books		Others		reference books		others

8. Do you use these resources for writing in English?

In class				At home			
	pen & paper		dictionaries		pen & paper		dictionaries
	computer		others		computer		others
	reference books				reference books		

9. Describe one English reading experience which you really enjoyed.
10. Describe one English writing experience which you really enjoyed.
11. What English reading & writing activities do you consider important?
12. What helps you take part in English activities?

	The space in the classroom allows you to move around and read/write with your friends
	Availability of resources (textbooks, literature from magazines, newspapers, library books, CD-Roms, videos, audio-cassettes)
	Your parents telling you how important it is to learn English
	Your friends in the classroom
	The activities your teacher prepares for you
	Other things which help you...

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Bulthuis Frank Drs. works in the field of education and minorities, especially in bilingual and intercultural education. In these last years he has been working as a curriculum developer at the SLO (National Institute for Curriculum Development). He is the head of KPC Groep LOWAC, which is a nationwide network of more than 100 primary schools which are involved in the education of children of asylum seekers. He is also a member of the board of the VTSN, an association of schools with a bilingual programme.

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