

University of Kragujevac  
Faculty of Education in Jagodina

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# **Integrating Culture and Language Teaching in TEYL**

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## Foreword

It has become natural to refer to the English language as a global language, a means of worldwide communication. This phenomenon has brought about many changes in educational systems all over the world, as well as new challenges in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). Some recent tendencies in TEFL relate to the increasingly younger age of English language learners and the need to provide them with communication skills necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century intercultural connections. Consequently, integrating culture into the English language primary curriculum has become of major importance all over the world.

Most definitions of culture highlight the notions of transmitting, sharing and communicating, with language placed at the very core of any consideration of culture. The field of English language teaching emphasizes the introduction of an intercultural approach that focuses on the effective and productive integration of culture into language teaching. The aims of foreign language teaching have shifted from achieving “native speaker competence” to achieving “intercultural communicative competence”, which includes the skill of understanding the language and behavior of the target community while sharing its values, beliefs, norms and social practices with members of the ‘home’ community – and vice versa. Such an approach assigns another important role to the foreign language teacher/learner: that of “intercultural mediator”, i.e. someone who is capable of critically reflecting on the relationship between two cultures.

“Teaching English to Young Learners: Integrating Culture and Language Teaching” is a publication based on papers presented at the 3rd international conference with the same title, held at the Faculty of Education in Jagodina, University of Kragujevac, Serbia, on 1–2 June 2012. The articles in this volume deal with the issue of culture integration in Serbian primary English language classrooms and aim to contribute to better understanding and a more effective connection between foreign language teaching principles and the principles of teaching culture to young learners. Since it is almost impossible to come up with a single solution for culture integration into the EFL classroom, the papers in this book highlight,

from different perspectives, that language has a crucial role in recognizing one's own cultural identity, and that comprehension of the meanings it transmits is closely connected to the comprehension of a particular culture. The volume attempts to shed more light on these significant issues, approaching them from both theoretical and practical standpoints.

The publication is the result of teaching experience and research in young learner EFL classrooms in Serbia and the articles address the issue of English language teaching/learning, while tackling the problem of culture integration and giving some ideas of how this can be achieved in practice through classroom activities intended to promote and improve the intercultural competence of young learners. Some of the authors address the issues of culture and language integration in a more theoretical way: intercultural approach in teaching young learners (Biljana Radić-Bojanić), cultural pluralism, multiculturalism and intercultural awareness (Ivana Bančević Pejović), raising culture awareness by using storytelling (Marijana Matić and Vera Savić), cultural content in EFL books (Nenad Tomović), and psychological and social aspects of culture taught through foreign language (Nadežda Stojković and Slađana Živković). Several papers present research findings: teaching gender equality in the primary classroom (Danijela Prošić-Santovac), studying the interrogative intonation of Serbian EFL students (Biljana Pršić), the CLIL initiative in Vojvodina (Tatjana Glušac and Jelena Mazurkiević), teaching English in a mixed-ability class with the use of adjusted teaching materials (Biljana Petrović) and raising the quality of inclusion in such mixed classes (Velinka Vujinović and Jelena Mazurkiević). Furthermore, some authors offer practical tips for successful culture and language integration through using proverbs (Gordana Ljubičić), ideas and suggestions to bring content areas in English into the classroom (Nina Lauder) and practical examples of classroom activities based on the Native American cultural heritage (Ana Kocić and Ivana Ćirković Miladinović). It is the editors' hope that the publication of this Book of Conference Proceedings will familiarize a wider circle of experts in this area with the issue of culture integration in the EFL classroom and encourage further research in this field.

## Intercultural Approach in Teaching Young Learners<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** The paper will first attempt to demonstrate the importance of the intercultural approach in English language teaching, since raising intercultural awareness implies the development of skills for successful communication, i.e. competent and peaceful interaction with people who are different from us. Furthermore, it aids the growth of tolerance for differences, because communication with and about people from different backgrounds enables pupils to learn more about them and their way of life, their values, history and customs, which in turn increases understanding and empathy. Even though these goals might seem too ambitious for the age group of young learners, this paper will also show and illustrate how a variety of exercises, whose primary goal is raising intercultural awareness, can simultaneously be used to teach grammar or vocabulary. In other words, cultural and intercultural content does not have to be taught explicitly but, instead, can be incorporated in and integrated with teaching language content. This way, pupils are exposed to the kind of information that raises their intercultural awareness and, at the same time, allows teachers to contextualize grammar and/or vocabulary appropriate for the age and level of pupils they teach.

**Key words:** intercultural communication, intercultural competence, young learners, teaching vocabulary, teaching grammar

### 1. Intercultural Communicative Competence

The notion of intercultural communicative competence has been developing since the 1990s. In order to establish effective intercultural communication, one must be able to predict how their interlocutor tends

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to behave and accordingly send appropriate verbal and nonverbal messages. This means that successful communication with the members of different cultural groups requires a certain degree of communicative competence.

There are many approaches to intercultural competence and many opinions on what it is, since it is difficult to recognize the extent to which it is possible to distinguish intercultural competence from intercultural communicative competence.

Basically, intercultural competence can be summarized as the ability to interact successfully across cultures, where 'successfully' refers to social effectiveness (the ability to achieve social goals) and appropriateness (acceptable communication in a context). Intercultural competence involves a change of perspective on self and other, and entails affective and cognitive changes.

There are different theories on what intercultural competence consists of. These theories change depending on the context or one's point of view. According to the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, European Language Portfolio n.d.: 104–105), "intercultural skills and knowledge include the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture in relation with each other; cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures; the capacity to fulfill the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations; the ability to overcome stereotyped relationships."

According to Byram et al. (2001), the components of intercultural competence are knowledge, skills, and attitudes, supplemented by values that are part of one's multiple social identities. This model of intercultural competence consists of:

- attitudes and values (*savoir être*), which form the foundation of intercultural competence. They represent an affective capacity to suspend ethnocentric attitudes towards and perceptions of others and their cultures, and a cognitive ability to decenter, develop and maintain intercultural relations. This component represents the ability to relativize one's own values, beliefs, and behaviors, recognition of cultural differences, their acceptance as possible and correct, and the maintenance of a positive attitude towards them.



- knowledge (*savoirs*), not primarily the knowledge of a particular objective culture, but rather subjective culture, which gives the direct insight into the worldview, functioning, processes, and practices of different cultural groups in intercultural interaction.
- skills: (1) skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), or the ability to interpret events from another culture, to explain and relate them to events from one's own culture; (2) skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), or the ability to gain new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices, to combine and use knowledge, attitudes, and skills in communication and interaction; (3) critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*), which deals with the awareness of one's own and other's values and their mutual influence as well as the ability to evaluate critically practices and products in one's own and other's culture.

Therefore, an inter-culturally competent communicator possesses the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately in diverse cultural contexts.

Whereas some researchers maintain that intercultural communicative competence is just a part of intercultural competence, as well as believe that it is a component of communicative competence, other researchers tend to define it as a distinctive competence. According to them, "intercultural communicative competence is concerned with understanding differences in interactional norms between social groups, so as 'to reconcile or mediate between different modes present in any specific interaction'" (Byram and Fleming 1998: 12). Meyer (1991: 137) defines it as "the ability of a person to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures. Adequacy and adaptability imply an awareness of the cultural differences between one's own and the foreign culture and the ability to handle cross-cultural problems."

Raising awareness of the nature of intercultural interaction, as well as developing skills and competences that can help investigate different beliefs, values, cultural differences and practices, seem to be an efficient way to avoid cultural misunderstandings and breakdowns.

Intercultural communicative competence is a learnt state, based on the motivation, knowledge and skills needed for the understanding and acceptance of diverse cultural norms, values and underlying cultural assump-

tions, as well as communicating effectively across cultures. Therefore, intercultural communicative competence generally focuses on language proficiency, cognitive components including cultural knowledge, and ethnocentrism.

Raising awareness of intercultural communicative competence is an efficient way to avoid misunderstandings because of the lack of intercultural awareness. Intercultural communication helps interlocutors reach higher levels of language proficiency since culture affects spoken and written language as dimensions of social interaction. Also, interlocutors can predict where problems might occur during intercultural interaction, and thus, avoid such difficulties.

## **2. From Ethnocentrism to Ethnorelativism**

In intercultural communication, the issue of ethnocentrism is related to the development of intercultural sensitivity, i.e. the ability to experience cultural difference. People can be more, or less, sensitive to cultural difference. Those who are more inter-culturally sensitive can make finer discriminations among cultures. One's ability to see a culturally different person as equally complex to oneself and to take a culturally different perspective makes intercultural communication more successful. Thus, greater intercultural sensitivity creates the potential for increased intercultural communicative competence.

Bennett (2004: 62) has designed the 'Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity' in order to provide an understanding how people develop their ability to interpret and experience cultural difference. Bennett's model is constructed as a continuum, which is divided into two sets of stages: ethnocentric (the stages of reaction to difference) and ethnorelative (the stages of openness to difference), both of which refer to world-view conditions, or orientations.

Ethnocentrism is defined as an assumption that "the worldview of one's own culture is 'central to all reality'" (Bennett 2004: 62). Ethnorelativism is "the experience of one's own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities", and therefore cultural difference is seen as a way of enriching one's own experience of reality and as a means to understand others. The difference is at the center of the development of intercultural sensitivity. Denial is the stage with the

least intercultural sensitivity, while Integration is the one where the highest level is reached.

The underlying assumption of the model is that as one's "experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases" (Prechtel and Davidson Lund 2007: 469). Therefore, Bennett's model can serve as a tool for understanding the shift from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism, and the resulting changes that it assumes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes, i.e. the underlying worldview.

Ultimate ethnocentrism is characterized by *denial* of cultural difference, where one sees one's own culture as the real one and unquestionably true, and one's vision of the world at the center of reality. People at this stage are either unaware of cultural differences or deny their existence, so they tend to use stereotypes to describe others as well as to dehumanize them.

Less extreme is *defense* against cultural differences, characterized by the recognition of the existence of cultural differences. Despite recognition, differences are perceived and evaluated as threatening to one's reality and sense of self. To meet the threat, people at this stage perceive the world divided into 'us' and 'them', denigrate culturally diverse groups as being inferior and by using negative stereotypes, or claim superiority of their own cultural group, where the emphasis is on the positive features of one's own culture.

The last stage of ethnocentrism is *minimization* of cultural differences, characterized by the recognition and acceptance of superficial and insignificant cultural differences based on the assumption of a basic similarity among all human beings. People at this stage trivialize cultural differences believing that common principles guide values and behaviors, and that communication is based on a common and universal set of rules and principles.

Between the stages of minimization and acceptance, there is a change in the attitude towards cultural differences. In ethno-relative stages, differences are not seen as threats but rather as challenges.

The first stage of ethno-relativism is the *acceptance* of cultural differences, characterized by the recognition of cultural differences in behavioral norms and value systems without evaluating those differences as positive or negative. People at this stage are likely to be curious about cul-

tural differences and values of other groups. They are also skillful at identifying how cultural differences operate in a wide range of interactions but without adopting many of the behaviors exhibited by the members of culturally different groups.

*Adaptation* to cultural differences is the stage in which one's worldview is expanded by the addition of a range of values, abilities, and behavioral norms to interact in different cultures as well. People at this stage have the ability to temporarily modify the way they perceive and process reality, shift their cultural frames of reference and change their behavior to conform to different norms in order to interact more effectively across cultures. This shifting cultural frames of reference or looking at the world 'through different eyes' is referred to as empathy, which involves disregarding one's own worldview assumptions and taking another person's perspective in order to understand and be understood across cultural boundaries.

*Integration* is the last stage of openness to cultural differences. People at this stage are able to interpret and evaluate different patterns of behavior and switch styles, i.e. effortlessly adjust their behavior in order to adjust to the culture of the people they interact with. In some cases, individuals at this stage deal with issues related to their own 'constructive marginality', which implies a state of total self-reflective-ness, of not belonging to any culture but being an outsider. Reaching this stage allows the ability to operate within different worldviews.

### **3. Intercultural Learning and Young Learners**

Intercultural encounters offer plenty of opportunities for intercultural learning to take place, with an emphasis on gaining knowledge, acceptance, recognition, and respect for difference. However, the mere interaction between culturally different people and attempts to make them aware of cultural diversity do not instantly lead to tolerance, acceptance, and mutual understanding. Quite the opposite, many people feel incapable of dealing with and unable to interact with, or are even threatened by people from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, intercultural encounters always carry the risk of reinforcing existing stereotypes and prejudices. Therefore, cultural self-awareness is a necessary precondition for intercultural learning, which is based on one's willingness to make an intercultural encounter productive, and attempts to question one's values and interpre-

tations of one's worldview, and aims at deep processes and changes of attitudes and behavior.

According to Bennett (2009: 3), intercultural learning is "acquiring increased awareness of subjective cultural context (worldview), including one's own, and developing greater ability to interact sensitively and competently across cultural contexts as both an immediate and long-term effect of change." Therefore, it focuses on a mutual understanding of differences through intercultural sensitivity and refers to a process of acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and behavior that is in connection with the interaction of people from different cultures.

It is never too early to start developing cultural awareness and intercultural understanding, so the introduction of cultural content into the classrooms of young learners is an advisable step. Cultural diversity is an important concept to grasp during childhood because this understanding will enable children to embrace and value the things that make each person or group of people different. Children notice differences, and taking time to teach what is important to each culture can help foster acceptance and understanding (Johnson 2009).

Authors like Tillman and Belgrave (2001) and Mayesky (2008) suggest specific steps and procedures that should be incorporated into the teaching process with the aim of increasing cultural understanding, empathy, respect and compassion. They are planned out and implemented both at the level of a school and at the level of a classroom. The former needs to set a culturally open framework and create a general atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance, which in turn enables the execution of micro tasks in local classroom contexts.

Mayesky (2008) suggests incorporating important elements of cultural celebrations into a foreign language classroom because it is a very practical way to show students what is important to other cultures. Celebrations are an experiential way to teach pupils about the different foods, music, art and songs that have value in different cultures. Pupils are able to learn why cultures behave in certain ways and believe certain things, because they have a chance to actively participate in the celebration. Gordon (2007: 154) explains this by saying that "learning about ethnic holidays is one of the very first steps children can make in their attempt to understand diversity. Holiday celebrations are particularly effective in working with young children, because ethnic festivals tend to be enjoyed by immi-

grant families, and because it is a cultural attribute that even very young children tend to remember and understand.”

Furthermore, Tillman and Belgrave (2001) advise that teachers incorporate the arts into the foreign language classroom, because in that way children can increase their understanding about what is important to people of different cultures, while doing creative and fun activities. This includes teaching songs from different cultures and explaining the meaning behind the songs, reading stories from different cultures, learning cultural dances or playing games from other countries. This idea is supported by Gordon (2007: 160), who speaks strongly in favor of multicultural literature: “when reading stories that take place in foreign lands or within diverse cultural communities in the United States, when taking in images of faraway places or neighborhoods other than their own, when enjoying the unique styles of authors and illustrators from different cultures, students get to experience diverse cultures first-hand.”

Gay (2000) suggests using books and videos to help make different cultures come alive for students, especially because of the visual aspect of the input. She asserts that if pupils can visualize how other people live, they are more likely to understand different cultures. Seeing pictures in books or watching documentaries about other groups of people will enable pupils to experience what is significant to cultures other than their own. This is important because increased awareness of different groups of people can help eliminate ethnic stereotypes and lead to greater acceptance.

The things that pupils learn via different input should be additionally processed, according to Tillman and Belgrave (2001), who claim that pupils’ personal reflections contribute to deeper understanding of what they have learnt, thus ensuring that they are able to apply it to their relationships with others.

#### **4. Integrating Teaching Content and Intercultural Activities: an Example**

Gordon (2007: 160) asserts that, “for any cultural input to offer instructional benefits, its language needs to be comprehended and enjoyed by young language learners.” In other words, the material pupils use should have appealing, colorful illustrations that provide visual clues needed for vocabulary comprehension, it should be written in repetitive,

simple expressive language and have an engaging and exciting storyline (Gordon 2007: 161).

This material can be part of pupils' course book or the teacher can bring additional material to class. Because of the high demands that primary school curricula have imposed on the teacher, the best way to exploit cultural input is to integrate it with teaching content that is part of the syllabus. The exercise below will show how additional material can be utilized both for teaching the necessary content (vocabulary or grammar units) and for raising intercultural awareness at the same time. In this particular case the lexical focus is put on daily objects (e.g. clothes) and daily activities (e.g. going to school, doing chores, etc.), whereas the grammatical focus is on present and past tenses, as well as verb + preposition combinations (e.g. concentrate+on, believe+in, marry+no preposition, etc.).

\* \* \*

The teacher starts the lesson by asking pupils if they know of people who live a different kind of life from their own, thus introducing the broad framework of cultural differences. This discussion is a lead-in for the texts that five groups of students will read.

The teacher can shortly explain that the Amish lead a completely different life from the one pupils are used to and then let them read the texts. Besides offering plenty of lexical and grammatical input, which can be either presented for the first time or simply revised, pupils from different groups can shortly tell others what they have found out about one aspect of the Amish life, which can be a fruitful ground for discussion. This part of the exercise should be carefully monitored by the teacher, because pupils might be tempted to revert to stereotypes or mock the Amish lifestyle.

**Amish life**

All aspects of Amish life are dictated by a list of written or oral rules, known as Ordnung. It outlines the basics of the Amish faith and helps to define what it means to be Amish. For an Amish person, the Ordnung may dictate almost every aspect of one's lifestyle, from dress and hair length to buggy style and farming techniques. The Ordnung varies from community to community and order to order, which explains why you will see some Amish riding in automobiles, while others don't even accept the use of battery-powered lights.

### **Amish Clothes**

Amish clothes are a symbol of humility and separation from the world. The Amish wear very simple clothes. Clothing is made at home of plain fabrics and is dark in color. Amish men in general wear simple suits and coats. Young men shave before marriage, while married men let their beards grow. Mustaches are forbidden. Amish women wear solid-color dresses with long sleeves and a long skirt. They never cut their hair, and wear it on the back of the head hidden under a small white cap. Amish women are not allowed to wear jewelry.

### **Technology and the Amish**

The Amish do not like any technology. Electricity, television, automobiles, telephones and tractors are considered to be a temptation. Most Amish farm their fields with horse-drawn machinery, live in houses without electricity, and get around in horse-drawn buggies. Amish communities have telephones, but not in the home. Instead, several Amish families will share a telephone in a wooden little house between farms. Electricity is sometimes used for electric fences for cattle, electric lights on buggies, and heating homes.

### **Amish Schools and Education**

The Amish believe in education, but only provide formal education through the eighth grade and only in their own private schools. One-room Amish schools are private institutions, run by Amish parents. Schooling concentrates on the basic reading, writing, math and geography, along with Amish history and values. Education is also a big part of home life because farming and homemaking skills are an important part of an Amish child's life.

### **Amish Family Life**

The family is the most important thing in the Amish culture. Large families usually have seven to ten children. Chores are clearly divided in the Amish home – the man usually works on the farm, while the wife does the washing, cleaning, cooking, and other household chores. The father is the head of the Amish household. German is spoken in the home, though English is also taught in school. Amish marry Amish, they are not allowed to marry anyone else. Divorce is not allowed either.

The role of the teacher is crucial here because she/he is the one that should provide a link between the pupils' and the Amish lifestyle and, by steering the discussion, raise awareness of the differences, which should not be presented and talked about in any evaluative tone.



## Conclusion

The intercultural approach in English language teaching is of crucial importance since it implies learning skills for successful communication, i.e. competent and peaceful interaction with people who are different from us. This approach aids the development of tolerance for differences, increases understanding and provides a positive milieu for the growth of empathy.

In the classroom context communication with and about people from different backgrounds enables pupils to learn more about them and their way of life, their values, history and customs, which in turn increases understanding and empathy. Even though these goals might seem too ambitious for the age group of young learners, a variety of exercises, whose primary yet implicit goal is raising intercultural awareness, can simultaneously be used to teach grammar or vocabulary. In other words, cultural and intercultural content does not have to be taught explicitly but, instead, can be incorporated in and integrated with teaching language content. This way, pupils are exposed to the kind of information that raises their intercultural awareness and, at the same time, allows teachers to contextualize grammar and/or vocabulary appropriate for the age and level of pupils they teach.

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## Cultural Pluralism, Multiculturalism and Intercultural Awareness in Teyl the Eyes of the Same Colour

**Abstract:** The paper endeavors to apply the idea of *cultural pluralism*, as famous American pedagogue Neil Postman sees it, in the context of the Serbian school system, especially in teaching English to young learners. In his book *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School*, published in 1995, Neil Postman defines the term as following: "Cultural pluralism is a seventy-year-old idea whose purpose is to enlarge and enrich the American Creed – specifically to show the young how their tribal identities and narratives fit into a more inclusive and comprehensive American story." Incorporating all cultural experiences in a class, instead of forcing a dominating one upon all the students will be the leading idea of the paper. Yet the paper will discuss many challenges that an English teacher in Serbia is confronted with. First of all, teaching English is often perceived as a form of colonization, and in our country, as a consequence of political conditions (NATO bombing above all), English teachers are often charged with being distributors of intruding foreign ideas. In addition to these accusations drawn upon English teachers by globalization, there are always present ambiguities regarding the task of a teacher: since Socrates teachers have been blamed for corrupting the youth.

**Key words:** Cultural pluralism, multiculturalism, critical pedagogy, transgression, creativity

The subtitle of the paper (The Eyes of the Same Colour) is taken from the book *How to Talk So Kids Can Learn* written in 1995 by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish and stands for equal treatment of children as inner motivation of the children. A teacher tells a class about research that proves that

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children with brown eyes are more intelligent than the children with blue eyes. On that day, brown-eyed children were more successful than the blue-eyed children. The following day the teacher tells the children that he had made a mistake and that the research showed the opposite. On that day blue-eyed children accomplished more (see: Fejber, Mazliš 2011: 212–213). The first demand of a teacher is that he/she treats all children equally, yet not in the same way. For every child has to have equal opportunities to actualize him/herself, while at the same time he/she has special needs, different problems, and tries to cope with a different personality... Thus, for a teacher to accomplish his/her mission he/she has to overcome the apparent paradox of the vocation – to treat all the children equally in order not to underestimate some, and to give special attention to all the children's demands (springing from both their cultural and psychological background), because there is always a reason standing behind all those demands. As stated above, even books from popular psychology take into account the negative impact of the projection of an image given to a student as a role he/she has to fit in by his/her teacher. The paper attempts to make teachers realize and become more conscious of the different backgrounds their students come from; English teachers especially because they have to incorporate one additional culture, the culture of the subject interwoven in grammar, dialogues, texts they have to teach from the books of mostly English publishers, and the way of thinking, into the lesson. By overcoming bias that puts one in a prescribed role, to which teachers like all human beings succumb to, influenced by the media as well as by their fellow colleagues, teachers make their class a more comfortable environment where true learning, when both students and teacher learn, can take place.

The categories mentioned above are all anticipated in our educational system: assumed and presumed in a democratic classroom, but I do not think that they are transparent enough. In order for our minds to grasp their importance we need to define our terms more closely, in the tradition of critical pedagogies taking place in the United States, as part of the counter-cultural movement, encouraged by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, and found in the works of Neil Postman, Bell Hooks and Peter McLaren. Although not originally from the USA they found their true implementation there because of America's class and racial differences. This approach is applicable here as well, because in Serbia we also have class and racial inequality. In addition, we are confused about the picture of

ourselves that we want to send to the world, meaning that we are not sure if we want to preserve our culture, which elements to keep, or whether we should change them all to fit in a globalizing world. And all these ambiguities are reflected in our educational system, which is inseparable from its socio-political conditions. For that purpose it is important to draw a distinction between the terms cultural pluralism and multiculturalism. The views on this subject by Edward Said, Neil Postman, Peter McLaren, and Tariq Ali will provide the framework for defining these terms. Thus, in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, while discussing education in the U. S., Said questions the concept of multiculturalism. He points out that multiculturalism has become a stronghold of politics of separatism, and urges for alternatives:

The major task, then, is to match the new economic and socio-political dislocations and configurations of our time with the startling realities of human interdependence on a world scale. If the Japanese, East European, Islamic, and Western instances express anything in common, it is that a new critical consciousness is needed, and this can be achieved only by revised attitudes to education. Merely to urge students to insist on one's own identity, history, tradition, uniqueness may initially get them to name their basic requirements for democracy and for the right to an assured, decently human existence. But we need to go on and situate this in a geography of other identities, peoples, cultures, and then to study how despite their differences, they have always overlapped one another, through unhierarchical influence, crossing, incorporation, recollection, deliberate forgetfulness, and, of course, conflict. We are nowhere near "the end of history", but we are still far from free from monopolizing attitudes toward it. These have not been much good in the past – notwithstanding the rallying cries of the politics of separatists identity, multiculturalism, minority discourse – and the quicker we teach ourselves to find alternatives, the better and safer" (Said 1994: 278–279).

His book was first published in 1993. Two years later, in 1995, in the book *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School*, Neil Postman also found the alternative in cultural pluralism. "Cultural pluralism is a seventy-year-old idea whose purpose is to enlarge and enrich the American Creed-specifically, to show the young how their tribal identities and narratives fit into a more inclusive and comprehensive American story" (Postman 1996: 50). In the same year Peter McLaren published *Critical Peda-*

*gogy and Predatory Culture, Oppositional Politics in Postmodern Era*. There he argues on behalf of critical pluralism or as he calls it critical and resistance multiculturalism, “distinct from conservative or corporate multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism and left-liberal multiculturalism” (McLaren 1995: 119–125). According to him “resistance multiculturalism refuses to see culture as non – conflictual, harmonious and consensual. (...) [It] doesn’t see diversity itself as a goal but rather argues that diversity must be affirmed within a politics of cultural criticism and a commitment to social justice” (McLaren 1995: 126). In support of their alternative, in an interview in 2011, while addressing the protests of the Arab world in North Africa, Tariq Ali also spoke of multiculturalism as an instrument for disguising imperialistic intentions.<sup>2</sup> The point is that we should not let ‘melting pot’ happen in our classroom, disperse all various identities of our students for the cause of a dominating one. If we bear in mind the aforementioned distinction as well as the postulates of critical pedagogy we inherited from Freire that Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Freire 2006: 34), we cannot overlook the burden the task of teacher sustains.

Applied to teaching English to young learners in Serbia, this means that we, teachers, should not try to present English games, stories and songs as exclusive in our classroom. Firstly, they should always be presented in comparison with our games, stories and songs, and the teacher should always be acquainted with similar activities of various ethnic groups in the region and in other countries all over the world. There should always be time for playing games, stories and singing songs in different versions. For example people in Serbia celebrate White Sunday (“Bele poklade”) when children make masks and go from door to door collecting candies (it used to be eggs, apples, dried fruit...). In English speaking countries they celebrate Halloween in the similar way, and in Mexico they celebrate the Day of the Dead. Yet the reasons for celebration are different, springing from differences in relig-

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<sup>2</sup> Ali, T. (2011). “Demokratija i kapitalizam”, interview by Vladimir Tasić in: *Vreme*. Available at: <http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=976978>, Retrieved on: 26 February 2011.

ion. If we discuss that, it would be more than valuable for children to give themselves a place in a globalizing world, sharing the similar customs, yet at the same time acknowledging their own beliefs as being equally valid as well. Also, children acquire the notion of the world that surrounds them. When I say this I have in mind John Gatto's "Teacher of the Year Acceptance Speech" (1990) and his notions on the interrelation between school and social crisis:

This is a time of great school crisis and that crisis is interlinked with a greater social crisis in the general community. We seem to have lost our identity. Children and old people are penned up and locked away from the business of the world to a degree without precedent — nobody talks to them anymore and without children and old people mixing in daily life a community has no future and no past, only a continuous present. In fact, the name "community" hardly applies to the way we interact with each other. We live in networks, not communities, and everyone I know is lonely because of that. In some strange way school is a major actor in this tragedy just as it is a major actor in the widening guilt among social classes. Using school as a sorting mechanism we appear to be on the way to creating a caste system, complete with untouchables who wander through subway trains begging and sleep on the streets (Gatto, 1990, <http://www.home-ed.vic.edu.au/2002/02/26/john-gatto-teacher-of-the-year-acceptance-speech/>, retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup>, May 2012).

Thus Said's demand for "situating one's own tradition in geography of other identities, peoples and cultures" is fulfilled.

Secondly, the teacher should never skip discussing if the students liked the game/activity and why children from places where the games are originally played like them. Teachers should always encourage their students to state their opinion and to discuss why it is important to play that game, or act out the story, or sing the song, what they are learning and what skills they are improving (both social and technical). Also, the teacher should always ask children which activity students prefer to do (choosing between two or three) and let a student who is not in the mood for the chosen activity to do something for him/herself, like making up his/her own song, story or a game to be played next time. Thus Said's call for insisting one's own uniqueness and one's own identity would be accomplished, and on a higher level it would show them the way to acquire their "basic requirements for democracy and for the right to an assured,

decently human existence” later in life. Also, I will mention John Gatto’s speech again where he stresses the same postulates:

Right now we are taking all the time from our children that they need to develop self-knowledge. That has to stop. We have to invent school experiences that give a lot of that time back, we need to trust children from a very early age with independent study, perhaps arranged in school but which takes place away from the institutional setting. We need to invent curriculum where each kid has a chance to develop private uniqueness and self-reliance (Gatto, 1990, <http://www.home-ed.vic.edu.au/2002/02/26/john-gatto-teacher-of-the-year-acceptance-speech/>, retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup>, May 2012).

Despite four years training at university, and five years experience as a teacher, I could never ascertain why Roma children at first and second grade, when we only learn songs and chants, act out stories, and play oral games, got excellent marks but later used to fail English by a huge percentage. Prejudiced answers, such as that they were lazy and less intelligent did not satisfy me. I knew that some of them were forced to work at early age, and some who were excellent students. Postgraduate studies made me aware of the different type of culture they belonged to (we did not learn during the *compulsory* school curriculum about the life and tradition of our Roma friends with whom we shared the classroom. The school system tried and is still trying to assimilate them, while globalization is trying to assimilate differences, and we, teachers, are trying to make all students fit into an imaginary model of a quiet, obedient, always-prepared student). However, it was not until I heard it from an oppressed voice, not until I read Bell Hooks, a black woman educator, that I realized we should incorporate different cultural experiences in the classroom instead of assimilating them. I was surprised to learn that a black woman thinks that segregation was better. In her book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* she confesses:

... my all-black grade schools became the location where I experienced learning as revolution.

Almost all our teachers (...) were black women. They were committed to nurturing intellect so that we could become scholars, thinkers, and cultural workers – black folks who used our “minds”. We learned early that our devotion to learning, to a life of the mind, was a counter-hegemonic



act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of White racist colonization. Though they did not define or articulate these practices in theoretical terms, my teachers were enacting a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance that was profoundly anti-colonial. Within these segregated schools, Black children who were deemed exceptional, gifted, were given special care. Teachers worked with and for us to ensure that we would fulfill our intellectual destiny and by doing so uplifted the race. My teachers were on a mission.

To fulfill that mission, my teachers made sure they “knew” us.

(...)

School changed utterly with racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds (...). Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved. (...) Bussed to white schools, we soon learned that obedience, not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us” (Hooks 1994: 2–3).

That made me question our good intentions and I started wondering if we were really doing a favour to our students in wanting a certain, predictable type of behavior and knowledge from them, bereft of any imagination, succumbing only to memorizing. Having in mind Freire’s words on education made me ask the same thing that people in the USA had started asking themselves<sup>3</sup>.

All mentioned critical pedagogues speak on behalf of the manifold humankind, forced by experience to take a stance oppositional to the dominant mainstream *predatory* culture that has, as Peter McLaren put it “blinded [people] to the ways in which dominant social order continues to shut the colonized out of history – even in this so called era of interculturalism and growth of poly-ethnic and poly-lingual communities” (McLaren 1995: 10). McLaren’s book is on pedagogy, and throughout it he urges teachers to incorporate into their activities the personal experience of their students, severed from representation in the curriculum, subjugated, he claims, to the laws of market and economy. It exemplifies what he considers to be “pedagogy for liberation” which refuses to adopt the perspective imposed by dominant culture and succeeds, magnificently, in escaping cultural invisibility and assimilation (McLaren 1995: 83). All the other books promote this liberating type of school. They were published in the last decade of the last century. Maybe we missed them be-

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<sup>3</sup> see the video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKOD1YkHRwk&lr=1>

cause we were occupied with so many wars going on in our own country, yet it is about time, at least for us teachers of English (since we are often accused of integrating foreign ideas into the minds of our students), to start challenging these accusations by incorporating the liberating concepts of critical pedagogy. As already mentioned, Gatto said: “Experts in education have never been right, their “solutions” are expensive, self-serving, and always involve further centralization. Enough. Time for a return to Democracy, Individuality, and Family. I’ve said my piece” (Gatto 1990).

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## Storytelling as a Means of Raising Culture Awareness in ELT

**Abstract:** The role of English as an international language of communication in the modern technological world poses special demands on the EFL teacher. This is especially true for teachers of young learners. This paper discusses the notion of culture in EFL, its importance and position in the EFL classroom and offers examples and research data on why and how storytelling can be used for raising cultural awareness in the young learners' EFL classroom today.

**Key words:** culture, ELT, storytelling, young learners, cultural awareness

### 1. Introduction

As English becomes more and more the language for international relations and communication, and a common language in many spheres of life and science, the role of the English teacher and teaching itself need to change, in order to adjust to the modern global needs of learners. The author of this paper truly believes that the aim of ELT nowadays must be to equip the pupils with a ticket to the global community; the immediate consequence being that teaching in such a case, although it encompasses them, goes far beyond dictations, grammar drills and tests.

Teaching English as a foreign language to young learners, in turn, means taking into consideration children's cognitive level of development, interests, knowledge of the world and the basic presumptions of teaching a foreign language. Teaching culture as an integrative part of EFL, and using it as a tool for better contextualization of linguistic units, speaks for itself.

The aim of this paper is to show why and how teaching stories in EFL can be a useful tool for raising cultural awareness especially in the case of young learners.

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## **2. Basic assumptions**

### **2.1. What is meant by 'Culture'? A Working Definition for ELT**

The term 'culture', as the Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus defines it, refers to the total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitute the shared basis of social action. This system is acquired socially and organized in our minds in culture specific ways forming a framework, which largely determines the way we perceive and define the world around us (Alptekin, 1993). Based on Adaskou et al. (1990), it is possible to divide 'culture' into three different subcategories for the purposes of language teaching. These are the following:

- Culture in the aesthetic sense involves literature, music, films and the fine arts.
- Culture in the sociological sense refers to the way of life in the target community. This category includes the structure of different institutions from the national health system to the family, and the interpersonal relations at home, at work, and during free time activities.
- Culture in the pragmatic sense is the third category. It refers to the social skills, which make it possible for learners to communicate successfully with other members of the target language community according to setting, audience, purpose and genre. The above categories are useful for our purposes because they incorporate topics, which are normally dealt with in general English language courses. The relative importance of such culture-related topics may of course vary according to the aims of the courses.

### **2.2. Opposing Views on the Cultural Content of EFL Courses**

In literature, one can find two widespread, opposing views regarding the relationship between culture and ELT. These are the following:

- Culture and language are inseparable, therefore, English cannot be taught without its culture (or, given the geographical position of English, cultures).
- English teaching should be carried out independently of its cultural context. Instead, contexts familiar to the students should be used.

It is important to note that both views support the inclusion of cultural elements in the English language course. The second statement, as well as the first one, assumes that language cannot be separated from the larger contexts in which it is used, and that these contexts are determined, among other variables, by the cultural background of the participants. The question, then, is not whether to include cultural elements in the teaching of English. Actually, the question is which culture or cultures should receive focus and how this should be done. In order to be able to deal with the above statements, it is necessary to take into account relevant arguments and counter arguments.

It is considered that children acquire the formal properties of their native language (i. e. its semantic and syntactic systems) simultaneously with their cultural knowledge. The situation is different in the case of foreign language learning in that the learners are already culturally and linguistically competent members of one community, and they aim to acquire the language code of another community (Widdowson, 1990). The assumption that children acquire their first language together with cultural background knowledge may lead to the belief that no language, be it second or foreign, can be learnt separately from the culture to which it belongs (see also Šafranĵ, 2006). Indeed, many native and non-native EFL teachers, and other members of the academic community, assume that it is virtually impossible to teach the target language without teaching the target culture (Byram, 1986; Jiang, 2000). Otherwise, the learners will be exposed to an empty frame of language. Another argument for tying language and its culture together for teaching purposes relates to motivation.

Gardner and Lambert's classical study (1972) introduced the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation and claims that students with motives to integrate in the target community can be more successful in second language learning situations. Although other studies question the application of this claim in foreign language learning situations (Dörnyei, 1994), it still remains a general assumption that a successful language learner is one who has a positive attitude towards the target culture (Svanes, 1988; Prodromou, 1992). Looking at the question from another point of view, publishing language course books focusing on the target culture is cost-effective because such a decision makes it possible for learners from different societies to make use of the same materials. Also,

for native speaker textbook writers it may be hard to develop materials focusing on cultures other than their own.

However, there seem to be some problems with treating English and its culture as inseparable. Firstly, the use of target culture elements in the process of ELT encourages a view, which equates English with the ways it is used by native speakers. Such a view leads to the assumption that native speakers are not only representatives but also the only owners of the language (Alptekin, 1993: 140)(Barwise, 2006, p. 132). Some experts believe that this approach strongly relates to the idea of a national language being a requirement for a national state, a powerful idea in the 20th century. Also, the model of dividing English speakers into three groups (first language, second language and foreign language speakers) stems from this approach. It must be seen, however, that this model, although a very useful starting point, will not be the most helpful one for describing the use of English worldwide in the 21st century. This is because English as the second language and foreign language speakers outnumber the first language users, and it is logical to assume that the global future of English will be determined by second and foreign language speakers (Graddol, 1997). Secondly, English already represents many cultures. First language speakers live, mostly, in countries in which the dominant culture is centred on English. As an example, this is the case in Great Britain, the USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. But the fact that the first language of most people in these countries is English does not mean that there are no cultural differences. Then, which culture should be tied to the English language teaching? In a second language learning situation it may seem reasonable to focus on the culture of the target community in the given country. But what should we do in a foreign language learning situation? Should we focus on all cultures? That might be impossible. Should we focus on a few or one of them? But how should we choose? Instead of trying to answer the above questions, perhaps it is more useful to accept that 'English [as indeed any other language] can be used by anyone as a means to express any cultural heritage and any value system (Smith, 1987: 3). It follows from this argument that the teaching of English does not need to focus exclusively on the target culture or cultures. Thirdly, there are indications that some ELT course books focusing on the target culture have an alienating effect on students who do not want to be culturally assimilated and, as a consequence, give up learning the language (Gray,

2000). On the other hand, it is not uncommon for many students to become alienated from their own social and cultural settings as they become adjusted to the value system of the Anglo-American world. Many educators in Asian and African countries have expressed their concern for the status of their native culture and language in relation to the cultural content of ELT materials developed for global use (*ibid.*).

These problems with the cultural influence of English on other societies have led to the suggestion that an ideologically, politically and culturally neutral form of English should be promoted in ELT. It is argued that English, as an international language utilised for communication purposes would make it possible for nonnative speakers to retain their own cultural characteristics as much as possible (Jenkins, 2000). Another suggestion is that, instead of focusing entirely on the culture of the target language, it is more beneficial to take a cross-cultural approach to EFL teaching. According to Prodromou (1992), for example, the development of students' cross-cultural awareness is of vital importance because in this way they will become more sensitive to the world's many cultural systems and will care more about the world they live in.

### 2.3. Teaching English as a foreign language to young learners

As Cameron (2001) points out, children learning a foreign language bring their experience of acquiring the mother tongue, their knowledge of the world and their cognitive level of development (see also Moon, 2000) into EFL. The characteristics of young learners are now generally known. Among them are: short attention span; the natural young learners' urge to play and experiment with words in their mother tongue; love for stories; and being kinaesthetic learners. Young learners are truly a specific age group- impulsive, social, spontaneous, inquisitive; they like to be entertained and crave for love.

As a consequence of all of the above, their cognitive development and learning styles, it is suggested that the teacher should take a more holistic approach (Cameron, 2001) to teaching language to young learners in a more contextualized manner rather, than as a list of grammatical patterns and vocabulary groups.

*The role of stories in teaching English as a foreign language*

The benefits of using stories in foreign language teaching and learning are also widely known. As stories play an important part in the everyday lives of young learners in their L1, it seems logical to use them in EFL. Not only do they provide a framework which is already familiar to young learners but they also provide authentic context and show that language, foreign languages included, is used for communication. Linguistically speaking stories have a lot of repetition within the text, which is very useful for fostering desired grammatical structures, chunks or functions. Being interesting to children they can be re-told over and over again and thus provide additional practice in a non-threatening, non-drill manner. Furthermore, stories give both learners and teachers opportunities to explore, repeat and re-structure the material in a personalized way.

As the stories also bring the elements of culture into the classroom, they help learners establish personal relationships through foreign language and enable them to appreciate other peoples and cultures (Šafranĳ, 2006). It has also been proven that until the age of 10, learners can accept other cultures without prejudice; they are open to anything which is different and they do so without judgement (ibid). All these facts speak in favour of using stories as a means of raising cultural awareness. The ultimate goal of such learning is that being able to work and communicate with people from different backgrounds and different cultures is essential in today`s world. A global skills set in turn ensures a bright future and an interesting and more enriching life path.

As Maticĳ found out in her survey (2012) Serbian young learners aged 9–11 are keen on learning English through stories in their classrooms in state schools in Serbia. The survey, which included about 1300 pupils from different areas of Serbia, has shown that young learners of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade in Serbia enjoy by far learning English through stories, whether these come from textbooks, teachers` own material, or additional video material provided in course book packs. The focus group discussions also provide evidence for these learners` interest in learning through stories, their interest in English speaking culture(s), and having the opportunity to use English language with different non-native speakers. The young learners proved to be aware of the fact that English is an international language of communication.



Despite differences in opinions of what is considered to be the English culture to be taught to all learners, young learners included, it has been established that in order to study a culture and its society a researcher needs to become familiar with the field, and search for answers to questions such as: what people mostly talk about, what they appreciate the most, who are the national heroes, taboos, gods and goddesses, fairytales and folk tales, what is considered to be fair and what isn't, what is funny and what not, how important different games are for them and similar (Šafranĳ, 2006).

Starting from there and using the power of stories as a tool of raising interest in EFL, improving motivation and cultural awareness at the same time the author truly believes it is possible to not only raise the culture awareness of young learners but also start equipping them with the communications skills in a foreign language necessary and useful for 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## Developing Intercultural Literacy in the Young Learner Classroom

**Summary:** The paper looks at the concepts and procedures of developing intercultural literacy in teaching English to young learners (TEYL). First, it defines the role of culture in language teaching, then it discusses the elements of developing intercultural competence/literacy, and finally it explores the conditions of developing intercultural literacy through storytelling. The main aim of the paper is to raise teachers' awareness of the need to develop intercultural literacy in teaching a foreign language to young learners and to give suggestions of possible paths (choice of appropriate cultural topics, materials, activities, communication contexts) to meeting the requirements of the Serbian primary curriculum in this respect.

**Key words:** TEYL, young learners, intercultural competence/literacy, cultural topics, cultural materials, storytelling

### 1. Introduction

In today's increasingly globalised world people have more and more opportunities to engage in communication with speakers from other cultures. Successful communication in such circumstances depends both on the linguistic and intercultural competences of the participants. It is widely accepted that language and culture are inseparably interrelated in a number of ways (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002; Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010; Hinkel, 2001; McKay, 2001). This has had very important implications for foreign language teaching: it has led to the idea that a language cannot be taught without culture, and that "if language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language

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teaching” (Kramsch, 1993, 8, in McKay, 2001, 329). Since “culture determines the way we interpret the world”, then language expresses this interpretation and allows language learners to have experiences they would not have in their own culture (Coyle, Hood & Marsh 2010, 39).

The importance of developing intercultural dimension in language teaching is pointed out by the *Common European Framework* (CEF), a document issued by the Council of Europe with the aim “to improve the quality of communication among Europeans of different languages and cultural backgrounds” (CEF, 2002, xi). The document states that one of the main aims of foreign language teaching today is “to promote mutual understanding and tolerance, respect for identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication” and to develop learners’ ability “to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries” (ibid, 3). General competences listed in the document include declarative knowledge, such as knowledge of the world, then socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. Specific socio-cultural knowledge should relate to everyday living, living conditions, interpersonal relations, values, beliefs and attitudes, body language, social conventions and ritual behaviour, while intercultural awareness involves knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation between the native culture and the foreign language/target language culture (ibid, 101–104).

To understand fully the role of culture in language learning, the answers to the following questions are needed: first, what should development of intercultural competence involve; and second, how can intercultural competence be developed and assessed in a foreign language classroom?

## **2. Intercultural literacy and language learning**

### **2.1. Defining intercultural literacy**

Culture can be defined as “integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations” (US National Centre for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University, 2000, in Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). It stems from the definition that language is

culture. As a consequence, through the study of a foreign language, students learn about cultures that use that language.

“Cultural patterns, customs, and ways of life are expressed in language: culture specific world views are reflected in language ... [L]anguage and culture interact so that world views among cultures differ, and that language used to express that world may be relative and specific to that view” (Brown 1980, 130 in Coyle, Hood & Marsh 2010, 39).

Petersen and Coltrane (2003) argue that “students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs”. Research (e.g. Genc and Bada, 2005) indicates that a lack of cultural knowledge of both the native culture and the target culture contributes to poor learning outcomes for EFL learners. This is particularly true for communication with native speakers and for communicating meaning to native speakers.

The concept of ‘culture’ in language teaching changed in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century “from emphasis on literature, the arts and philosophy to culture as a shared way of life” (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002, 9). As a consequence, language teaching should help learners achieve both linguistic competence and intercultural competence; the former is necessary for communicating correctly and appropriately in a foreign language, while the latter facilitates understanding in interacting with people from other cultures, avoiding stereotyping and accepting them as individuals with distinctive perspectives, values and behaviours (ibid, 10).

Intercultural literacy is a concept related to cross-cultural engagement and it involves the understanding, competence, attitudes, language proficiency, participation, and identities necessary for successful living and working in a cross-cultural setting (Heyward, 2002, 10). Learners should be supported in developing intercultural literacy so that they can understand how culture(s) feel, develop empathy, tolerance and respect for integrity of culture(s), and achieve language proficiencies for successful intercultural communication (ibid, 16–17).

Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002, 11–13) argue that intercultural competence is a developing concept that involves knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Attitudes make the foundation and include curiosity, openness, and readiness to accept other cultures as valid and to see one’s own culture from the foreigner’s point of view; knowledge is not only

knowledge about other cultures, but also knowledge about intercultural interaction and its importance for personal growth. The authors propose two groups of skills that should be developed: skills of comparison, interpreting and relating, which help learners predict misunderstandings and resolve them, and skills of discovery and interaction, which enable learners to acquire new knowledge of a culture. According to the authors, learners should be aware of their own values and should become able to critically evaluate both their own perspectives and practices and those of people from other cultures, while language teachers should help learners develop intercultural skills by making “values explicit and conscious in any evaluative response to others” (ibid, 13).

Likewise, Kramsch (1993, 8, in McKay, 2001, 329) argues that the goal of cultural learning is to enable learners to see their own culture in relation to other cultures and thus develop cross-cultural understanding. Understanding socio-cultural expectations can help language learners achieve successful communication in a target language community.

The role of a language teacher, then, is to reinforce awareness of cultural aspects by incorporating real life situations that would motivate and engage learners in purposeful communication. This task involves a careful choice of topics, activities, materials and assessment procedures.

## 2.2. Developing intercultural literacy in a language classroom

Developing intercultural competence in language classes can be facilitated through a series of activities in which learners first discuss their own experiences with a target language culture on the basis of listening or reading about it, and then compare the target language culture with their own. This requires critical thinking and thus facilitates learners’ general academic development. A useful method is experiential learning through simulations and role plays in which learners’ schemata and background knowledge are activated, resulting in cultural behaviour that prepares learners for real intercultural communication (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002, 14).

The topics and situations should match learners’ language level and intellectual development, and can serve for covering cross-curricular themes (ibid, 15). Cultural topics that are of high interest to learners should be covered, like food, music, dance, holiday celebrations and festivals, current events, literature, politeness (Pursley, 2009), home, school, tourism and

leisure (Byram 2002, 21). Byram (ibid.) considers that it is crucial “to get learners to compare the theme in a familiar situation with examples from an unfamiliar context” in order to avoid clichéd and stereotypical images of the target culture. Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is an approach to language teaching that lends itself perfectly to developing intercultural competence as it focuses on themes and encourages analysis and comparison of cultural practices and products. Also, grammatical exercises can include examples which will challenge stereotypes related to other cultures, countries and people, both of the target language and of other cultures (ibid, 21).

Materials that can be used for bringing a target culture into the classroom are all sorts of authentic texts, audio and video material, much of which can be found on the Internet. Authentic stories, written for native speakers, can provide contexts that can provoke worthwhile discussion, analysis and comparison. Also, learners can be encouraged to approach textbooks in a critical way.

“It is important to use authentic material but to ensure that learners understand its context and intention. Materials from different origins with different perspectives should be used together to enable learners to compare and to analyse the materials critically. It is more important that learners acquire skills of analysis than factual information” (ibid, 24).

Teaching should enable learners to develop new attitudes, new skills and new critical awareness, while working in groups or doing project work (ibid, 33). One of the most important tasks of the teacher in this respect is to create curiosity, a sense of openness, and learners’ awareness of the “culturally-determined nature of their basis for making judgements”, without criticising them (ibid, 36).

Assessment is a vital component of developing intercultural competence in a foreign/second language classroom. Learners’ intercultural competence/literacy can be evaluated in discussions, cultural projects, role plays (Pursley, 2009) and by using a portfolio (Byram, 2000). Byram (ibid.) argues that cultural knowledge and factual recall are only one aspect of intercultural competence, and that it is crucial to develop students’ ability to see relationships between different cultures, to mediate/interpret these differences for themselves and for other people, and to critically understand their own and other cultures. Byram (ibid.) believes that it is very

difficult “to assess whether students have changed their attitudes, become more tolerant of differences and the unfamiliar”, and suggests portfolio approach as the most appropriate tool for evaluating students’ intercultural competence.

It can be concluded that cultural awareness and knowledge of other cultures should be followed by critical analysis of new concepts and experiences with the target language culture, so that intercultural understanding can be developed as deep learning, necessary for further intercultural experiences in new contexts and for intercultural dialogue as mediation between one’s own and other cultures (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010, 39–40). It is now important to determine what role intercultural literacy plays in a young learner language classroom.

### **3. Young learners and intercultural literacy**

While Piaget views children as active learners and thinkers who construct their own knowledge from working with ideas and objects, socio-cultural theorists emphasize the role of social interaction in constructing language, thinking and culture: Vygotsky stresses the importance of language, social interaction and support by an adult or a sibling/peer who is more knowledgeable, in enhancing children’s learning potential, and Bruner sees language as the most important tool for children’s cognitive development, and points out the crucial role of systematic support in the form of scaffolding for a child’s success in learning (Cameron, 2006, 4–9).

In learning a foreign/second language, children actively try to construct the meaning and are limited by their partial world knowledge; however, the scope of their learning is determined by their language experience – the richer the experience, the more they will probably learn (ibid, 20). To plan developmentally appropriate instruction for young learners (YLS, children aged seven to eleven), teachers should recognise that YLS are going through the stage of concrete operations in which they are learning to apply logical thought to concrete problems, and that they learn best through hands-on concrete experiences, while focusing on meaning and being supported by meaningful context, visual cues and multisensory classroom activities in low-anxiety environment (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010, 5).

As culture is closely related to language, it should be an essential component of foreign language teaching, and teachers should provide rich



experiences with cultural materials and practices in the foreign/second language (ibid: xxi). Theme-based instruction acknowledges the crucial role of culture in language learning. It proposes planning three groups of outcomes: linguistic (related to functional language), subject content (related to the concepts of the wider curriculum) and cultural ones (reflecting the experiences with patterns of thinking and behaviour in a target language community) (ibid, 155). However, Curtain and Dahlberg (ibid.) warn that the relationship between language and culture is so close that it is sometimes difficult to separate them in teaching:

“Such a close relationship can lead to inappropriate assumption that whatever the language is being used, the culture is inevitably being taught. At times, this assumption has resulted in a failure to identify specific cultural outcomes and content for language curriculum. [...] [E]ven though there may be significant overlap between two of these areas, each of them also plays a distinctive and valuable role in instruction that must be planned for separately and carefully” (ibid.).

Obviously, when children are learning a language, there is no automatic learning of culture. And to be able to develop sensitivity to a foreign language culture, children should first be made aware of their native culture. Many young learners first encounter the idea of culture and become aware of cultural differences and similarities when faced with a foreign language culture. They become curious to learn both about their own culture and other people’s culture and to be included in meaningful conversations (Bowies & Gallavan, 2011, 115). It is the teacher’s task to provide appropriate cultural material and cultural context and to create engaging activities that will enhance children’s cultural competence.

Curtain and Dahlberg (ibid, 429) argue that attitudes toward nations and groups perceived as ‘other’ must be developed by the age of ten, when children are in the process of moving from egocentricity to reciprocity and information received before this age is eagerly received. The authors go on to suggest that learners in grades 3–5 become more receptive to information about people who are different from themselves. Moreover, Curtain and Dahlberg (ibid, 434) claim that exposure to a foreign language is a means of developing children’s intercultural competence as children have the opportunity to experience involvement with another culture through a target language and the positive impact of cultural information is en-

hanced when that information is experienced through foreign language and accompanied by experiences in culturally authentic situations. Research findings suggest that children's positive attitudes towards peoples, nations and cultures of the foreign language can, in turn, make foreign language learning more successful (Ioannou-Georgiou, 2010, 23).

Teaching intercultural literacy requires careful planning and preparation by the teacher. Although much of the target culture is taught implicitly, culture needs to be taught intentionally and explicitly to avoid stereotyping. Research shows that although teachers recognise the benefits of integrating cultural contents and developing intercultural literacy in language teaching, they find it very difficult to make culture distinguishable in their lessons or to incorporate it on regular basis (Lucas, 2009; Pursley, 2009). A possible strategy may be to introduce cultural themes that interest young learners, taking care of their language level and intellectual development. Teachers may have to simplify the language to make it comprehensible for their students, and get children to identify similarities and differences between their own and other cultures, ask questions and share their understanding of differences. With beginning learners discussions cannot be very sophisticated, but deeper analysis can be done in later stages of language learning and teachers should return to the same topics with more complex and subtle materials (Byram, 2002, 15). As Byram (*ibid*, 17) puts it, "cultural learning goes on throughout life" in one's native culture, so does the development of intercultural competence.

One of the most effective means for developing intercultural literacy in a YL classroom is storytelling because it is a direct and enjoyable means of communicating cultural ideas and values and giving children cultural experiences similar to experiences of those who live in the target culture (Curtain and Dahlberg, 2010, 72). We will explore how to facilitate development of intercultural literacy through a thematic unit created around an authentic story.

#### **4. Using stories to develop young learners' intercultural literacy**

The main pedagogical value of stories is the fact that the purpose of storytelling is always genuinely communicative (Wajnryb, 1986, in Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010, 72). The benefits of telling a story in teaching a foreign language are manyfold: besides contributing to successful language learning owing to memorable contexts and interesting and enjoyable content,

stories expose children to other cultures and can prepare them for reading authentic literature (Cameron, 2008; Curtain & Dahlberg, 2010; Ellis & Brewster, 2002; Ioannou-Georgiou, 2010; Malkina, 1995; Shin, 2007; Wright, 2009). Stories provide experiences in culturally authentic situations, meet emotional, cognitive and psychological demands of children, and make language learning purposeful, social, supported and enjoyable (Malkina, 1995; Shin, 2007). Moreover, authentic stories (the ones not written for language learning purposes, but for native speakers) expand the classroom world through associations with children's daily life experiences, feelings, memories, cultural and intercultural values, thus offering cultural contexts that attract children's attention and engage them in purposeful communication and discussion (Ioannou-Georgiou, 2010).

It is explicitly stated in the Serbian National Primary Curriculum (2008) that one of the main aims of foreign language teaching from Grade One is understanding other cultures and different traditions. General standards in the Curriculum also state: "Learning a foreign language enables learners to enrich themselves by getting to know other cultures and to develop awareness of the importance of their native language in relation to other languages and cultures. Students develop curiosity, investigative spirit and openness to communication with people who speak different native languages" (Serbian National Primary Curriculum, 2008, 100).

Although the Serbian National Primary Curriculum does not suggest or specify stories to be used with young learners, storytelling can meet many of the above aims and standards and should therefore be part of the English language curriculum for teaching young learners. A story should be carefully chosen to fit a topic suggested by the English YL curriculum for a specific language and intellectual level of the learners. Also, the story should provide a meaningful context for communication, an enjoyable and fun experience, and cultural and intercultural values that extend beyond the classroom world (Ioannou-Georgiou, 2010, 139). It should give children the reason to participate, discuss, analyse and compare their own and foreign cultures.

We will explore the use of the children's story *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* in theme-based instruction with cultural focus.

4.1. Application: *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes*, Eve Sutton (author), Lynley Dodd (illustrator), 2010

The rhyming story *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* was written by New Zealand children's author Eve Sutton and illustrated by Lynley Dodd. The book was first published in 1974, but we here refer to its 2010 edition. The book pictures eight cats, seven of which come from different parts of the world: France, Spain, Japan, Germany (Berlin), Norway, Brazil and Greece. The story can be used "to develop awareness of other cultures and to break down stereotypes and value national identities" (Ellis and Brewster, 2002, 63), as well as to teach the themes of countries (location, national flags, landmarks, national costumes, national dances, national colours, etc.) or domestic animals (cats and their typical features).

The story meets the criteria for successful use in language teaching: it has a lot of repetition that comes naturally in the story, its illustrations are helpful and support understanding, it offers opportunities for children's participation and engagement in the storytelling process, and it is linguistically appropriate for young learners aged nine to eleven, presenting the right balance of known language and new vocabulary (Ioannou-Georgiou, 2010, 143–144). The basic potential of the story lies in the possibility for linguistic development of young learners through frequent repetition of a number of rhyming words (names of countries rhyme with verbs or nouns that describe activities or objects typical of life in that country), functional chunks (for describing places or characters), nouns (names of countries, cities and objects), action verbs (describing typical activities), adjectives (describing physical appearance of characters) and prepositions (describing location).

Most importantly, the story caters to children's interests and has the potential to satisfy their curiosity about other countries and wider world, offering both factual data (names of famous landmarks, like the Eiffel Tower, typical dress or national costumes, climate or music preferences) and the possibility to discuss habits and everyday life in these countries and compare them to children's own experiences. 'My cat' in the story stands for a cat in any country in the world because it has no national features, except that it 'likes to hide in boxes'. It can easily get any traits or habits children feel as representing their own country, region or city, and thus allows them to think about what is a typical and representative value.

The characters of cats (used instead of people), usual pets all over the world, make it easier for children to understand and empathise (with the cat that caught a very bad cold and with the other one that is too fat and got stuck in the doorway), accept and respect (the national costumes/dress and the occasions when they are worn – e.g. kimono or matador's outfit), without judging them.

The activities related to the story will dictate what kind of materials the teacher will use and where the focus of the lesson will be. In the pre-storytelling stage, new vocabulary should be introduced and the cultural focus should lie in factual information related to the seven countries mentioned in the story: names of the countries and capital cities, the colours of national flags, location of each of the countries on the world map, landmarks and habits associated with each of the countries. The activities (see Appendix 1) appropriate for this stage may include describing country location, colouring the flags, brainstorming factual information about the countries and putting it in posters, as well as classifying new vocabulary and guessing country names on the basis of flag description (Ellis and Brewster, 2002, 64–65). The materials will include illustrations from the book, the world map, paper flags to be coloured by children and kept as picture cards.

The while-storytelling stage should engage children in active listening and understanding of the story. To stimulate curiosity and interest, the teacher should let children guess the content of the story only by looking at the book cover. While reading, the teacher should frequently stop and ask comprehension questions to check understanding, and on second or third reading invite children to supply already learnt vocabulary at certain places of the text. The activities may include miming action verbs (flying a plane, playing the violin, marching like a policeman, walking through a narrow doorway, singing and dancing), describing and comparing cats (big, small, fat, slim, tall, short, happy, sad) and their habits, drawing the cats from the story, doing a class survey of likes and dislikes, discussing leisure activities, interests and values in different countries and in children's own country and comparing them without judgement. Children can attempt to read the story with or without help, or just repeat the lines they have memorised. The materials will include illustrations from the book, post-cards from the countries, video material on life in the countries presented in the story, and a class survey grid.

In the post-storytelling stage children's overall understanding of the story and the topics should be checked. Appropriate activities may include making a book about the cats in the story by using children's own illustration that show their impressions of the characters and places from the story (Ellis and Dahlberg, 2002, 66–67), drawing masks of the characters and acting out the story, doing projects on typical food, sports or family life in the countries of the story, writing a postcard from the countries of the story, and creating and acting out dialogues with the characters from the story. Activities like these will engage children actively in culture learning and show how much they have become aware of cultural differences without being judgemental. Moreover, children's critical thinking skills will be enhanced as well as understanding of their own culture. If children express the wish to meet people from the countries in the story or get in contact with peers from other countries, we may conclude that cultural objectives of the lessons based on the story *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* have been fully achieved.

The inquisitive minds of young learners can be activated by using stories which offer interesting cultural content, while the use of appropriate activities and materials can help them develop intercultural awareness, openness, tolerance and acceptance of other ways of behaving and thinking.

## **5. Conclusion**

Developing intercultural literacy in a language classroom is a demanding task for language teachers, but a necessary objective in language teaching today. It becomes more important when teaching young learners, as they have more opportunities in today's globalised world to meet other cultures in real life, either by travelling or moving to other parts of the world, or just by interacting with peers abroad using social networks.

The *Serbian National Primary Curriculum* has rightly recognised the need for developing intercultural understanding, leaving teachers a lot of freedom to choose appropriate topics and materials. A very effective way of developing young learners' intercultural awareness is storytelling and using a series of activities that will engage young learners in active culture learning through the process of simultaneous linguistic development. Authentic stories are great contexts for presenting values and cultural facts of a country, while offering a unique linguistic experience in a joyful way.

It is indisputable that using storytelling and culture-focused activities can foster children's linguistic, social and emotional development, and help them to enhance their own cultural sensitivity through a foreign language.

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**Appendix: Activities for practising cultural literacy with young learners, based on the story *My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes* by Eve Sutton**

<p><b>Cultural literacy in TEYL: <i>My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes</i> by Eve Sutton (choosing, organising and ordering activities)</b></p>	
<p><b>Task 1:</b> In which YL grades can the following activities be used for developing cultural literacy?</p> <p><b>Task 2:</b> What is the appropriate order of the following activities in pre-storytelling, while-storytelling and post-storytelling stages?</p>	
<p>A _____</p> <p>Book-making project: explain to children that they are going to make a cat-shaped book. Each page will feature one of the cats from the story and its country. Pupils can add their own country on page 8. Distribute four sheets of paper to each child and the cat template and instruct pupils to cut round the cat and the folded sheets of paper. Staple the pages together at the fold. The books can include for each country (text and pictures): a description of the cat; the flag; the capital city; a famous landmark; the lines from the story. (based on Ellis and Brewster, 2002)</p>	<p>F _____</p> <p>Stick one set of flags flashcards on the board and play ‘What’s missing’ game: stick the cards on the board, ask children to close their eyes, remove a card, rearrange the other cards and ask: <i>What’s missing?</i> Children look up and the first student who guesses correctly gets to hold the flashcard. Continue until there are only two flashcards left. The winner is the student who has most flashcards. Repeat the procedure with countries name cards, without pictures.</p>

<p>B _____</p> <p>Organizing a competitive group activity: stick on the board two sets of cat pictures/flags and names of countries from the story <i>My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes</i> on two different sides, and individual students representing two groups come to the board to match one pair at a time; the winner is the group that first finishes the activity successfully.</p>	<p>G _____</p> <p>Put the large pictures of cats/flags from the story on the walls, call out the names of countries and ask individual children to point to the right picture.</p> <p>Point to a picture and children say the name of the country in chorus.</p>
<p>C _____</p> <p>Copy the lines from the story onto cards, cut them out into two parts each (country cards and rhyming cards), to make fourteen cards. Divide the class into two groups. Jumble up the cards. Give each pupil in group A a country card and each pupil in group B a rhyming card. Instruct pupils to find their rhyming partner and stand together. Once they all have found their partners, ask them to reconstruct the story and to line up at the front of the class in the sequence of the story. Pupils then 'read back' the story. (based on Ellis and Brewster, 2002)</p>	<p>H _____</p> <p>Distribute copies of the national flags and ask children to follow the key at the top of the worksheet to colour flags. Ask children to cut out their flags and to arrange them in the table in front of them. Call out simple descriptions (e. g. It's green, yellow and blue! Which country?) and ask children to hold up the corresponding flag and say the country.</p> <p>As children gain confidence, ask them to work in pairs, one describing a flag and the other guessing the country. (based on Ellis and Brewster, 2002)</p>
<p>D _____</p> <p>Word/picture web: ask children to brainstorm 'typical' national features they associate with the seven countries in the story (e. g. things like food, climate, famous landmarks, currency, language spoken, capital cities, sports, etc.). Build up words or picture webs</p>	<p>I _____</p> <p>Time capsules: give children the box templates you have prepared; then ask them to cut out the shape and to fold up the sides of the box; after they have made the box, instruct them to draw a picture of a cat and to cut it out; then tell them that their boxes are going to be</p>

<p>for each of the countries and make into posters and display around the class. (based on Ellis and Brewster, 2002)</p>	<p>sent into space for people from other cultures and countries to discover in the future; ask them to think of small objects to put in their boxes that are representative of their culture/country today; objects could include postcards, stamps, bus tickets, coins, badges, flags, etc. (based on Ellis and Brewster, 2002)</p>
<p>E _____</p> <p>Tell/read children the story <i>My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes</i> by Eve Sutton, using pictures or PPP. Read the title of the story and the name of the author and ask the children what and who the story is going to be about. While telling the story, check understanding and have children predict what will happen next.</p>	<p>J _____</p> <p>Dictate the names of countries from the story <i>My Cat Likes to Hide in Boxes</i> and get children arrange their flags in the right order. Monitor to see how successfully students have done the activity.</p>
<p>K _____</p> <p>National landmarks: draw pupils' attention to the pages where a specific landmark is illustrated (e. g. the Eiffel Tower – France, the Parthenon – Greece). Elicit the names of the capital cities of these countries (Paris, Athens) and ask pupils to illustrate their book pages for France and Greece with these landmarks and to write the names of the capital cities.</p> <p>Then ask pupils to research landmarks and capital cities for the other countries and to illustrate the other pages of their books. (based on Ellis and Brewster, 2002)</p>	



## Cultural Content in ELT Textbooks<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** In this paper we will try to explain how cultural content can be dealt with in ELT books, to enlighten the role of culture and to show why culture is so important for the learner. Furthermore, we will explain why an ELT book should not be based on one group of culture materials, why books should often be supplemented with some extra cultural content and why it is necessary to provide various cultural information.

**Key words:** culture, cultural content, ELT materials, source culture, target culture, international culture

### **Introduction: language(s) and culture(s)**

Culture has always been present in ELT textbooks and subject to numerous debates. According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 204–205), cultural information presented in ELT materials can be divided into three groups: those based on source culture materials (learner's culture), target culture materials (i. e. culture which belongs to countries where native speakers of English live), and on international culture materials (different cultures belonging to both English-speaking and non-English speaking countries).

Although it is more-or-less easy to define culture by simply copying a dictionary entry, it is better to see what people see as culture and what aspects of human life, beliefs and attitudes constitute culture. According to Robinson (1985), when teachers were asked what culture meant to them, their responses fell into three categories: products, ideas and behaviors. Further explanation of these categories can be found in Tomalin and Stempleski (1993: 7). Products involve literature, folklore, art, music and

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artifacts; ideas are further divided into beliefs, values and institutions, whereas behaviors comprise customs, habits, dress, foods and leisure.

Culture and language are linked because “they work together in a symbiotic relationship that ensures the existence and continuation of each” (Samovar et al. 2010: 228). Furthermore, we can quote Hall’s famous statement, “Communication is culture and culture is communication” (Hall 1959: 191) and add an explanation/statement provided by Samovar et. al. (2010: 22), who say that “you ‘learn’ your culture via communication, while at the same time communication is a reflection of your culture”. Both these statements hold true in applied linguistics and are a solid basis for understanding cultural content in ELT materials.

It follows that culture is important for language teaching, and we will use McKay’s view to describe this aspect. According to this author, “cultural knowledge often provides the basis for the content and topics that are used in language materials and classroom discussions. Secondly, pragmatic standards are frequently based on particular cultural models. Which culture to use in both these areas of language teaching needs to be carefully considered with reference to the teaching of an international language” (McKay 2003: 10). Let us then see what McKay’s statements actually mean.

Using a foreign language in everyday life usually entails communication with a person who belongs to a different culture. Cultural patterns are often translated into a language we learn without considering possible differences. For example, a Serbian college student would sound rude if he/she addressed a Serbian university teacher by his/her first name, but this practice is quite common in the US and many other countries. Many foreign students in the US will address a university teacher as e. g. *ProfessorSmith* and will be confused when they hear American students addressing the same person as *John*, assuming that the professor’s name is John Smith. If we delve further into interpersonal communication, we might find even more interesting situations. Another point could be words that are considered offensive in certain cultures. For example, Spaniards or Serbs are often relaxed in communication and use words or expressions which Germans or Americans might find offensive or obscene even in casual situations, taboo words in particular. Finally, in an international classroom, one can always notice that students from some Western countries often interrupt the teacher by asking questions, whereas some students

from Asia are always silent and speak only when spoken to, which reflects the norms of school behavior in their respective countries. All these situations illustrate that we cannot simply translate certain words, expressions or adhere to certain cultural patterns we find quite normal and acceptable in our native environment, and often have to adapt if we want to be accepted. On the other hand, teachers should also be aware of these differences because the success of their teaching depends on their ability to adapt to cultural differences.

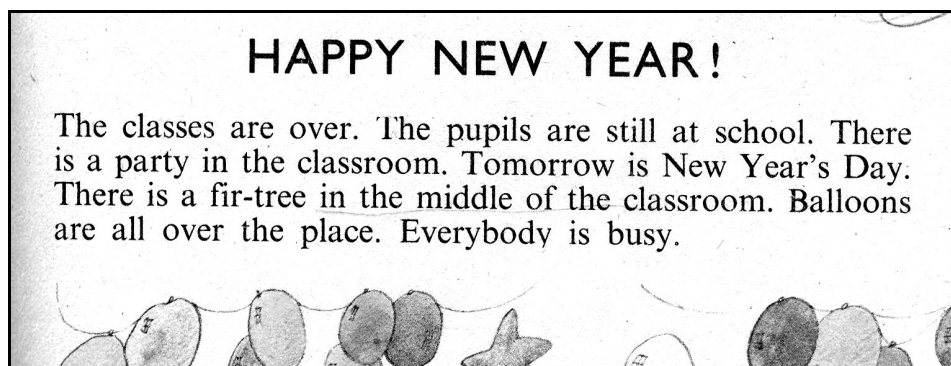
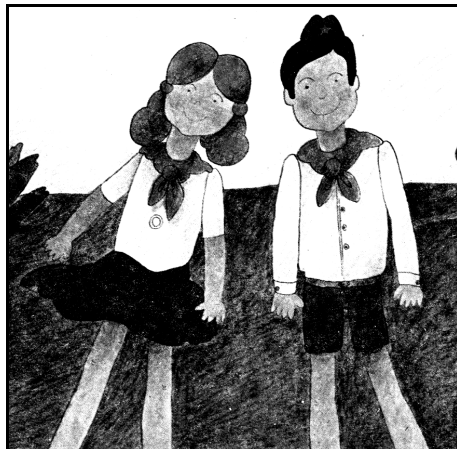
**English as an international language. Which culture(s) does it represent?**

Although many authors support the view that language and culture go with one another, or that they are inseparable, it is certain that English is in a different position when compared to other languages. English has long ago ceased to belong solely to the countries where English is spoken traditionally (UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, South Africa). Furthermore, it is used in many countries as an official language, in media or everyday communication, although it is not the native tongue of the local population. Finally, it is used in international communication between many countries and by speakers of different languages. Although this information is widely known, it is significant for this paper because it reminds us of the fact that the cultures represented by the English language are not those which belong to the countries where it is spoken traditionally, but form an international amalgam of cultures. Furthermore, cultural environment in these countries has become more versatile and is subject to non-English influence. In short, English is *primarily* linked with the cultures which belong to the First Circle countries, to use the term coined by Kachru, but we must take into account that it has become an element of many non-Western cultures which belong to the countries where it is used in everyday communication, administration and other aspects of life in which native/local languages are not used. Finally, although we cannot say that it represents cultures which belong to countries where English is not spoken officially and where there are no native speakers, we should bear in mind that these cultures are often internationally described in English.

## ELT materials and their shortcomings

We will start with the cultural information that can be found in ELT materials and try to explain why it is impossible to find an ideal solution if the authors stick solely to one of these concepts.

If an ELT book is focused on the source culture, it means that characters, who are usually locals, will talk about *their own* culture, customs and everyday life in English, which is not very realistic, especially if there are no foreign characters who will be interested in the local culture. Furthermore, a locally published ELT book based on the source culture cannot be used in countries which do not share the same cultural patterns. To illustrate this, we will use an example from an ELT book published in Serbia in the 1980's:



(Taken from *Engleski jezik za peti razred osnovne škole*, 1985)



As we can see, both the text and pictures cannot be easily understood if we do not know the local context and official policies of the period. A sentence like 'Mladen is a boy and a Pioneer' would not mean much to someone who did not live in the Eastern Block, who might even think that he is an innovator, explorer or settler. The truth is that he belonged to a youth organization, which was, or still is, common in some communist and ex-communist countries. Pioneers used to wear uniforms like those which can be seen in the second picture, but without this knowledge, many people from other countries would simply think that these children wear funny clothes with communist insignia or that they belong to a paramilitary organization. The text entitled 'Happy New Year' cannot be understood without some knowledge about the then state ideology, which ignored Christmas and turned both national and international Christmas traditions into New Year traditions – there was no mention of Christmas tree, but there was simply a fir-tree, and no Santa Claus/Father Christmas, i.e. these names were not commonly used in ELT books. Furthermore, authors of ELT books from this period often avoided using Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. in front of people's names, and 'sir' and 'madam' were also not commonly used. These words could be found in these books, but they did not appear very often.

On the other hand, an ELT book focused on the source culture is very useful if the characters are likely to receive foreign guests, to work as tour guides or to be involved in any similar activity which entails presenting their own culture or way of life. It is also worth mentioning that introducing a new culture is not that easy in some cases, and that there has to be something that can bridge the gap between the already acquired cultural pattern and a new one. According to Alptekin (1993: 141), "EFL writers should try to build conceptual bridges between the culturally familiar and the unfamiliar in order not to cause conflicts in the learner's 'fit' as he or she acquires English". To sum it up, it means that learners should actually start with something they are familiar with in order to learn about something new.

An ELT book focused on target culture will probably involve British/American characters in local settings, often including minorities who live in these countries. If source culture and target culture are very different and if students who belong to the source culture do not have many contacts with the target culture, these books can sometimes be confusing

without further explanations and notes after the text. Although this problem is not huge, and can be solved by giving these explanations, books which involve solely target culture do not provide enough linguistic resources for talking about the learners' culture, especially if it is much different and is not based on Western/European patterns. If the book is printed in a non-English speaking country and is not revised by native speakers, it can sometimes be less realistic. Another problem is whether to use British or American (why not Australian or Canadian?) culture and variety. On the one hand, in some countries authors of ELT materials traditionally use British English and present British culture, but many students tend to acquire American English due to increased exposure to this variety. In some cases there are certain stereotypes that can be found in ELT books. For example, characters from the UK are often named John and Mary, who are white and live in London, although an average British citizen can be someone named Angus, Cheryl or Keith, can be of e. g. Asian descent, and can live in Manchester or Liverpool. Many British people do not drink their 5 o'clock tea and might prefer a cup of coffee or a sandwich instead, whereas there are even more Americans who do not live in New York or Los Angeles and live their lives far from skyscrapers, glamour and all other things their country is famous for.

Finally, international target culture materials that use a great variety of English and non-English speaking countries are aimed at international target cultures, characters are from all over the world and, of course, they speak English. These books often provide insight into various cultures, but in some cases, they do not mention learners' culture and thus they might face difficulties when talking about certain aspects of their culture. Furthermore, if their culture is not mentioned, they can feel frustrated. In contrast, if their culture is mentioned, they are likely to feel proud. Generally speaking, ELT books based on international target culture materials can be quite useful when it comes to intercultural competence, because they provide not only linguistic input, but also describe various cultural patterns and settings and learners will be more prepared to act in international settings. These books can be a useful tool in an international classroom and if students are to be prepared for international settings, where no culture is dominant, e.g. international business and trade, corporate environment etc.

As we have seen, what these materials lack is balance between cultures. Although it would be ideal to determine the right balance for each group of learners, it is impossible. However, authors have long ago realized that they should provide a variety of cultural information, and this trend is nowadays growing.

### **Conclusion**

Almost every teacher will say that there is no ideal book, and the conclusion will be made along these lines. It is our opinion that every ELT book can have certain shortcomings in various cultural settings and that it is up to the teacher to supply some extra materials and present different cultures by way of English. If a local teacher must use a locally written ELT book based solely on source culture, then he/she will have to provide extra materials which provide enough information about cultural patterns present in English-speaking cultures and those that belong to major international cultures. A local teacher who can use ELT books based on target/international cultures is in a better position, because he/she will have to find extra materials dealing with source culture, which the students find more familiar. Of course, the term 'local teacher' implies that the teacher belongs to the same culture as students and that he/she is not a native speaker. On the other hand, a native speaker who teaches English and uses materials based on target or international culture should try to provide materials which describe students' culture in an appropriate way and incorporate them when possible. Furthermore, it would be necessary to raise teachers' awareness of this problem and help them understand why all cultures are important for a successful curriculum.

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## Teaching Cultural Content as a Means of Enriching the Future Identity of Young Language Learners

**Abstract:** Learning a language is an ontological skill. This means that it deals with and partakes in the very making of identity. Learning a foreign language is by its nature a way of enriching the identity of the learner by broadening their cultural knowledge and by presenting new forms of experience. Given this high relevance, culture needs to be introduced and presented to learners of all ages. However, just as methodology assumes that various age groups require different approaches to the content they are being taught, it is necessary and advisable to present young learners, children, with cultural contents, yet in the form they can grasp and comprehend. This paper explores the psychological and social aspects of culture taught through a foreign language.

**Key words:** culture, identity, formation, attitudes, psychology

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Cultural diversity is an important concept to grasp during childhood. Understanding that people are not all the same will enable children to embrace and value the things that make each person or group of people different. Children notice differences, and taking time to teach what is important to each culture can help foster acceptance and understanding.

Richard Gregory Johnson, *A Twenty-First Century Approach to Teaching Social Justice: Educating for Both Advocacy and Action.*

### Introduction – making the stance and defining the terms

The topic proposed here has for its basic premise the claim that learning a language implies learning a culture. Learning a foreign language is

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said to be an ontological skill, partaking in the very essence of existence. Furthermore, this paper advocates the need to foster presenting cultural issues through the syllabus of English language for (very) young learners. The authors admit and respect the fact that much of this has already been done to a very high degree of excellence. For that reason, our research paper does not deal with presenting appropriate methodology for introducing cultural issues to very young learners.

Our aim here is to present analytically the reasons why insisting upon culture in language teaching should have for its aim the enrichment and empowerment of children's identity, mental capacities and social intelligence. In the process of learning a foreign language, children will by far surpass 'mere knowledge'<sup>2</sup> of a foreign *language*, and will actually adopt new vistas of human understanding, which directly influences the formation and enrichment of their identities.

Let us first try and define the most crucial concepts we are dealing here with. The word *culture* is used here as implying integrated patterns of human behavior, which include thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. It refers to what educators like Howard Nostrand call the 'ground of meaning', i. e. the attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving and remembering shared by members of that community (Nostrand, 1989: 51). *Language competence* refers to the capacity to function linguistically and psychologically within a linguistically defined context of culturally integrated patterns of human behavior as defined by a group. It is obvious that culture and language competence are inseparable. Here, we have already hinted at the concluding argument of this work, namely, that knowing a foreign language implies a developed cross-cultural competence, meaning that a person is familiar and aware of new, (foreign) patterns of behavior, and is able to apply those appropriately in various, unpredictable settings. Furthermore, this implies developing human potentials such as profound understanding of different ways of life and empathy towards them.

One of the salient ways in which culture manifests itself is through language. Material culture is constantly mediated, interpreted and recorded — among other things — through language. It is because of that

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<sup>2</sup> It needs to be noted here that the concept of 'mere knowledge of a language' is highly inappropriate, since language and culture are inseparable. Knowledge of the former implies knowledge of the latter.

mediatory role of language that culture becomes the concern of the language teacher. Culture is in the final analysis always *linguistically mediated membership into a discourse community that is both real and imagined*. Membership implies identity, the way a person perceives of themselves. Language plays a crucial role not only in the construction of culture and so one's identity, but in the emergence of cultural change. Language is thus essentially rooted in the reality of the culture (Malinowski 1923).

### **The interdependence of culture, language competence and identity**

Stern (1999) expressed the relationships between culture and English language culture as follows:

1. Language is a part of culture, and must be approached with the same attitudes that govern our approach to culture as a whole;
2. Language conveys culture, so that the language teacher is also of necessity a teacher of a culture;
3. Language is itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs, which cannot be ignored in the classroom.

When learning a foreign language, children gain insight into cultural norms of that other culture, they gain linguistic but also cultural competence that not only helps them function in a foreign environment, but improves their social intelligence as a whole. Learning about foreign cultural values, norms, attitudes, typical and/or expected behavior in some recognizable situations, certainly makes children more sensitive to such situations they encounter at home, but most importantly, this makes them more prepared to respond appropriately.

As the use of language in general is related to social and cultural values, language is considered to be a social and cultural phenomenon. Since every culture has its own cultural norms for conversation and these norms differ from one culture to another, some of these norms can be very different and conflict with other cultures' norms. Consequently, communication problems may arise among speakers who do not know or share the norms of other cultures.

The aim is to increase students' awareness of and to develop their curiosity about the target culture and their own, helping them to make comparisons among cultures. The comparisons are not meant to underestimate

any of the cultures being analyzed, but to enrich children's experience and to make them aware that although some cultural elements are being globalized, there is still diversity among cultures.

Finally, all this strongly influences the change and enrichment of their personalities. Speaking of culture, competence, identity, we are at close proximity to the very existential questions, as those are crucial constituent elements of human cognition. Vygotsky (1978) conceptualised cognitive development as the transformation of socially shared activities into internalised processes. The sociocultural theory of language states that it is through social mediation that knowledge becomes refined and viable and gains coherence. Mediation of language is the mechanism through which external, sociocultural activities are transformed into internal, mental functioning.

Sociocultural theory holds a strongly interactionist view of language learning. The role of the teacher in sociocultural perspectives goes beyond providing a rich language environment to learners. The teacher uses the language as a cognitive tool to enable learners to develop thoughts and ideas in language. The thinking process indicates development in learners, who become independent and capable of completing tasks as they reach their potential level of development. If language is seen as social practice, culture becomes the very core of language teaching. Cultural awareness must then be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency (Kramsch 1993).

### **Goals and ways of cultural instruction through language learning**

According to Seelye (1988), the primary aims of cultural instruction that is an inherent part of language learning can be summarized as follows:

- developing an understanding of culturally-conditioned behavior
- developing an awareness that social variables such as age, social class, geographical position of residence, etc, which directly influence linguistic expression and social behavior
- introducing children to conventional behavior in some common situations that are present in most cultures, yet the behavior patterns differ
- developing awareness of cultural connotations of words and phrases



- stimulating children' intellectual curiosity about the target culture
- encouraging empathy towards people of that culture
- developing empathy towards other people in general.

As for culture and teaching materials, text book writers, like everyone else, think and compose chiefly through culture-specific schemas, a set of English discourse as part of their evolving systemic knowledge, partaking of the cultural system which the set entails (Alptekin 1993). If they have any subject content, coursebooks will directly or indirectly communicate sets of social and cultural values which are inherent in their make-up. This is the so-called 'hidden curriculum' which forms part of any educational programme, but is unstated and undisclosed. It may well be an expression of attitudes and values that are not consciously held but which nevertheless influence the content and image of the teaching material, and indeed the whole curriculum. A syllabus (and teaching materials form part of this) cannot be neutral because it has to reflect a view of social order and express a value system, implicitly or explicitly (Cunningsworth 1995). To emphasize again, the starting point for this situation is the fact that language itself is the mirror image of the culture in question.

Using authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage children in authentic cultural experiences. Sources can include films, news broadcasts, and television shows, websites, photographs, magazines, newspapers, restaurant menus, travel brochures, and other printed materials. Teachers can adapt their use of authentic materials to suit the age and language proficiency level of the children. For example, even beginning language students can watch and listen to video clips taken from a television show in the target language and focus on such cultural conventions as greetings. The teacher might supply children with a detailed translation or give them a chart, diagram, or outline to complete while they listen to a dialogue or watch a video. After the class has viewed the relevant segments, the teacher can engage the children in discussion of the cultural norms represented in the segments and what these norms might say about the values of the culture. Discussion topics might include nonverbal behaviors (e.g., the physical distance between speakers, gestures, eye contact, societal roles, and how people in different social roles relate to each other). Children might describe the behaviors they observe and discuss which of them are similar to their native culture and which are

not and determine strategies for effective communication in the target language.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of language instruction certainly is for the students to reach a level of communicative competence. To achieve this, they need to be aware of different social circumstances that shape the appropriate linguistic response. This is the sociolinguistic component of communication that determines the rules of communication which in turn depend on social, pragmatic and cultural conditions. Understanding the cultural context of day-to-day conversational conventions such as greetings, farewells, forms of address, thanking, making requests, and giving or receiving compliments means more than just being able to produce grammatical sentences. It means knowing what is appropriate to say to whom, and in what situations, and it means understanding the beliefs and values represented by the various forms and usages of the language.

Culture must be fully incorporated as a vital component of language learning. Second language teachers should identify key cultural items in every aspect of the language that they teach. Children can be successful in speaking a second language only if cultural issues are an inherent part of the syllabus.

In developing cultural awareness in the classroom it is important that we help children distinguish between the cultural norms, beliefs, or habits of the majority within the speech community. It is of equal relevance that the children are enabled to discuss their native culture with their foreign-speaking friends at the same time that they are provided with a real experiential content.

In this way, young learners start developing life-long, important, personal traits and abilities. They learn a foreign language, they enrich their personalities with the new vistas that this language opens up for them by allowing them to witness different ways of life, different ways of perceiving and experiencing the world. Moreover, children start distinguishing the differences between their native and the foreign culture. Similarly, this starting difference allows them to make further comparisons and contrast between and among cultures they are yet to encounter. Learning a language teaches them empathy towards people in general, for we are all at once different and alike. Learning a culture is a complex and intricate

process that deeply influences the developing characters of young learners. It fosters the most refined features of humanity, acceptance and mutual understanding.

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## **Happily Ever After: Teaching Gender Equality in the Primary Classroom**

**Abstract:** Because some well-known fairy tales can contain problematic issues, such as outdated views of gender roles, this paper argues that fairy tales which teachers use while teaching English to young learners should be drawn from a wide pool of sources, not restricted to classical fairy tale collections, but encompassing also the more modern collections of feminist tales. Research was carried out in order to ascertain whether children themselves would receive such tales with a positive or negative attitude. To this end, 77 ten-year-old pupils were provided with a tale, the text of which was adapted to their maturity level. The research yielded results which undisputedly speak in favour of the main argument of this paper.

**Key words:** teaching English, young learners, classical fairy tales, feminist fairy tales

### **Fairy tales in TEYL**

Fairy tales are a frequent ingredient of language teaching classes for young learners, providing them with opportunities for “rich, authentic uses of the foreign language” (Cameron 2001: 159). Some of the benefits of using tales in English language classes include, but are by no means restricted to, the following: acquisition of new vocabulary, development of children’s imagination and literary competence, as well as listening skills, and most importantly motivation (Zaro and Salaberri 1995: 2–3). However, when it comes to choosing which tales to use in their classes, teachers usually resort to a haphazard approach, using what is accidentally available, and creating their reading programmes while “groping in the

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dark for texts” (Machura 1995: 71). Very often, it is the most popular tales that are chosen for the use in class, one reason for this being the children’s familiarity with their content. These, so called classical or traditional tales “are the product of centuries” (Fox Eades 2006: 35), and because of this they have acquired many layers of meaning due to various cultural influences over time. They underwent a process of canonisation during the nineteenth and, especially, the twentieth century by being filtered through the lens of editorial policies which fostered an old-fashioned, patriarchal worldview. Tales were promoted based on their compliance with the constructed ideals of femininity and masculinity, emphasising “the negative side of femininity for girls (fragility, timidity, obsession with appearance and with domesticity), and the negative side of masculinity for boys (aggression, insensitivity, rudeness, and a refusal to be helpful)” (Davies, 2003: xi). Thus, existing tales with strong, active and independent heroines<sup>2</sup> became seriously neglected at the expense of those featuring submissive, passive and dependent ones, such as ‘Cinderella’, ‘Sleeping Beauty’, ‘Snow White’, etc. What is more, the content of such tales was gradually modified, so that, by the time Walt Disney’s films came into existence, whatever initiative the heroines might have had in the printed editions of the nineteenth century was entirely lost in the cinematic versions, and subsequently, in the majority of printed versions as well, under the influence of the powerful medium of film.<sup>3</sup> The negative consequences of such a trend in terms of the formation of gender stereotypes ought not to be underestimated, and, certainly, ought not to be reinforced in the classroom, since these stereotypes are the underlying basis of power relations not only in society at large, but also in each individual classroom.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in two nineteenth-century collections of English fairy tales, edited by Joseph Jacobs, a Jewish folklorist with relatively liberal attitudes, “one can find heroines such as curious and brave Lady Mary in ‘Mr Fox’, and the witty peasant girls who married fools of their own accord in ‘A Pottle o’ Brains’ and ‘Gobborn Seer’, [while] two heroines, Kate Crackernuts and Molly Whuppee, even have tales titled after their own names; Kate rescues a prince from the fairies and helps her sister regain her former beautiful form, while Molly outwits a giant, thus earning a husband for herself and her two sisters” (Prošić-Santovac 2011: 106).

<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, there are Disney/Pixar’s films today, such as *Brave* (2012), which counter this tendency, although the plot of this particular film is not based on a traditional tale, but is newly invented. Also, *Shrek* films (2001–2010), produced by DreamWorks Animation, although loosely based on William Steig’s fairy tale picture book *Shrek!* (1990), use motifs and characters from various fairy tales in such a way as to function as a subverting agent.

## Teaching gender equality using fairy tales

As has already been noted, it is very often the case that the most popular tales get chosen for use in language learning classes, and 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Cinderella' are even officially recommended for the use in pupils' mother tongue classes (*Rules and regulations on the curriculum for the fourth grade of elementary education* 2006). On the other hand, pre-school teachers and teachers of English in the first four years of primary school do have a greater freedom, and they can and should make choices which are more in line with the ideals of gender equality, because "schools play a key role in teaching and reinforcing the dominant values of culture and this holds especially true in areas of gender and sexuality" (Meyer 2010: 3). English language classes are especially suitable for dealing with gender issues, because of "the ability of the Language Arts curriculum to address a wide variety of subject matter [which] allows a diverse range of topics and concerns to be discussed" (68). In these classes, fairy tales can be used as a prompt for discussion about gender roles and stereotypes, and in that sense, the above mentioned and similar traditional tales can also be utilised and, in an age-appropriate manner, exposed as an example of practices which promote outdated worldviews, thus contributing to the development of children's critical reading skills. However, it is also possible entirely to avoid introducing gender bias into one's lessons, by carefully choosing the texts to be presented in class, and including tales which feature protagonists of both genders, who are strong, active, resourceful and independent, as well as those who are not. A combined approach can be applied, so that both kinds of tale receive due attention and are compared under the critical eye of both teachers and students. The advantage of the latter approach would be that in this case gender equality would get to be discussed as a matter-of-fact state rather than a state whose existence needs be vindicated.

Needless to say, all activities, as well as the tales used, should be adapted in such a way that they resonate well with children, both in terms of their cognitive development and in terms of the level of their knowledge of the English language. For this purpose, some of the less familiar folk tales from the nineteenth century can be used, such as those already mentioned, or some literary fairy tales, feminist and/or fractured, written in the twentieth century or later, such as 'The Paper Bag Princess' (1980) by

Robert Munsch or 'Prince Cinders' (1987) by Babette Cole, for example.<sup>4</sup> Because teachers might be apprehensive about the prospect of introducing culturally authentic material which may be perceived by some as 'going against the grain' of domestic culture, research has been performed with the aim of ascertaining whether the children themselves would receive such tales with a positive or negative attitude. Based on two recent studies of secondary school students' attitudes (Turjačanin and Stojanovski 2009; Radoman 2011), which both reported an alarming level of gender bias among youth, and their views on what constitutes 'proper' male and female identity, the hypothesis was that a majority of children would be resistant to this type of tale, especially male respondents, and also hesitant to accept the reversed roles of characters.

### **Methodology**

The research took place during the 2011/2012 academic year and was conducted on a sample of seventy-seven ten-year-old children from a small town near Novi Sad. The pupils were all in the fourth grade of primary school at the time the research took place. The gender distribution was as follows: 56.6 % were female and 43.4 % male. The participants were given a fairy tale, without providing them with the information that the tale used was not a traditional one,<sup>5</sup> and questionnaires were distributed after the participants had read the tales. In order to combine "quantitative measurement and qualitative inquiry," a questionnaire "that asks both fixed-choice (closed) and open-ended questions" was used (Patton 2002: 5). Closed-ended items were formulated so as to require a 'yes/no' answer, while the purpose of open-ended probes was to unravel the reasons behind the answers the children gave about their attitude towards the newly encountered tale and the characters appearing in the tale. The questions were short, direct and "specific to the respondent" (Bell 2007: 463), in that different versions of the questionnaire were used for female and male participants, with male and female grammatical forms inserted where required with the aim of avoiding depersonalisation. The order of the an-

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<sup>4</sup> In 'The Paper Bag Princess' the princess is the one who saves the prince, only to reject marriage with him after realizing that their relationship is unsatisfactory because the prince does not treat her with respect, while in 'Prince Cinders', a variant of 'Cinderella' with reversed gender roles, the prince is abused by his brothers, doing all the household chores for them, and, through the help of a fairy, ends up being married to a princess.

<sup>5</sup> The text of the tale was shortened and adapted to their maturity level.



swers to close-ended items was alternated, because “some respondents may simply offer an affirmative response” (Krosnick 1991: 217) to whatever question was posed to them if, for example, the affirmative option always came first. The quantitative results were processed using SPSS Statistics software, and the qualitative results were analysed using descriptive codes.<sup>6</sup>

### **The tale**

Jay Williams’s ‘The Practical Princess’ (1986) was used in the research because of the similarity of its motifs with those in two traditional fairy tales, ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Rapunzel’, with the expectation that the participants were familiar with these tales, especially with ‘Sleeping Beauty’ since, as it has already been noted, it is recommended for use in mother tongue classes in the fourth grade of primary school by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. ‘The Practical Princess’ begins with Princess Bedelia’s birth, when the fairies bestow presents upon her. However, apart from being given the gift of beauty and gracefulness, she is also given the gift of common sense, which her father thinks is unnecessary. He is proved wrong when a dragon comes to the kingdom and demands that the princess be sacrificed to him, or he will destroy the kingdom. Instead of being saved by a prince or by her father, Bedelia saves herself using her own mind. She takes her best dress and stuffs it with straw and gunpowder, which explodes when the dragon eats this false princess, having come into contact with the fire in his belly. Further complications arise when Lord Garp of Istven, a greedy old man, comes to ask 18-year-old Bedelia’s hand in marriage, threatening war if she doesn’t consent. She again uses her common sense and the knowledge she acquired in the course of her education to outwit him, and refuses to marry him. In order to punish her, Lord Garp uses magic to imprison her in a tower. There she finds the sleeping Prince Perian, the rightful ruler of Istven, whose hair and beard have grown extremely long during his imprisonment. Bedelia eventually frees the prince from Lord Garp’s

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<sup>6</sup> Codes are “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or influential information compiled during a study” (Miles and Huberman 1994: 56), with the aim of “reducing or simplifying the data while highlighting special features of certain data segments in order to link them to broader topics or concepts” (Dörnyei 2007: 250).

evil spell, rescues him and herself and takes him for her husband as a reward.

## **Results and discussion**

As expected, the pupils were largely familiar with the two traditional tales that shared their motifs with 'The Practical Princess' – 98.9 % had previously come across 'Sleeping Beauty', while 91.8 % knew about 'Rapunzel'. However, the results negate the research hypothesis to a great extent. It was predicted that the children would be resistant to the reversal in the stereotypical gender roles of characters, and that they would not look upon 'The Practical Princess' favourably, especially the male respondents. This was not the case, though, as the self-perceived attitude towards the tale was positive for all of the participants. Nevertheless, a discrepancy in the data emerged when it came to a vicarious indicator of the attitude; thus, although all females expressed their wish to read more similar stories, 13.8 % of the males stated that they wouldn't like to do so in the future. Pearson Chi-Square test was performed to examine the relation between gender and the attitude towards the feminist tale as expressed through the participants' wish to read more similar tales in the future. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between these two variables ( $X^2(1) = 6.28, p < .05$ ). These results raise doubt about the truthfulness of the initial answers of this particular group of male respondents about liking the tale, which could have been reported due to acquiescence response bias, perhaps in order to please the teacher when they were still at the beginning of the questionnaire, while the influence may have faded as the work on the questionnaire progressed, since the latter question was placed later on in the questionnaire, in order to screen for this precise situation.

Nevertheless, a majority of respondents showed preference towards the feminist tale over the classical ones, and here again, there was striking similarity between the answers in terms of the respondents' gender, especially for 'Sleeping Beauty' (74.4 % of female and 74.2 % of male respondents favoured 'The Practical Princess'). A somewhat higher percentage of those who preferred 'Rapunzel' among the members of both groups (64.3 % of female and 71 % of male respondents favoured 'The Practical Princess') may have been influenced by an adaptation of the traditional

tale 'Rapunzel', Walt Disney's animated film *Tangled*<sup>7</sup> (2010), released several months before the research took place, since the film features a much more active heroine than is the case in the Grimms' tale, and is largely action-driven. The latter characteristic, however, was most often quoted as the reason for preference of 'The Practical Princess' over the two traditional tales, with 24% of males and 33% of females stating 'adventure' as the main reason; the exception were the five cases where the (female) participants reported having seen *Tangled* and liking it more because of a large number of adventures and events depicted. Other arguments for preferring 'The Practical Princess' were its uniqueness and novelty (from the point of view of the pupils who had never before come across such a tale), as well as the humour present in the tale, which some of the participants claimed to be lacking from the two traditional tales; thus, humour was an important issue for 18.2 % of female and 18.6 % of male respondents. Also, a large amount of decision making was quoted by a male participant as a plus of the tale, while a female participant thought it to be more appropriate for the respondent's age than 'Rapunzel' and 'Sleeping Beauty', which were considered suitable for younger children. Contrary to expectations, only one female respondent quoted 'romance' as a criterion for preferring the tale. For 21 % of males and 19 % of females, the most important criterion for the preference towards the feminist tale was the strength, independence and resourcefulness of Princess Bedelia, and one comment of a female participant especially deserves to be singled out, since it shows that some children are at least intuitively aware of the gender asymmetry present in the works of literature that they encounter: "I like this tale because finally a girl was the one to save herself and the prince, and, finally, a girl is the real hero in a tale."<sup>8</sup> A similar opinion was shared by 18.2 % of the females and 18.6 % of the males, and one might even detect a sort of relief from the social pressure in some of the answers of the male respondents: "I like the tale because here the prince does not have to save the princess", because "the princess thinks for herself and saves herself on her own," and "she can take care of herself and can kill

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<sup>7</sup> The title of the film was changed to *Tangled* in order to appeal to the audience of both sexes, as it was supposed that boys would not eagerly watch a film with a female lead titled after her name.

<sup>8</sup> Unless specified otherwise, all the quotes used in this section are from the pupils who participated in this research. In addition, all the quotes have been translated from Serbian into English by the author.

the dragon on her own.” Nevertheless, there were also those with an opposing attitude; thus, one female respondent expressed her disagreement with the reversal of gender roles, stating that “the prince should be the one to save the princess, not the other way round.”

The fact that all respondents, apart from one male, expressed their liking of the active and intelligent princess perhaps testifies of the changing view of desirable or acceptable sets of gender-related characteristics among younger generations, but this finding can also point to the fact that the ten-year-olds are still undergoing the process of socialization which is by no means finalized at that age and are therefore more likely to be open-minded. A relative similarity in the percentages of those children of both sexes who liked the passive, helpless and docile prince (81 % of female and 86.2 % of male respondents) also offers hope that children can, at this age, still be socialized into members of society who are acceptant of diversity, rather than being oriented towards stereotypical types of behaviour and being. Lord Garp, straightforwardly presented as the villain of the tale, quite expectedly had an entirely negative reception; nonetheless, there was one male respondent who, rather than explicitly 'liking' him, expressed his pity for Lord Garp, who was “heartlessly and without any respect rejected by Bedelia.” The greatest discrepancy can be seen in the perception of the role of the dominant patriarch, the father (the dislike towards this character was felt by 81 % of female and 31 % of male respondents). Almost one third of the whole sample was of the opinion that the father should have been the one to protect and save Bedelia from the dragon (18.6 % of the male and 42 % of the female respondents). Such a difference in percentages may be ascribed to the possibility that the females identified with the princess in distress at the beginning of the tale, and since they were all still little girls, the focus in their lives is unlikely to be the search for a partner, but rather the need for a protective father. This need is, however, highly culturally conditioned, as females are stimulated towards it artificially and are not encouraged to use their own resources and act independently. Males, on the other hand, are taught from the beginning of their lives to fend for themselves, and not to rely on their fathers to protect them as a matter-of-course, and they therefore did not express such a level of dissatisfaction with the father who did not perform his protective role properly.

On the whole, the research findings largely support the main argument of this paper that feminist fairy tales ought to be used in English language

teaching classes. However, this conclusion can only be generalised, to a certain extent, for working with children around the age of ten, since this was the population from which the sample was drawn. Research in this field is scarce; in fact, the only other two studies<sup>9</sup> that deal with a similar topic, albeit in a different manner and scope, and using alternative methodology, are Ella Westland's "Cinderella in the Classroom: Children's Responses to Gender Roles in Fairy-tales" (1993) and Bronwyn Davies's *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales: Preschool Children and Gender* (2003).<sup>10</sup> Westland's research, performed in Great Britain, focused on children of the same age as the present study, and she used the Grimms' version of 'Snow White', Martin Waddell's 'The Tough Princess' (1986), and Babette Cole's 'Princess Smartypants' (1986) and 'Prince Cinders' (1987). She concluded that the girls included in her study were 'resisting readers', "able to criticise and manipulate (as well as enjoy) the gender images presented to them in the dominant fairy tales of our culture" and that the boys "had more of a vested interest than the girls in sticking to fairy-tale stereotypes," which is why she stated that "we should be worrying about the effect of fairy-tale stereotypes not upon our daughters, but upon our sons" (Westland 1993: 237). By comparison, the results of the present study do not show such great discrepancy in girls' and boys' attitudes, which may be accounted for by the fact that almost twenty years had passed in between, and that, although Serbia can be characterised as a country with a largely patriarchal outlook, time may have indeed made a difference, influencing a more liberal way of upbringing of children. Davies's study, on the other hand, as the subtitle implies, focuses on preschool children, and is therefore for the most part inadequate for comparison due to the different stages of development that the examined children were in at the time when research took place. In addition, the reception of feminist tales constitutes only a portion of Davies's research project, conducted in Australia in the 1980s, and concentrates on four tales, of which two are of the similar kind to 'The Practical Princess': 'The Paper Bag Princess' (1980) by Robert Munsch and 'The Princess and the Dragon' (1981) by Audrey Wood. Davies's study serves "as a caution to anyone who might imagine that such books, by themselves, can dismantle the gender order" (Broom

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<sup>9</sup> To the best of the author's knowledge.

<sup>10</sup> Replicated in 2004 in Japan, and published under the title *Gender in Japanese Preschools: Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales in Japan*.

1990: 402), and she concludes that “the power of the pre-existing structure of the traditional narrative to prevent a new form of narrative from being heard is ever-present ... and there is no single solution to this for the feminist writer or for the adults who are interacting with and reading stories to children” (Davies 2003: 72). This paper, on the other hand, although acknowledging the difficulties one might face while working with such materials, offers a more optimistic view of the matter, and suggests that age might play a significant role in children’s acceptance of feminist fairy tales, since by the age of ten, children experience a whole range of gender positionings, as well as the biases that come along with these, and might even be aware of and resistant to some of them.

### **Limitations of the study**

The optimistic view of the study is generated by the overall positivity of the children’s reaction to the feminist fairy tale. However, as “young children have a particular tendency to want to please adults by agreeing with them or being overly positive in their responses” (Bell 2007: 464), deferential agreement bias may have occurred, although precautions had been taken against it. Also, as the sample used in this research was drawn from the population situated in the northern part of the country, the findings may not be transferable to the attitudes of children from other parts, which is why further data collection would be needed to determine this in order to make wider generalization. Since all the pupils belonged to one school climate, research in other geographical areas may yield entirely different results, based on the mindset of pupils, their parents and teachers. Nevertheless, regardless of its limitations, this study should give teachers enough impetus to encourage them to try an approach to teaching alternative to traditional practice.

### **Conclusion**

The findings in this study have shown that resistance on the part of ten-year-old children to the newly encountered form of fairy tale is not an issue for a majority of respondents, and that, although “children need the reassurance of the familiar materials with which they feel confident and at ease” (Machura 1995: 79), they are open to new experiences, as well. Contrary to expectations, the criteria for deciding on one’s attitude towards

the feminist tale were similar for both genders, with humour and the presence of adventure being the most prominent ones. Reversed gender roles did not pose a problem, either, which is why the conclusion has been drawn that it is advisable to allow children to explore different points of view, using a balanced approach, both through traditional and through modern tales. However, certain obstacles need to be overcome in order to achieve this. Firstly, not all “caregivers and teachers are necessarily interested in reading the ‘disruptive’ tales, since, if they belong to the dominant group, they might not be willing to abandon what they feel to be a position of power” (Prošić-Santovac 2011: 107). Secondly, the availability of the books of feminist fairy tales, either collections or individual picture books, does present a problem in our country, thus making it difficult to compete for popularity with the readily available traditional fairy tales. Consequently, “not as many children are exposed to them in reality, and their formative influence in terms of general public is thus drastically reduced” (107), which is where the role of English teachers is the most important. As they are familiar with the language, they have at their disposal a greater number of stories than do class teachers who are not fluent in English, and they should use this advantage to contribute to opening up their students’ horizons, especially while they are at an age when their personalities are still plastic and prone to ‘moulding’.

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## To Rise or To Fall: That Is the Question

**Abstract:** Pronunciation teaching has had different positions in teaching EFL, from being considered very important, to being generally avoided or ignored. The most recent approach, discourse intonation, shifts the emphasis from segmentals (vowels and consonants) to prosodic patterns, i.e. suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm and intonation), and it seems to be particularly well suited for use in an EFL classroom. In modern times it has arisen as a logical goal for English language teachers to strive towards 'near-native' and 'socially acceptable' pronunciation rather than only 'comfortably intelligible' one. Bearing in mind the Critical Period Hypothesis, we should pay special attention to young learners in order to achieve this goal.

**Key words:** Teaching intonation, interrogative intonation, Serbian high-school EFL students, young learners, critical period hypothesis.

### Introduction

Over time pronunciation has held different positions in the English language teaching. In the 1940s, 1950s, and into the 1960s, pronunciation was viewed as an important component of English language teaching curricula in both the audio-lingual methodology developed in the U. S. and the British system of situational language teaching. In these two schools of language teaching, language was viewed as consisting of hierarchies of structurally related items for encoding meaning, and language learning was viewed as mastering these forms. Both audio-lingual and situational language teaching continue to flourish in programs throughout the world, with the major change being the integration of phonetics into communicative interactions and functional language use.

Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing through the 1970s and into the 1980s, quite a sharp contrast to the previous period could be observed.

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Whereas until the mid-1960s pronunciation was considered an important component of language teaching, in the next two decades it was generally avoided or ignored. As Chun says, Leather (1983) suggested two reasons for this: "First, pedagogical concern had shifted from linguistic form to communicative function and focused on 'getting the message across' rather than on 'getting the sounds correct.' Second, theoretical linguistics had not provided helpful input for teaching applications." The familiar ways and means of teaching pronunciation no longer seemed appropriate, as new pedagogical sights were set on language functions, communicative competencies, task-based methodologies, and realism and authenticity in learning activities and materials.

Since the beginning of the mid-1980s there has been a growing interest in revisiting the pronunciation component of the EFL curriculum. In her book Chun states that "The most recent approach to teaching pronunciation, is *discourse intonation*, i. e., how (...) intonation can function in discourse to mark such boundaries as between sentences, paragraphs, topics, conversational turns; to control interactive structure or organize conversational exchange, e. g., to constrain a hearer to reply or to discourage the hearer from replying; to continue an established topic or to signal a new topic; to indicate the expectations a speaker has about a listener's reply, to facilitate cooperation between and among speakers in structuring a discourse, to mark the shared mutual knowledge of a speaker and listener."

In its most modern framework, teaching discourse intonation means teaching aspects of pronunciation beyond segmentals (vowels and consonants) to prosodic patterns, i. e. suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm and intonation) in order to make intonation serve larger goals within discourse. It is not sufficient just to get the individual sounds of L2 right. According to Chun, "...it is also necessary (1) to keep thought units or idea units together when speaking, (2) to provide markers for focus, given vs. new information, "propositional attitude," and turn-taking cues in discourse, and (3) by providing such markers, to help the hearer parse, process, and understand what is said." In other words, discourse intonation involves both conversational control and the establishing of social meanings and roles, by means of the assigning of prominence, key, and tone choice for information that the speaker considers part of the shared common ground.

In 1983 Roach said that intonation is a complex and language-specific area of phonology and that this complexity and specificity meant that it is

essentially unteachable. There are two main arguments against the explicit teaching of pronunciation. The first, based on *the critical period hypothesis*, claims that it is virtually impossible for adults to acquire native-like pronunciation in a foreign language; and the second insists that pronunciation is an acquired skill and that focused instruction is at best useless and at worst detrimental. However, a widely cited study by Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (1977) found that adults were actually superior to children in the areas of pronunciation and sound discrimination, at least in the first stages of learning, and the only subject in the study identified as acquiring native-like pronunciation was the teenager. It is also claimed that adults and adolescents have certain skills which are not available to children. Also, proponents of such a theory tend to underestimate the effect teachers and classrooms can have in the areas of motivation and that pronunciation teaching methods create an awareness of the importance of pronunciation and provide more exposure to input from native speakers.

There is increasing awareness that more emphasis should be placed on suprasegmentals than on segmentals. As Chun says in her book, it has been reported that British native speakers were irritated by non-native speakers of the language who worked in a cafeteria because they offered meals using falling instead of the more polite rising intonation. Also, Clennel said that “Failure to make use of the appropriate pragmatic discourse features of English intonation may result in serious communication breakdown between native and non-native speakers.”

However, some languages are learned primarily for use in international contexts where much of the interaction takes place between nonnative speakers with different first languages, often with no native speakers involved at all. In this case, we are talking about *international* language, an area where English is certainly dominating. Research into EIL has demonstrated the importance of pronunciation in EIL communication in general, and of certain pronunciation features in particular. The EIL research found that in interaction between L2 speakers from different L1s, pronunciation plays a critical role in preventing communication breakdowns and that the phonological and phonetic factors involved are not necessarily the same as those involved in communication between a native and nonnative speaker of the language.

Generally, our question as teachers should be: “What are our pronunciation goals?” As Chun says, “We must decide whether we are striving for

'comfortably intelligible' pronunciation, 'near-native accents,' or 'socially acceptable' pronunciation." Before deciding, we should bear in mind that today's students are more than ever exposed to English – not only do they watch movies and listen to songs in English, but they also start learning it in the first grade of primary school or even earlier. Thus, it seems logical to strive as much as possible to the "near native" and "socially acceptable" pronunciation which can only be obtained through teaching not only segmentals but suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm and intonation) as well.

Working in schools for almost 10 years, I have had the opportunity to use various books. Almost all of them had exercises which could be used to practise intonation with students, but in practice it rarely happened. Having limited time, teachers often choose to spend it practising grammar units and little time is spent on practising intonation. Another problem is big classes where teachers have difficulty managing all students and devoting attention to them all.

I have noticed that my students generally have unclear knowledge on the importance of intonation. They are mostly left in the dark when it comes to discourse intonation which leads to occasional misunderstanding and poor oral presentations. One of the potential problems in teaching EFL to Serbian students can be the interrogative intonation and that is why I decided to do a research on that issue. Do Serbian high school EFL students use question intonation properly?

In English there are various types of questions. In this research I focused on yes/no questions, wh- questions, tag questions and choice questions.

### **Previous research**

Verdugo (2005) investigated the use of prosodic cues for pragmatic functions with Spanish EFL learners, focusing particularly on expressing certainty in English tag-questions. Her participants used a falling pitch where inappropriate, and also used a narrower pitch range. Uncertainty was signalled by inappropriate, falling or mid-level tones, instead of a complex fall-rise.

Paunović and Savić (2008) investigated what phonetic cues EFL students use to signal discourse functions. Part of their research focused on tag-questions. The results showed that the majority of students used the intonation properly, which was quite expected for Paunovic and Savić, since this distinction is usually explicitly taught in English language classes.

Olivia Marasco (2011) investigated whether native speakers of Spanish could imitate intonation patterns of English *wh*-questions. Her speakers had most difficulty with producing a higher tone in the utterance than that in the *wh*-word, while producing a final falling boundary tone was generally not a problem.

### **Present study**

The research aimed to examine how intermediate Serbian EFL students manage interrogative intonation in a reading task. The investigation focused on pitch movement, key and tone. The population comprised 5 first-year students of Grammar school in Kruševac (3 female and 2 male, aged 15–16). Their overall language proficiency level was approximately B1 (CEF). The participants had 8 years of studying English in a formal educational setting.

The research was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Do Serbian EFL students of 1<sup>st</sup> year secondary school use interrogative intonation properly?

### **Methodology**

The data-gathering procedure consisted of a single reading task. The students were given a short dialogue to read consisting of one *wh*-question, one choice question, one yes/no question and two tag questions. Each participant had enough time to prepare for the recording (silent reading); when ready, they read the text aloud and were recorded. The digital recording was stored directly into the Speech Filing System 4.8/Windows for subsequent analyses.

### **Data analysis**

The acoustic analysis of the recordings was performed using Praat, version 5.2.03. Data analyses were based on F0 measurements obtained through the program for each individual participant. The analysis focused on the following intonation cues: pitch movement, pitch peak and pitch range. The analysis focused on the following intonation cues: pitch movement across the tone unit and pitch range (the span between maximum and minimum F0 measurement). Pitch range was measured for each ques-

tion the speaker pronounced. Pitch movement was transcribed in the traditional 5-tone system (fall-rise \/, fall \, rise /, rise-fall /\, level tone —).

### Results and discussion – Tag questions

As for the tag questions, I included two questions and wanted to check whether the students would recognize which one only seeks confirmation from the hearer and in which one the questioner really doesn't know the answer to the question and to see if they would use the appropriate intonation. "A rising contour is used when the questioner really does not know the answer to the question, whereas with a rising-falling pattern the questioner presumes to know the answer and is merely trying to confirm the presumption" (Chun 2002, 218).

In the tag question "isn't it?" the context clearly supported the interpretation that it was meant only to seek confirmation from the hearer, which means that the appropriate phonetic signal would be a falling tone.

"It's a LOVEly DAY, ISN'T it?"

Two students used the complex rise-fall pattern, one used level-rise pattern, another used level-fall pattern and one student used level tone. Since they are at the beginning of their high school education, it cannot be concluded whether that student made a mistake because of the lack of familiarity with the right intonation signal or because of nervousness. Table 1 sums up the measurements for this item and Figure 1 shows F0 tracks of '... *isn't it?*' produced with a level tone (left) and a rise-fall tone (right).

As for the other tag question, it was made clear from the context that the questioner didn't know the answer and so the appropriate phonetic signal would be a rising tone.

"You're not MOving, ARE you?"

Here three students used the appropriate rising pitch contour, one student used level tone and one used level-fall tone. Since this type of tag question is not something that attracts much attention in primary school education, I would conclude that the students who made the mistake are not actually familiar with the kind of intonation that is supposed to be used when tag questions are not used simply for confirmation. Table 2

sums up the measurements for this item and Figure 2 shows F0 tracks of the TU ‘... *are you?*’ produced with a rising tone (left) and a rise-fall tone (right).

### **Choice question**

Choice questions are the kind of questions that give the listener option to choose between two or more items. Here I concentrated on one type of choice questions when the listener is to choose only one of the alternatives. This question is more complex since it requires using rising intonation on the first item and falling on the second.

“Would you LIKE BEER or WINE?”

Only one student used rising intonation for the first item, three students used the inappropriate level intonation and one used level-rise intonation. As for the second item, all students used the appropriate falling intonation. Table 3 sums up the measurements for these items and Figure 3 shows F0 tracks of tone unit ‘... *beer or wine*’ produced with a rising-falling tone (left) and a level-falling tone

### **Wh – question**

The intonation of wh-questions should generally be rising-falling. “English wh-questions show a peak in the wh-word but the utterance usually has another peak that is higher than the wh-word and is perceived as more prominent.” (Ladd, 1997). Here I focused on the analysis of pitch peaks of the question word “what” and words “doing” and “lately”. Word “doing” was supposed to have a higher peak than the question word, and word “lately” was supposed to have a falling intonation.

The question was: “WHAT have you been DOing LATEly?”

Three students pronounced the question appropriately, while two of them produced the highest tone on the question word. However, for only one student the peak of “doing” was actually perceived as higher than the peak in the question word. Since this is not something that is generally taught in primary schools, I suppose that the mistakes the students made were due to the lack of their familiarity with this intonation pattern. Table 4 sums up the measurements for this item and Figure 4 shows F0 tracks of the question produced with a rising tone (left) and a falling tone (right).

### **Yes/no question**

In English, yes/no questions are described as having a typically rising pattern. In the given question it was clear that the questioner was seeking information and thus the expected intonation was to be rising.

The question was: “Hey, are you GOing to MARK’S PARty?”

Three students used level-rise pattern, one used fall-rise pattern and one used level tone to produce the question. It seems that students are aware that they should use rising intonation for this question type. Table 5 sums up the measurements for this item and Figure 5 shows F0 tracks of the question produced with a level-rise pattern (left) and a level tone (right).

### **Conclusion**

The research aimed to check how Serbian EFL students use interrogative intonation at the beginning of their high-school education. Overall impression is that it is generally correct, although there are a few details that could be improved. As expected, the students had most problems with the choice question – the kind of question that uses complex intonation which the students had probably never practised in their primary school education. Both kinds of tag questions (those seeking information and confirmation) were of the same difficulty to the students, although I expected the former to be harder to them since they should have been exposed to a considerable amount of practise with tag questions seeking only confirmation. On the other hand, the students had practically no problems with yes/no and wh-questions.

Although the research was very limited in scope with respect to the number of participants, it suggests that the students have gained satisfactory knowledge on some points in the primary school. It also implies that since they generally had problems with items that were known to them, it might be good to practice intonation on those items with them and after a period of time conduct a similar research.

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## Appendix 1 – Text used for the reading task

A: Hi, Peter!

B: Hi, Sam!

A: Come in. Make yourself comfortable.

B: Thanks!

A: Would you like beer or wine?

B: Wine, please. So, what have you been doing lately?

A: Nothing much. Doing some projects, reading books... It's a lovely day, isn't it?

B: Yes, I'm really enjoying it. Hey, are you going to Mark's party?

A: I'm afraid I can't go. I have to pack some stuff.

B: You're not moving, are you?

A: As a matter of fact I am.

B: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

## Appendix 2 – Tables

**Table 1.** F0 measurements of the pitch movement on the TU '*... isn't it?*'

Student		Pitch movement			Key + tone	Pitch range
		F0 Hertz		Semitones		
Female	1	173	204–165	2.8/-3.7	L-M <sup>-</sup> /	81–402
	2	179	219–156	3.5/-5.8	M-L / \	151–311
	5	203	252–178	3.7/-6	M-L / \	176–281
Male	3	109	127	2.6	L-M <sup>-</sup>	109–196
	4	118	131–94	1.8/-5.7	L-M <sup>-</sup> \	93–163

**Table 2.** F0 measurements of the pitch movement on the TU ‘... are you?’

Student		Pitch movement			Key + tone	Pitch range
		F0 Hertz		Semitones		
Female	1	170	259	7.3	M-H /	92–283
	2	186	195–184	0.8/-1	L <sup>-</sup>	178–242
	5	213	222–175	0.7/-4.1	H-L <sup>-</sup> \	74–252
Male	3	103	149	6.4	L-M /	101–177
	4	101	137	5.3	L-M /	97–161

**Table 3.** F0 measurements of the pitch movement on the TU ‘... beer or wine?’

Student		Beer				Wine				Pitch range
		Pitch movement			Key + tone	Pitch movement			Key + tone	
		F0 Hertz		Semitones		F0 Hertz		Semitones		
Female	1	199	317	8	M-H /	317	175	-10.3	H-M \	83–319
	2	229	204–273	-2 / 5	L-H – /	277	231	-3.1	H-L \	204–291
	5	212	245	2.5	M-H –	271	140	-11.4	H-L \	178–242
Male	3	121	135	1.9	L –	191	111	-9.4	H-L \	111–203
	4	125	139	1.8	L –	128	94	-5.3	M-L \	207–317

**Table 4.** F0 measurements of the pitch peak on words “what”, “doing” and “lately”

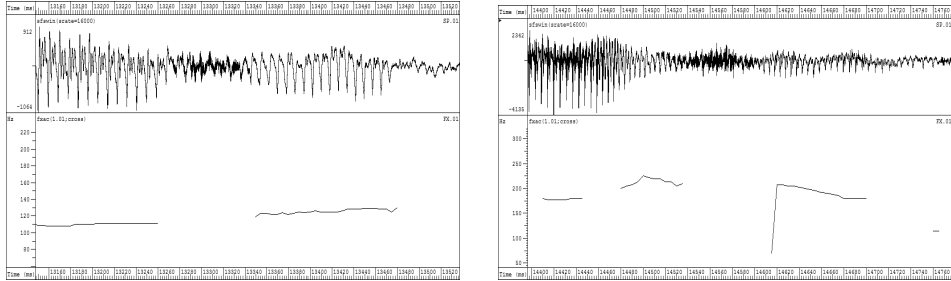
Student		Pitch peak			Semitones	Key	Pitch range
		F0 Hertz (What)	F0 Hertz (doing)	F0 Hertz (lately)			
Female	1	261	270	178	0.6/-7	L-M-L	178–437
	2	260	292	98	2/-19	H-H-L	81–314
	5	272	241	218	-2/-1.7	H-M-M	177–281
Male	3	163	217	137	5/-8	M-H-L	102–222
	4	156	133	100	-2.7/-5	H-M-L	92–167

**Table 5.** F0 measurements of the pitch movement at the end of the TU ‘...Mark’s party?’

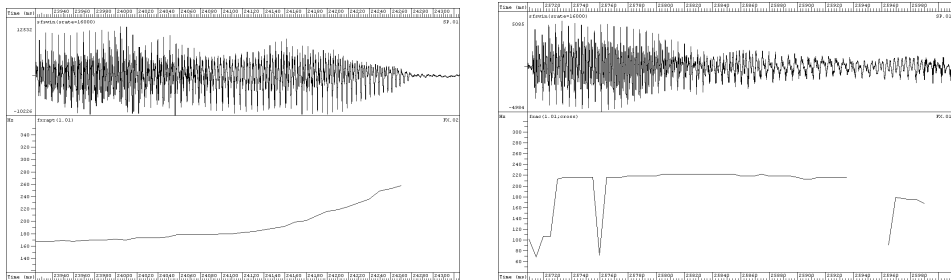
Student		Pitch movement			Key + tone	Pitch range
		F0 Hertz		Semitones		
Female	1	224	194–272	-2.5/5.8	L-M – /	191–313
	2	251	207–302	-3.3/6.5	M-L-H \ /	207–317
	5	214	182–274	-2.8/7.1	L-H – /	171–318
Male	3	119	110–164	-1.4/7	L-M – /	90–246
	4	118	140	3	L-M –	109–160

### Appendix 3 – Tracks of tone units

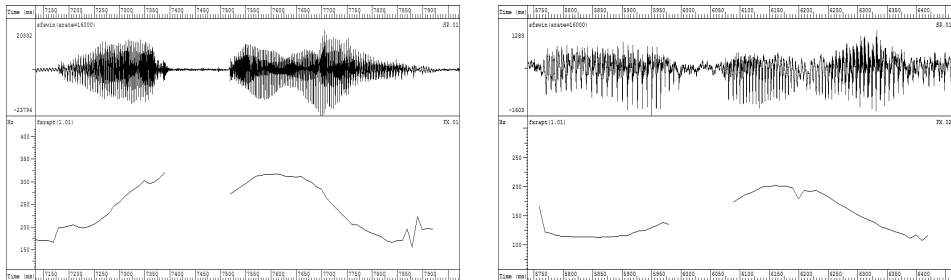
**Figure 1.** F0 tracks of the TU ‘...*isn't it*’ produced with a level contour (student No 3) and a rise-fall contour (student No 2)



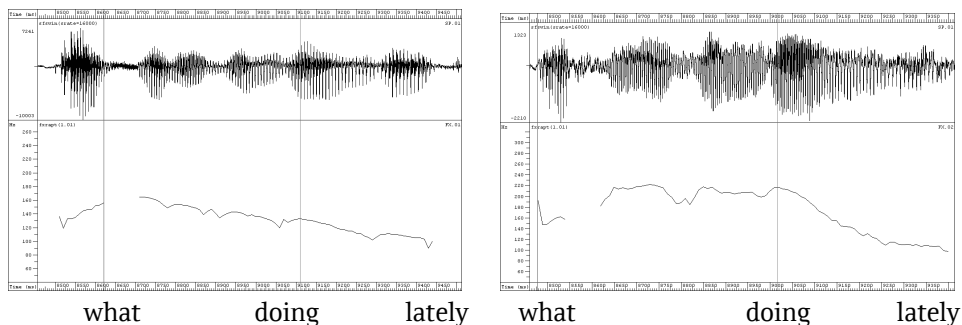
**Figure 2.** F0 tracks of the TU ‘...*are you*’ produced with a rising contour (student No 1) and a level-fall contour (student No 5)



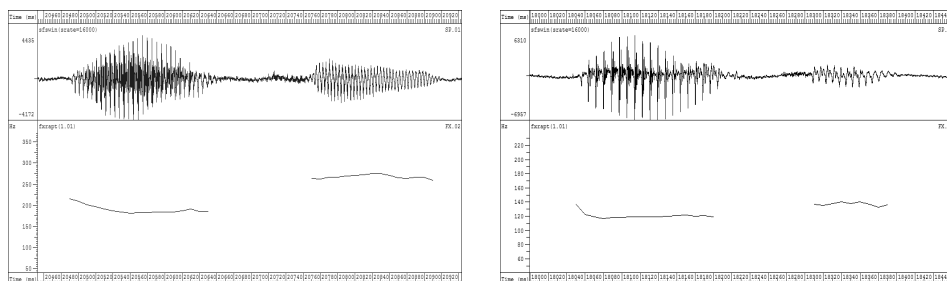
**Figure 3.** F0 tracks of the TU ‘...*beer or wine*’ produced with a rising-falling contour (student No 1) and level-falling contour (student No 3)



**Figure 4.** F0 tracks of the question “What have you been doing lately?” produced without a higher peak in “doing” (student No 4) and a with a higher peak (student No 3)



**Figure 5.** F0 tracks at the end of the TU ‘...Mark’s party’ produced with a level-rise contour (student 5) and a level contour (student No 4)



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## The CLIL Initiative in Vojvodina

**Abstract:** Hard CLIL was initiated in Vojvodina in 2011 by the Provincial Secretariat for Education. Twenty-four kindergarten, primary, and secondary school teachers of Maths, Science, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science and Geography from Sremska Mitrovica, Vrbas and Novi Sad took part in the Project. The paper describes the teacher training course they attended before they started teaching CLIL in September 2011.

The authors of this paper were entrusted with the demanding task of designing the training, delivering it and observing the teachers teaching. The paper gives a detailed description of the work procedure, aims of the training, an overview of the topics covered, participants' concerns, as well as the teacher trainers' impressions of the participants' classes.

**Key words:** hard CLIL, Vojvodina, kindergarten, primary school, secondary school, teacher training

### 1. Rationale for CLIL in Vojvodina

In 2011 the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (APV) decided to fund a project designed by the Secretariat of Education of APV (the Secretariat) aimed at introducing English as a medium of instruction in certain curricular subjects in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in three towns in Vojvodina.

The Secretariat named such education *bilingual* even though it is by virtue of its conception *hard CLIL*<sup>2</sup>. In bilingual education two languages

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<sup>2</sup> In Glušac (2012) it is stated that hard CLIL presupposes that an additional language (other than the mother tongue or a second language) is used as a medium of instruction in teaching other school subjects.

are of equal importance and, hence, both are used equally for instruction. The medium of instruction in such education is a second or native language. The proficiency goal is a native model and authentic materials are used as students have sufficient knowledge of the language to be able to follow it. The goal of bilingual education is not primarily or necessarily language learning.

On the other hand, CLIL classes are taught in a foreign language by teachers who are not necessarily native speakers of the language. In CLIL adapted materials are usually used as students (and some teachers) have a limited command of the language used as a medium of instruction. The proficiency goal is a non-native model, rather than native. Moreover, the goals of CLIL are: acquiring language proficiency through mastering content, improving communication and cognitive skills and well as developing an understanding of cultures, languages etc.

The Project involved teachers and students for whom English was a foreign language. Owing to the lack of adequate teaching resources, the teachers were expected to design their own materials and adapt those normally used for teaching the curricular subjects in Serbian. Hence, a large portion of the teacher training was devoted to designing and adapting teaching materials to suit CLIL students. Moreover, as emphasized in its brochure (Secretariat 2011), the Government and the Secretariat decided that it was critical to initiate CLIL for the following reasons: (1) students would acquire excellent communication competence, (2) students would acquire professional competence – they learn professionally-related vocabulary, (3) students would have better chances to earn an internationally recognized certificate/diploma, (4) students would be enabled to overcome personal, language and culture-bound limitations, (5) students would develop greater tolerance towards other people, cultures and languages, (6) students would have better job opportunities, etc. Moreover, getting engaged in the Project was supposed to help students develop and/or improve their language/communication/cognitive/learning skills across the curriculum. Judging by the aims of the Project, students were expected to acquire a number of language and non-language skills, which is a characteristic of CLIL.

The Project presupposed that certain school subjects (Maths, Science and Geography for primary school; Maths, Chemistry, Physics and Computer Science for secondary school) would be taught in English. More pre-

cisely, 30–45% of the national curriculum was planned to be taught in English during the school year. However, teachers of these subjects needed to find a way to inform children of the equivalent terminology in their mother tongue so as not to deprive them of such knowledge they might need in future. It was emphasized in the brochure (Secretariat 2011) that students who decided to engage in CLIL would use the same materials (prescribed by the Ministry of Education) as those who decided not to engage in the Project. As emphasized by the Secretariat (2011), Serbian and the English languages were not expected to exclude, but to complement, each other.

## **2. Participants**

Schools in Vojvodina that were interested in introducing CLIL and that had adequate subject teachers whose knowledge of English was at B2 level (according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*) were encouraged to apply. Twenty-four kindergarten, primary and secondary school teachers from Sremska Mitrovica, Vrbas and Novi Sad were selected. Ten teachers employed in 3 primary schools taught Maths, Science and Geography, while 4 teachers employed in the only secondary school that participated in the Project taught Physics, Chemistry, Maths and Computer Science. There were also 10 kindergarten teachers from two kindergartens.

Not all teachers' knowledge of English was at the required B2 level, but alongside the teacher training, they were also enrolled in English language courses and were required to pass the First Certificate examination in English administered by the British Council. However, their restricted / limited / less-proficient knowledge of English did not prevent them from active participation in the training.

Before beginning to teach CLIL classes, those teachers were expected to attend the teacher training held from June to October 2011, the aim of which was to equip them with necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills that would aid them in teaching not only content, but certain language (vocabulary, listening, speaking, writing etc.) and non-language skills (culture, communication, critical thinking etc.) alike.

The schools participants worked at were additionally equipped with new technology devices to help them access international resources and improve the quality of their teaching practice.

### **3. Teacher training**

The authors of the paper were entrusted with the exceptionally demanding task of designing the teacher training program, delivering it, and observing CLIL teachers at work.

The authors had a shared understanding of the importance of quality teacher training suited to teachers' different teaching styles, language abilities and varied working environments. The aims of the teacher training were varied: (1) help teachers understand the concept of CLIL and their role in it, (2) raise teachers' awareness of possible difficulties that may arise in CLIL classes, (3) equip teachers with necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills to teach content and language in a foreign language, (4) raise teachers' awareness of new age skills (critical thinking, collaboration, project work etc.), (5) equip teachers with skills necessary to perform assessment, (6) equip teachers with necessary skills to adapt and design their own materials, and (7) provide individual guidance/support to teachers. This training was also prepared as an intensive language course in order to provide teachers with an additional opportunity to improve their language proficiency.

The teacher training was designed to last 48 hours. The first part of the training (12 hours) was delivered in June 2011, whereas the second part was held after the summer break, August – October 2011. The part of the training held in June was delivered to all participants participating together, whereas in the second part of the training, owing to the fact that it was more practical, the participants were divided in 2 groups: (1) kindergarten and lower grade primary teachers and (2) higher grade primary teachers and secondary school teachers. Each training session was held 9am – 3pm on a Saturday. The morning sessions were aimed at all teachers as they were instructed on different aspects of CLIL teaching. In the afternoon sessions, the participants worked in two groups depending on the level at which they taught. Those sessions were primarily aimed at teachers reflecting on their own students and working environments, as well as on working on their individual lesson plans assisted by the teacher trainer. They were expected to incorporate into their own lesson plans what they had learned in the morning sessions.

The participants were expected to choose a unit from a course book they were to use and work on a lesson plan gradually, until the end of the training, with the aim of incorporating all aspects covered in the training ses-



sions. At times, they were invited to present part of their lesson plan, share with others what they changed according to what they had learned in the training etc. The last training session was devoted to the participants' presentations of part of their lesson plan to their fellow participants.

#### **4. Topics covered**

A variety of topics were covered during the teacher training. The first part of the training (delivered in June) covered topics such as: ELT methodology, communicative language teaching, grammar, lexis, phonology, using mother tongue in foreign language teaching, the role of error, students' characteristics, giving instructions, giving feedback etc. The first part of the Project was delivered by the second author of this paper and an English language teacher who had to leave the Project and was subsequently replaced by the first author of this paper.

The second part of the Project was slightly changed after feedback received from the participants after the first part. The topics covered in this part included the following: planning a CLIL lesson, adapting and creating materials, four language skills, work formats, classroom language, critical thinking, assessment, managing a change, teaching other things in a CLIL class etc.

#### **5. Teacher training outcomes**

The teacher training was designed in the previously described manner so as to enable the participants to gain certain theoretical knowledge and, more importantly, practical skills that would help them in their teaching as well as in overcoming some challenges that they would indisputably face.

The participants were expected to be able to act according to their learners' characteristics. More precisely, they were expected to be aware of their students' individual learning and personal characteristics in order to boost their motivation, select appropriate teaching methods and work formats to employ, choose appropriate feedback when an error appears, and the like.

The participants were also expected to gain skills related to planning successful CLIL classes. They were expected to be able to plan an individual lesson, as well as a series of closely related lessons. Moreover, they needed to know how to design those activities that were aimed at improv-

ing both students' content knowledge and language skills, how to incorporate multi-media for effective and engaging classes, as well as how to select appropriate types of activities.

As regards material selection, adaptation and design, it was important for the participants to understand the importance of the 4 Cs<sup>3</sup> when choosing, adapting or designing materials. Namely, the participants were expected to be able to select appropriate materials to suit their different students' needs or to adapt or design their own materials that would enable their students to broaden their knowledge related to different cultures, that would improve their cognitive skills and content knowledge and that would help them improve their communication skills in English. When selecting, adapting and/or designing teaching materials, the teachers needed to cater for different learning styles and students' personal characteristics while conforming to the prescribed national curriculum.

When delivering a lesson, the teachers were expected to show that they had successfully mastered the integration of both content and language, that they used effective and appropriate classroom language, that they were confident about when to use L1 and/or L2, that they employed a variety of practices which they could alter or change if a situation required from them to do so, even if they had not previously planned it. Moreover, in their lesson delivery they needed to demonstrate a good command of the language used as a medium of instruction.

As for assessment, the teachers were expected to be able to use different types of assessment, design a test and set assessment criteria. Moreover, it was expected that they would become aware of the necessity of determining a focus of assessment so as to choose or design an appropriate assessment tool and set appropriate criteria. Moreover, the teachers were expected to be able to use different kinds of feedback in different situations and for different learners.

## **6. Participants' concerns**

As those teachers were trained even after they had begun teaching CLIL, at the beginning of each training time was set aside for a discussion

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<sup>3</sup> According to Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols (2008: 31), there are four principles that contribute to a successful CLIL lesson: cognition, community, content and communication.

about those issues that had emerged during the previous week – their concerns, challenges, achievements etc.

Owing to the fact that they were the first CLIL teachers in Vojvodina and that not all project stages had been realized, the participants had a number of difficulties that made their work even more challenging. They did not have adequate course books and had to adapt or design teaching materials for every class. Moreover, using L1 in CLIL classes seemed to be a recurring concern. They wanted to know whether L1 was allowed at all, and if it was allowed, to what extent they could use it etc. The participants wanted to know whether they could switch to L1 if they were unable to express themselves clear enough in English, as well as whether they should allow their students to respond in L1. Furthermore, they were very concerned about how to assess their students appropriately and what to assess. They did not consider themselves to be proficient language users and wanted to know whether it was acceptable to assess only their students' content knowledge. It was the participants' constant concern whether their students would perform well in standardized tests owing to their exposure to English, rather than Serbian, as a means of instruction. Besides that, they had a number of administrative questions, one of them being whether the descriptive grade to young students they needed to write in each student's personal record needed to be in Serbian or in English. Their school administration could not provide them with an appropriate answer as it was not given any clear instructions on how to resolve such issues.

Not only were the participants working on improving their own language proficiency and attending the teacher training, but they also faced a number of administrative challenges that we, teacher trainers, could not help them with.

## **7. Observing teachers at work**

Vital parts of the teacher training were visiting the teachers in their 'natural' environment and observing them teaching a CLIL lesson. The teacher trainers were expected to visit each teacher once, observe his/her class, and meet the teacher afterwards to share with him/her her impressions. The teacher trainer who worked with the teachers teaching in kindergartens and lower grades of primary school in the afternoon sessions visited those teachers, whereas the other teacher trainer visited the teachers working in the secondary school and higher grades of primary school.

The teacher trainers would contact the teacher to be observed well in advance and set a time for class observation so as to enable the teacher to prepare himself/herself.

The classroom observation revealed the following: (1) the teachers managed their classes very well, (2) they demonstrated an appropriate use of both languages, (3) judging on the activities, materials and classroom delivery, the teachers catered for different students' needs, and (4) students were very active, even those who did not have a good command of English. On the other hand, the classroom observations also revealed that the lessons lacked certain component parts that are important if good learning outcomes are to be achieved. Namely, in most teachers' classes an effective lead-in was missing. Upon entering a classroom, most teachers started teaching immediately. Furthermore, most teachers did not make use of different work formats. In most cases, students worked individually or in pairs, rarely in groups. Besides that, it was evident that the teachers provided students with information and knowledge rather than with opportunities that would enable them search for information and knowledge themselves.

The teacher trainers came to an understanding that the teachers were shouldering different burdens at the same time: they were pioneers in teaching CLIL and had no colleagues with appropriate CLIL experience they could turn to for help; they were trying to incorporate new teaching strategies; they lacked adequate teaching materials; they were teaching in a foreign language etc. The teacher trainers believed that gradually, as teachers became more confident and skilled at teaching CLIL, they would improve the aspects the teacher trainers drew their attention to after class observations. Some teachers emphasized that they were unable to improve some of those aspects due to highly demanding curricula and lack of time.

Discussions with teachers after classroom observations revealed that they were very satisfied with their CLIL classes. They thought that CLIL classes improved their students' classroom participation and their learning. They all agreed that CLIL presupposes thorough preparation, but their students improved learning was worth the extra effort they were investing.

## **8. Overall impressions**

Implementation of CLIL presupposes active participation of numerous stakeholders and very detailed planning. The Project described in this pa-

per was an exceptional opportunity to improve the quality of education and students' learning, as well as to provide them with better prospects in the future. The teachers who participated in the Project, the head teachers who decided to apply to the Secretariat, the parents of those students who consented to their children being involved in CLIL and the students themselves showed great enthusiasm and willingness to engage in a new form of education they thought was worth every challenge they knew they would face. Unexpected challenges emerged, however, and the teachers faced insurmountable problems at times. That only convinced us even more that if it is to be successful, CLIL needs to be carefully planned by a number of different stakeholders and each of them should have a specific role in the process of implementation of CLIL.

Moreover, the teachers need to be provided with guidance and support throughout the project, not just in its initial phase. It is of vital importance to evaluate the project and its effects as the data collected through evaluation would be of utmost importance for the sustainability of the project and implementation of the same or similar projects in the future. Unfortunately, no evaluation was conducted as part of the Project described in this paper, which hampered the teacher trainers, and other stakeholders involved, to see the effects of their month-long work.

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## Native American Culture in EFL Classroom

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is two-fold: first, to provide theoretical justification for integrating culturally-based contents with foreign language instruction; and second, to illustrate those theoretical considerations with a practical example of a classroom activity based on the Native American cultural heritage. The first part gives an overview of major theories founded on the hypothesis of integrated language and culture teaching, whereas the second part of the paper considers the most important aspects of teaching English to young learners. In the third part, after a brief consideration of the place of Native American culture within the framework of U. S. culture in general, we present an idea for a classroom activity which re-contextualizes the Native American legend of Princess Pocahontas and adapts it to the EFL teaching context, which involves young learners.

**Key words:** TEFL, language, culture, young learners, Native Americans

### 1. Introduction

This paper deals with culturally based contents in EFL classrooms. The authors first give an overview of major theoretical considerations related to the introduction of cultural content into the language classroom, thus providing justifying principles for broadening the goals of teaching English as a foreign language. As the paper is intended predominantly for those who teach English in (Serbian) elementary schools, the authors provide some of the basic principles of teaching young learners in the second part of the paper. Those language-teaching principles are then combined with

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the principles of teaching culture to young learners. The third part of the paper contains a series of practical classroom activities intended to promote and improve intercultural competence of young learners. All of the activities are based on the story of Native American princess Pocahontas. As this particular story has been an inspiration for many oral and written interpretations, and lately, for numerous film adaptations, it was deemed that it would also be interesting enough for (Serbian) young learners. The conclusion section summarizes the main purposes of the paper and gives some directions for further research in the areas of promoting intercultural competence and cooperation.

## **2. (Why) should we teach culture in language classrooms?**

In order to provide justification for the inclusion of culturally-based contents into primary school EFL teaching, it is first necessary to establish the connection between culture and language. Coming up with a single definition of culture is not an easy task and in many instances it turned out to be an almost impossible one. For the purposes of this paper, we have chosen two definitions which seem to cover some major aspects of this complex notion. Firstly, according to Geertz (1977: 89), culture is “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life”. Similarly, Lustig and Koester (2010: 25) state that “Culture is a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms and social practices which affect the behaviors of a relatively huge group of people”. Both definitions highlight the notions of transmitting, sharing and communicating, thus putting language at the very core of any consideration of culture. As language is a basic means of disseminating any particular culture, it stands to reason that learning/teaching a language necessarily involves learning/teaching certain aspects of a culture in which that particular language is used. According to Byram (1989: 22), language has a crucial role in identifying one’s cultural identity and the comprehension of the meanings it transmits is closely connected to the comprehension of that culture.

Such views contributed to the emergence of the so-called *intercultural approach* to English language teaching, which emphasizes an integrated approach to foreign language learning/teaching. Thus, the aims of foreign



language teaching shifted from achieving “native speaker competence” to “intercultural communicative competence”, which “includes the ability to understand the language and behavior of the target community, and explain it to members of the ‘home’ community – and vice versa.” (Corbett, 2003: 2). Such definition adds another important role to the foreign language teacher/learner: that of “an intercultural mediator”, i. e. someone who is capable of critically reflecting on the relationship between two cultures (Byram, 2008: 68). Acting as (rather than being) an intercultural mediator involves a set of behaviors that Byram (*Ibid*: 69) categorizes into: “attitudes”, “knowledge”, “skills of interpreting and relating”, “skills of discovery and interaction” and “critical cultural awareness/political education”. In other words, an intercultural mediator is supposed to exhibit curiosity and openness towards the target culture, knowledge of the societal and individual interaction processes in both native and target cultures, while at the same time he/she should be able to gain, operate and critically reflect on the knowledge of a culture and its practices, be it a native or a target culture (*Ibid.*).

Having established somewhat broadened goals of teaching English as a foreign language, it is now necessary that we consider the Serbian teaching context.

### **3. Principles of teaching English to young learners**

As previously indicated, this section will deal with a more specific teaching context – that of Serbian primary schools. We will first give some facts regarding the introduction of the English language into primary school curriculums and then present some principles and techniques of teaching English to young learners.

#### **3.1. Teaching English as a foreign language in elementary schools in Serbia**

The practice of teaching English to young learners from ages 7 to 11 was introduced into Serbian schools in 2003/2004 school year. From that moment onwards, children started learning English from the first grade of primary school. Teaching English as a foreign language in primary schools is still gaining popularity throughout the world. It is therefore, important to identify the types of materials that best prepare pupils for learning the

L2 as well as to find the best teaching and learning strategies that will enhance learning outcomes. According to Slattery and Willis (2001: 4) the teacher should be aware of the principles of teaching young learners in order to successfully plan and organize a lesson. The teacher should know that learners from ages 7 to 11 learn in a variety of ways: by watching, listening, imitating, doing things etc. Young learners are not able to understand grammatical rules and explanations about language but are comfortable with routines and enjoy repetition. Then, they can generally imitate the sounds they hear quite accurately and copy the way adults speak but they often talk in their mother tongue. Furthermore, young learners have quite a short attention span and because of that, they need a variety of materials that will provide the possibilities for using their imagination (*Ibid.*).

When it comes to the Serbian teaching context, it is very important to have in mind that young learners start to read and write in their native language at the same time as the instruction in English begins. Therefore, gradual introducing new items is more than appropriate. Young learners from ages 7 to 11 develop as thinkers and they learn to make the difference between the real and the imaginary. They can work with others, learn from others, be reliable, and take responsibility for class activities and routines.

Knowing these young learners' characteristics, the teacher can help his/her learners to learn better and to make learning English enjoyable and above all, to form a positive attitude towards language learning in his/her students. These are the tips that the authors Slattery and Willis (2001:4–5) give to teachers:

- *Don't worry about mistakes. Be encouraging. Make sure children feel comfortable, and not afraid to take part.*
- *Talk a lot to them in English, especially about things they can see.*
- *Play games, sing songs, say rhymes and chants together.*
- *Tell simple stories in English, using pictures and acting with different voices.*
- *Constantly recycle new language but don't be afraid to add new things or to use words they won't know.*
- *Plan lessons with varied activities, some quiet, some noisy, some sitting, some standing and moving.*
- *Encourage them to read in English (stories, comics, reading games)*

- *Encourage them to work meanings out for themselves*
- *Explain things about language, but only very simple things*
- *Use a wide range of language input as their model for language use*
- *Encourage creative writing and help them to experiment with language*
- *Explain your intentions and ask them to help with organization of activities*

With these basic guidelines on teaching young learners in mind, it is now necessary firstly, to consider their theoretical application and integration into the overall culturally-oriented curriculum and secondly, to provide examples of possibilities for their practical application. The following sections will be dedicated to these two goals respectively.

### 3.2. Teaching culture to young learners

It has already been stated that teaching the development of intercultural competence has been included among the aims of primary foreign language instruction and that it has moved from an additional lesson to an integral part of the target language curriculum. When it comes to young learners, it is necessary to bear in mind the limitations posed by their age, their degree of mental development and their level of knowledge of both native and target languages. Therefore, both the contents taught and the techniques used need to be learner-appropriate. Or, as Doyé (1999, quoted in Byram, 2008: 81) put it: “‘Child appropriateness’ does not mean that only the easily accessible contents are dealt with but that the educationally necessary subjects are treated in a manner that is adequate to the development of the children.”

Regarding the contents incorporated into the curriculum, especially if we take into consideration the fact that Serbian and Anglo-American cultures are relatively distant (and not only in terms of geography), a good starting point could be using the representations of Anglo-American culture that Serbian children can encounter in mass media. This is in line with the suggestions made by Curtain and Pesola (1994, quoted in Byram, 2008: 81), whose idea is that cultural contents for the integrated curriculum should be drawn from the representations categorized as: *cultural symbols* (such as flags and insignia), *cultural products* (stories and songs, coins and stamps) and *cultural practices* (habitual forms of greeting, gestures, eating and drinking practices). Byram (*Ibid.*) also mentions

Skender's suggestions for teaching French in Croatia as useful techniques for teaching culture in primary school classrooms: identification of elements of the foreign culture in the children's environment, use of typical images, emphasis on the ludic dimension of learning through songs, games, rhymes, stories and creation of the target language atmosphere. The most complex and systematized approach is given by Doyé (1999, quoted in Byram, 2008: 82) who identifies 7 principles, goals and outcomes of teaching intercultural competence:

- *the selection of learner-appropriate contents,*
- *relativising the opposition of US vs. THEM (insider group and outsider group)*
- *taking perspectives and decentring;*
- *modifying stereotypes;*
- *unlearning prejudice;*
- *preventing discrimination;*
- *acquiring tolerance.*

This implies that the primary school teacher must be aware of the emerging knowledge of and feelings about other countries, including ones which may be associated with the specific language being taught.

#### **4. Native American Culture in EFL Classroom**

In this part of the paper we will provide an example of how cultural contents may be integrated into the primary school curriculum. Firstly, we will provide justification for the selected contents and secondly, we will outline several activities that could be done in the EFL classroom with the purpose of enhancing learners' intercultural competence.

##### **4.1. Selecting contents: Pocahontas – history, legend, popular culture**

When it comes to selecting the contents to be taught in the EFL classroom, the first thing that needs to be considered, as suggested above is the appropriateness to the age and the interests of the learners. The story of Pocahontas, an Indian princess and an English lady seems to meet the above-mentioned criteria in terms of interest and appropriateness. Choosing this particular part from the (Native) American heritage is also in line with the already mentioned suggestions that typical images, cultural products – stories, legends and songs – should be used in the classroom with

the purpose of reducing stereotypes and prejudices and promoting tolerance.

The story of Pocahontas, although still a subject of much debate and controversy seems appropriate precisely because of the interest it has continued to provoke. The historical details of her life are constantly mingled with legendary and romanticized stereotypes, subject to many oral and written interpretations. The daughter of Native American chief Powhatan who later married a Virginian colonist John Rolfe and became Lady Rebecca and was even presented at the British Court continues to fascinate and inspire people even today. She is celebrated as the savior of the first English colony, the one who helped Captain John Smith and his colonists to survive in the New World. However, in the Native American accounts of the same story her fate is symbolic of the fate of her tribe, who, after the initial peaceful period, had to succumb to the overpowering influence of the white settlers, only to be completely marginalized and deprived of their native land.

Another reason for choosing this story is the fact that it was recontextualized in an animated film, released in 1995 by Walt Disney Pictures. As it is a content available to Serbian learners, the assumption was that it could be the starting point in teaching Native American culture within the TEFL framework in Serbia. The following section will present several classroom activities based on the history and legend of Pocahontas, as well as the Pocahontas animated film.

#### 4.2. Some ideas for classroom activities

In this part of a paper we present some ideas for classroom activities which re-contextualize the Native American legend of Princess Pocahontas and adapt it to the EFL teaching context which involves young learners.

*Activity 1: Compare the two photos of Pocahontas; Pocahontas as a legend, on one side, and Pocahontas as the cartoon character, on the other.<sup>2</sup>*

This activity may serve to introduce the story of Pocahontas to young learners. They are shown two pictures of Pocahontas: one, a historical portrait, the other an image from the animated film. The teacher may ask the

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<sup>2</sup> For the pictures of Pocahontas, see for example, <http://pocahontas.morenus.org/> or <http://www.nps.gov/jame/historyculture/pocahontas-her-life-and-legend.htm>.

learners whether they are familiar with the legend/film of Pocahontas and recount some of the basic facts related to the life of Pocahontas. On the linguistic level, this activity may serve to review some of the basic vocabulary related to colors, clothes, physical features, etc.

*Activity 2: Learn a song from a cartoon “Steady as the Beating Drum”.<sup>3</sup>*

The song used is from the Disney animated film. This playful activity will enable young learners to learn several simple phrases in the original Native American dialect of the Powhatan tribe and their counterparts in American English. Furthermore, the vocabulary used in the song can be used for a number of activities. The idea is to use learners’ presumed acquaintance with the cartoon (cultural product) and the title song in order to introduce new vocabulary, while promoting cultural diversity in the classroom.

*Activity 3: Learn the words from the song and the cartoon. Draw a mind map and organize the concepts according to the class they belong to.*

The vocabulary from the song is introduced by organizing it into mental maps according to the categories certain words belong to. For example: Animals (raccoon, humming bird, rabbit); Plants (corn, cedar, squash); Adjectives (steady, sweet, clean). Thus, learning the new vocabulary is made easier and more systematic and learners are prepared for the next activity.

*Activity 4: Choose Your Native American Name<sup>4</sup>*

Learners are told that Pocahontas means ‘playful one’ in the language of the Powhatan tribe. They are also informed that in Pocahontas’ day, girls were often named after plants, and boys were named after animals. Learners are, then, encouraged to think of their own Native American names combining various adjectives and animal/plant names and their own interests and qualities. This activity may be particularly useful in promoting intercultural competence, because learners are directly involved in creating the target language atmosphere, while at the same time minimizing the US vs. THEM opposition.

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<sup>3</sup> Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oC0422nteJg>.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from: [http://virginiaindians.pwnet.org/lesson\\_plans/elementary.php](http://virginiaindians.pwnet.org/lesson_plans/elementary.php)

*Activity 5: Color the characters from the cartoon*<sup>5</sup>

This activity is intended to involve young learners' imagination and to provoke their imaginative responses to the cultural contents taught. Furthermore, it is in line with the previously mentioned recommendation that the activities used should be varied in terms that they mobilize various learners' faculties.

*Activity 6: Do a picture dictation based on an image from the cartoon*

For this purpose, any image related to the Pocahontas story may be used. The vocabulary taught is thus recycled, and learners' mental faculties are fully engaged.

All of the above mentioned activities are merely starting point ideas on how to incorporate cultural contents into the primary school foreign language syllabus. All of them can be varied and adjusted to the various proficiency levels of learners. In addition, all of them are intended for the enhancement of learners' intercultural competence. Based on the authors' practical experience, all of these activities are both age-appropriate and thought-provoking and will hopefully be useful for English language teachers in Serbian primary schools.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to consider the issue of introducing culturally-based contents into the language classroom from two perspectives: a theoretical and a practical one. After discussing some of the basic justifications for intercultural approach in the language classrooms, we illustrated those theoretical considerations with practical classroom activities based on cultural contents. Intercultural competence is certainly not attainable in all its dimensions at the end of primary schooling, but the foundation for this important competence can be laid (Byram, 2008: 83). If foreign language teaching in primary education is to contribute seriously to the international education of young people, it has to recognize the complexity of the task, to include intercultural competence among its aims, to seek relationships with other aspects of the curriculum in systematic ways and to demand properly trained teachers and appropriate teach-

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<sup>5</sup> Available at: [http://www.hellokids.com/r\\_328/coloring-page/disney-coloring-pages/pocahontas-coloring-pages](http://www.hellokids.com/r_328/coloring-page/disney-coloring-pages/pocahontas-coloring-pages).

ing materials (Byram, 2008: 87). Teachers, therefore, have an important task to use the available materials – literature, films, mass media, etc. and incorporate them into the language teaching syllabus with the purpose of enabling their students to become not only linguistically, but also interculturally competent.

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## Teaching Culture through Proverbs

**Abstract:** Teaching culture is an integral part of teaching any foreign language, and cultural competence is the fifth skill needed for mastering a language successfully. English is no exception to the rule, but, unfortunately, our school curricula still do not dedicate much of a class time to teaching pupils about the culture of England and the United Kingdom in general. Among the material used in English language teaching, proverbs have a very important place. They have always been one of the best and most direct ways of learning about the tradition, customs, habits, folklore and beliefs of the English people. Although today proverbs may seem to be a bit out of fashion, pupils can still gain a lot of cultural knowledge from them and learn a lot about the history of the country, which will surely help them to observe the background and the origin of the language itself.

**Key words:** Foreign language learning, cultural competence, proverbs, tradition, customs

### I

Learning a foreign language does not mean acquiring linguistic competence only. Producing the right utterances, grammatically correct sentences and phonetically acceptable sounds is not enough for anyone to say that he/she had mastered a foreign language. Foreign language learning is comprised of several components, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency, as well as a change in attitudes towards one's own or another culture. Cultural competence, i. e., the knowledge of the conventions, customs, beliefs, and systems of meaning of another country, is indisputably an integral part of foreign language learning, and many teachers have seen it as their goal to incorporate the teaching of culture into the foreign language curriculum. Without the knowledge of the cultural patterns of the country whose language we are

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learning, we would not be able to understand and accept differences between nations and would be led into making unpleasant and very often dangerous mistakes in communication with the native speakers. Krashen said that “culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them” (Krashen, 1993: 1).

There are many definitions of culture. Duranti says that culture is ‘something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction, and, of course, through linguistic communication’ (Duranti, 1997: 24). Saville-Troike differs between the “‘material’ manifestations of culture that are easily seen and ‘non-material’ ones that are more difficult to observe.” (Saville-Troike, 1975: 83). Goode, Sockalingam, Brown and Jones define culture as an ‘integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations” (Goode, Sockalingam, Brown, & Jones, 2000: 5).

In foreign language teaching a difference is often made between the “*big C*” and “*little c*” culture. The “*big C*” culture refers to that culture which is most visible. Some visible forms of culture include holidays, art, popular culture, literature and food. When learning about a new culture, the “*big C*” cultural elements would be discovered first, as they are the most overt forms of culture. The “*little c*” culture refers to the more invisible type of culture associated with a region, group of people, language, etc. Some examples of “*little c*” culture include communication styles, verbal and non-verbal language symbols, cultural norms (what is proper and improper in social interactions), ways of behaving, myths and legends, etc.

Although it is obvious that foreign language learning must imply the incorporation of many different types of cultural patterns which can be found in the country whose language we are learning, our national school curricula still overlook this fact to a great extent. Only a few of the foreign language classes in our schools are dedicated to the culture of a foreign

country and its manifestations. The most often chosen cultural topics are mainly those dealing with food, national holidays or folk songs and customs. Very often, talk about culture is only a pleasant diversion or a nice way to end the lesson. The pupils surely need a more thorough explanation of the customs and habits of other people, because, without the knowledge of a foreign culture many stereotypes which are constantly being repeated are, and will always be, taken for granted. Cultural stereotypes are dangerous because they distort our picture of a country and its people and often make us come to the wrong conclusions, unfavorable attitudes and narrow-mindedness. Some of the cultural stereotypes often connected with Great Britain would include “five o'clock tea”, “fish and chips” as the traditional English fast-food, the commonly accepted opinion that all English people are cold and reserved, or the one about London being always covered with fog, as can still be seen in films about Sherlock Holmes. Although English people nowadays drink coffee like the rest of the world, eat Indian, Chinese or Pakistan food more than traditional “fish and chips” and are very kind to every foreigner, these former stereotypes are still repeated as commonplace in our school curricula.

People learn about any culture by means of *cultural knowledge* or *cultural experience*. Cultural experience is gained through traveling to the country or a region where the language is spoken or from personal contact with the native speakers. These days, owing to the economical situation in our country, the chances for this kind of experience are very limited for most of our students, and for most foreign language teachers, as well. On the other hand, when talking about the English language, cultural knowledge can be gained easily, since authentic material about the country, its people and culture is easily available – a fact that enables English-language teachers to introduce their students to real-life situations and true cultural experiences.

## II

Besides using literature, films, music, video clips, radio and TV shows as teaching material in our English language classes, a good way to make the English culture closer to our students is to use English proverbs. The study of proverbs is called *paremiology* from Greek *παροιμία* – *paroimía*, meaning “a proverb”. The Collins Cobuild Dictionary defines a proverb as: “... a short sentence that people often quote, which gives advice or tells you something about life” (English Dictionary for Advanced Learners,

2001: 1234). Most proverbs have their origin in oral tradition, and state a generally accepted truth, or “folk wisdom”. That wisdom is transferred from generation to generation. Proverbs strongly reflect the cultural values and everyday life of the people who speak that language. The history of the use of proverbs has constantly been a progression from the concrete to the abstract. The original, straightforward meaning of some proverbs is very often lost or changed over time, and sometimes even becomes confusing and incomprehensible for modern generations. But, the truth concealed in each proverb remains the same and in different ways manages to reach every new generation.

What are the main characteristics of proverbs? In the first place, they are short and because of that easy to remember. In order to convey a message in a concise way, and to attract the attention of people of different ages and social status, proverbs use a specific sentence pattern and different rhetoric techniques. The sentence pattern used is often symmetrical. The proverbs: “*Easy come, easy go*”, “*No pain, no gain*”, “*First come, first served*” and “*Where there’s a will, there’s a way*” show this sentence symmetry. But, not only is the sentence pattern often symmetrical – the choice of the word type is similar, and the number of syllable is the same, as can also be noticed in the examples quoted above. The rhetorical techniques used in proverbs include rhyme, rhythm, repetition, alliteration, assonance, contrast, metaphor, simile, metonymy, hyperbole, personification, comparison and many others. Here are some examples for each one of them:

1) Rhyme:

*A stitch in time saves nine.*  
*An apple a day keeps the doctor away.*  
*Haste makes waste.*  
*No pain, no gain.*  
*A friend in need is a friend indeed.*  
*When the cat is away, the mice will play.*

2) Repetition:

*Where there’s a will, there’s a way.*  
*In for a penny, in for a pound.*  
*Out of sight, out of mind.*  
*The more you get, the more you want.*  
*A friend in need is a friend indeed.*  
*Like father, like son.*

3) Alliteration:

*Forgive and forget.  
The fruit does not fall far from the tree.  
Live and let live.  
Better bend than break.  
Curiosity killed the cat.*

4) Assonance:

*Seeing is believing.*

5) Contrast:

*A chain is no stronger than its weakest link.  
One man's loss is another man's gain.  
To err is human, to forgive divine.  
A black hen lays a white egg.*

6) Metaphor

*Silence is golden.  
Yesterday is ashes, tomorrow wood.  
Revenge is a dish best served cold.  
The eyes are the window of the soul.  
Ignorance is bliss.*

7) Simile

*As busy as a bee.  
As soft as velvet.  
As is the gardener, so is the garden.  
Like father, like son.*

8) Metonymy

*The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.*

9) Hyperbole

*All is fair in love and war.  
The end justifies the means.  
All roads lead to Rome.  
A drowning man will clutch at straws.  
An ant may well destroy a whole dam.  
Faith will move mountains.*

10) Personification

*Actions speak louder than words.  
The pot calls the kettle black.  
Walls have ears.  
When fortune smiles, embrace her.*

11) Comparison

*Sleep is better than medicine.  
Well done is better than well said.  
A good name is better than a good face.*

One very important characteristic of proverbs is their vivid imagery which helps the reader to make the right sense of each one of them. These vivid images also help to convey the message more easily. So, when thinking about the proverbs such as “*Faith will move mountains*”, “*A rolling stone gathers no moss*”, “*Every cloud has a silver lining*”, “*Good fences make good neighbors*” or “*The road to hell is paved with good intentions*”, the mental images appearing in our mind resemble the paintings of famous artists.

### III

Proverbs always refer to the culture and tradition of the country from which they originate. Some proverbs date from ancient times and have their origin in the Bible, so they are familiar and accepted in the same way by all the Christian people – the English people being no exception. Such is the case with the proverbs: “*God moves in a mysterious way*”, “*Heaven takes care of children, sailors and drunken men*”, “*God helps them that help themselves*” or “*He who casts the first stone should be without sin*”. William George Smith, the compiler of “*The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*” says in his Introduction that: “There were originally two sources of proverbial wisdom. One was the common man, from whom came the proverbs of distilled experience such as ‘*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*’. The other was the wise man, or oracle, whose utterances were the result of reflection, and were received as rules of life by the folk, who had neither time nor mental capacity to meditate upon fundamental truths. The ordinary man was busy making sure that the bird remained in his hand. Once he had discovered the uselessness of two birds in the bush, or ten in the wood, or a hundred in the air, as against the practical satisfaction of one

firmly seized hold of, he registered this conviction as a bit of everyday common sense which it would be well to remember, and passed it on. His comment became a familiar saying, a byword, a proverb (The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs, 1935, p. vii).

Proverbs made and used by the common men are the result of a long and repeated life experience, and as such they reflect the conditions and environment in which those men lived. They tell us about the professions of the ordinary people in England, about the food they produced and used, about traditional ways of dressing, the animals they kept and the folklore beliefs and traditions they have preserved.

Many proverbs refer to peasants and their everyday life. Long before the Industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, England had been an agricultural country and peasants comprised the majority of its population. Their life was conditioned by the changes in nature that surrounded them, first of all by changes of the weather conditions. By observing and remembering the influence of these factors on his life, the English peasant tried to transfer his experience to the coming generations in a form of wise sayings. So the proverbs like *“He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son”*, *“As you sow, so shall you reap”*, *“One year seeding means seven years weeding”*, *“Make hay while the sun shines”*, *“The higher the tree, the sweeter the plum”*, although today understood in a more metaphorical sense, were, at the time of their origin, just the simple everyday advice given to those having to make their living by working on the soil. Many proverbs relating to weather conditions have also time references in them- either talking about the time of year or the time of day that had to be taken into consideration when undertaking any job connected with agriculture. Having observed during the course of time that *“March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers”*, *“St Swithin`s day, if thou does rain, for forty days it will remain, St Swithin`s day if thou be fair for forty days twill rain no more”*, *“Rain before seven, fine before eleven”*, *“When grass is dry at morning lightlook for rain before the night”*, *“Evening red and morning grey, two sure signs of one fine day”*, *“Cold is the night when the stars shine bright”* and *“Red sky at night, shepherds delight, red sky in the morning, shepherds warning”*, the English peasant tried to transfer this experience to his descendants. Peasants` lives also revolved around and depended on the animals raised on the fields and in stables. Among the animals, sheep were the most useful for the economy of the country, so many

proverbs are referring to them: *"You might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb"*, *"One foolish sheep will lead the flock"*, *"When one shears the sheep, the skin of a ram trembles"*, *"There is a black sheep in every flock"*, *"Who makes himself a sheep will be eaten by the wolves"* and *"To set the wolf to keep the sheep"*. Besides sheep other domestic animals are also very often mentioned in the proverbs. So people said: *"Do not search for a calf under an ox"*, *"Never look a gift horse in the mouth"*, *"You can lead a horse to the water but you can't make him drink"*, *"Don't count your chickens until they are hatched"*, *"Do not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs"*, *"Let sleeping dogs lie"*, *"Curiosity killed the cat"*, and so on.

While the common people in England were busy plowing their fields and raising animals in order to survive, the gentry led their own life, living in castles, going hunting, making wars and enjoying good food and drink. Many of the proverbs still keep the memories of such life. *"An Englishman's home is his castle"*, *"A gentleman without estate is a pudding without suet"*, *"Fine feathers make fine birds"*, *"You cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds"*, *"He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword"*, *"Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely"*, *"Pain is temporary, victory is forever"* are only some of them.

As a royal country Great Britain has always been proud of its kings and queens- the feeling that is expressed in many proverbs. *"A cat may look at a King"*, *"A cat may look at a Queen"*, *"A ruler who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no crops"*, *"The King can make a knight, but not a gentleman"*, *"Divide and rule"*, *"There is no royal road to learning"*, *"A king that sits in the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with his eyes"*, *"He that eats the king's goose shall be choked with the feathers"* are some of this kind.

The geographical position of Great Britain (an island surrounded by seas and the ocean) was one of the main factors that influenced the life of its people, making them excellent sailors, explorers and merchants. To know the sea was a matter of extreme importance. That is why a number of proverbs deal with water, the changes of the weather at sea and the advice for the fresh sailors. *"A calm sea does not make a skillful sailor"*, *"Any port in the storm"*, *"Every flow hath its ebb"*, *"If the wind will not serve, take to the oars"*, *"It is vain to cast your net where there is no fish"*, *"Rats desert a sinking ship"*, *"Time and tide wait for no man"*, *"No wind, no waves"* and *"After a storm comes a calm"* belong to this group.

Proverbs tell us about the jobs that people did in the past. Some of those jobs are almost forgotten or are very rare nowadays, but their names



still remain in the proverbs; the fact that can be seen in the following examples: *"When one shears the sheep, the skin of a ram trembles"*, *"Strike while the iron is hot"*, *"Love laughs at the locksmiths"*, *"If ifs and ands were pots and pans there'd be no work for tinkers"*, *"The cobbler always wears the worst shoes"*, *"The shoemaker's son always goes barefoot"*. *"A carpenter is only as good as his tools"* and *"Thatch your roof before the rain begins"*.

English people are fond of gardening, which is a well-known fact. Many proverbs, directly or indirectly, talk about planting trees and flowers, garden chores and the ways in which they should be done: *"As a gardener, so is a garden"*, *"As the garden grows so does the gardener"*, *"A garden is a work of art in progress"*, *"No garden without its weeds"*, *"He that plants thorns must never expect to gather roses"*, *"From tiny acorns mighty oaks grow"*, *"The grass is always greener on the other side"*, *"Stop and smell the roses"*, *"A man of words and not of deeds is like a garden full of weeds"*, *"The apple doesn't fall far from the tree"*, *"Friends are flowers than never fade"*, *"One who plants a garden, plants happiness"*, are some of the proverbs that confirm the fact. Although many of these proverbs now have a more metaphorical meaning, their original message is still obvious.

Proverbs about food reflect, naturally the gastronomic and culinary norms of the culture in which they arise. From them we can see what people ate in the past, what dishes they made, what drinks were their favorites. In England, a number of proverbs involving eggs show the long-standing importance of that food for the English people. *"A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Century"* cites twenty-seven such proverbs. Many of them are in use even today although their meaning might have changed with time. *"Don't put all your eggs in one basket"*, *"It is hard to shave an egg"*, *"Don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs"*, *"You can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs"*, *"As sure as eggs be eggs"*, *"Flies never visit an egg that has no crack"*, *"Don't teach your Grandma to suck eggs"*, *"Better an egg today than a hen tomorrow"*, *"Half an egg is better than an empty shell"* are some of the examples. When the English people say that *"Good broth may be made in an old pot"* or that *"Too many cooks spoil the broth"*, they tell us what kind of soup was, and still is made and eaten in England. The same goes for the proverb *"Poor folks are glad of porridge"*. *"The proof of a pudding is in the eating"*, *"A gentleman without estate is a pudding without suet"* and *"Better some of a pudding than none of a pie"*, do not only show that pudding is a traditional English dish, but also the way it was made – a very unusual one for the people in our coun-

try! *"Fine words butter no parsnips"* describes an English custom of using butter to accompany almost everything. Parsnips were featured in the proverb early on because they were common in the English diet and were usually buttered before being put on the table. *"Sympathy without relief is like mustard without beef"* obviously shows that the two should never be eaten separately. Fish, being the food traditionally taken from the sea, was, and still is, the topic very much in connection with the country like Great Britain. *"Fish and guests smell for three days", "Better are small fish than an empty dish", "Fish begins to stink at the head", "Old fish and young flesh feed men best", "It is a silly fish that is caught twice with the same bait"* are some of the proverbs of this kind.

The proverbs tell that the favorite drink of the old Englishmen was wine; beer obviously came as a more recent invention. *"Don't pour new wine into old bottles", "Beer before wine makes you fine, wine before beer makes you feel queer", "Old friends and wine are best", "When the wine is in, the wit is out", "Wine is the glass of mind",*

*"There is truth in wine", "Wine and wealth change wise men manners"* are the examples that prove this.

Folklore beliefs have an important place in the life of every nation. Many proverbs express superstitions connected with certain situations and fear of the supernatural. Traditional experience advises: *"Never eat an oyster unless there is an R in the month", "Never stand on the tail of a hedgehog after midnight", "Never play leapfrog with the unicorn" or "Never say die".* Many proverbs mention the devil's name as a metaphor for the evil powers and temptations the common man is faced with: *"Not every devil has a cloven hoof", "When it rains and the sun shines at the same time the Devil is beating his wife", "He who sups with the Devil should have a long spoon", "The devil dances in an empty pocket", "God sends corn and the devil mars the sack".* Yet, sometimes the proverbs offer a bit of solace by saying that *"The devil is not as black as he is painted"*.

Many proverbs are related to the traditional holidays of the year – Christmas and Easter in the first place. Most of them are in fact, the weather predictions, derived from the centuries-long experience. So people concluded that: *"If there's thunder during Christmas week, the winter will be anything but meek", "They talk of Christmas so long that it comes", "Christmas comes but once a year", "A green Christmas; a white Easter", "A good deal of rain on Easter Day gives a good crop of corn but little hay", "If*

*Easter falls in Lady-day's lap, beware, O England, of a clap", "Late Easter; long, cold spring".*

Of course, time and life never stop. New inventions appear, customs and life philosophy change. New proverbs are invented dealing with modern ways of living. Things not known before take their place in new sayings. Some of these new proverbs are full of humor and often paraphrase the old ones. So, the well-known proverbs "Wine in, wit out", "Don't put all your eggs in one basket", "A journey of thousand miles begins with a single step", "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime", "Home is where you hang your hat", "Too many cooks spoil the broth", and "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" became, in modern time modified and can now be read as: "Garbage in, garbage out", "Don't store all your data on one disk", "A journey of a thousand sites begins with a single click", "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to use the Net and he won't bother you for weeks", "Home is where you hang your @", "Too many clicks spoil the browse" and "You can't teach a new mouse old clicks".

### **Conclusion**

No matter what we may think about the obsolescence and the alleged unattractiveness of the proverbs for a modern user, we must respect their durability and the wisdom contained in them. Most of them survived the test of time and remained in almost unchanged form over centuries. Young readers can learn a lot from them and can understand, with little effort, the past times and their traditional values. And become prepared for the future.

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## Year Round Activities to Link Language and Content

**Abstract:** If we hope to empower our pupils with genuine skills for effective living we need to bring real world language and experiences into the classroom. Pupils are eager to explore the world around them and there are numerous topics and activities that we can tie into our EFL lessons. In this article we will look at how we can bring the real world into the classroom to help motivate our young learners.

**Key words:** young learners, cross-curricular, culture

In this article, we will look at some year round ideas and suggestions to bring content areas in English into the classroom through easy to carry out tasks and activities.

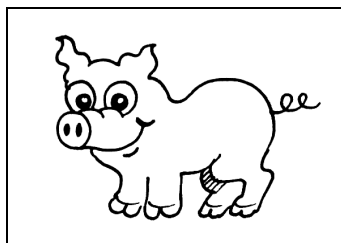
### January

#### New Year's Celebrations (Socials)

Talk to the pupils about what they do with their family on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Write some of the ideas on the board or on poster paper. When they have brainstormed their own traditions or local traditions, explain some customs in other areas of the world. For example, in Austria children are given good luck toy pigs on New Year's Day; in Greece children eat *Vassilopita* (St. Basil's cake) on the first day of the New Year. Whenever possible, provide visual support (photos, web pages, PowerPoint slides) to help understanding. Different pupils or groups of pupils can pick a country and make a poster or write a short, illustrated report on how New Year's is celebrated.

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## February

### Chun Jie (Chinese New Year) (Socials)

Take a look at the Chinese New Year festival (*Chun Jie*) with the pupils. Explain that this celebration symbolises the beginning of the year and a fresh start to life. Traditionally, *Chun Jie* celebrations start on the first day of the first month of the lunar calendar. During *Chun Jie* families decorate doors and windows and enjoy sweet rice cake. Children receive *Hong Bao* (red packets or envelopes with monetary gifts) and enjoy parades with colourful dragons that wriggle through the streets.



### Chinese Dragon Puppet (Arts and Crafts)

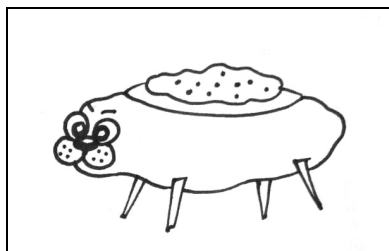
Pupils can make a Chinese dragon puppet to celebrate Chinese New Year in class. There are suggestions online for how to make puppets, for example: [www.show.me.uk/site/news/STO971.html](http://www.show.me.uk/site/news/STO971.html) or <http://www.tammyee.com/origamidpup.html>. Alternatively, pupils can come up with their own designs.

## March

### Potato Pets (Science; Arts and Crafts)

Pupils or groups of pupils can make 'potato pets' and grow 'hair' on their backs using grass seeds or alfalfa seeds. Pupils cut a section of the potato (on what will be the animal's back) and scoop out a few spoonfuls

of potato. They draw a face on their pet, add toothpick legs, and sprinkle seeds onto dampened cotton wool on the animal's back. Place the pets in a safe, sunny place and watch their green hair grow. Pupils can make daily or weekly observations in their notebook or on a chart.



## April

### Water Cycle (Science)

Talk to pupils about the fact that there is a limited amount of water on the Earth and explain that water keeps going round and round in what is referred to as the 'water cycle'. Talk to the pupils about the main parts of the water cycle (evaporation, condensation, precipitation, collection) and use visuals to show how the different parts of the cycle link together. Encourage children to draw and colour their own water cycle diagram.

### April Showers (Maths)

Place an 'April Showers' chart on the wall in the classroom where pupils colour in the number of days in April that it rains. At the end of the month they can calculate the percentage of days that it rained in April.

#### APRIL SHOWERS

Colour in a space on the grid on the days when it rains


## **May**

### May Day (History)

Explain to the pupils that the celebration of the onset of May traces back to Ancient Rome where a celebration which was known as *Floralia* took place each spring. It is said that this festival, that was in honour of the Goddess of Spring and Flowers (Flora), began around the year 258 BC. After the occupation of Rome many countries took on the festival of *Floralia* which eventually became known as May Day.

### May Flowers (Arts and Crafts)

Pupils can make May flowers out of coloured card, tissue paper or recycled material (egg cartons, fabric). The flowers can be used to decorate the bulletin board, windows in the classroom, or school corridors.

## **June**

### World Environment Day (Socials; Arts and Crafts)

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1972 the United Nations established The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The UNEP's responsibilities include keeping an eye on the global environment and helping countries solve regional problems by working together. Many countries participate in the World Environment Day by planting trees or by organising fund raising events. Pupils can work in groups to make posters describing ways we can help the planet (recycling, using bikes or walking instead of driving, planting trees, respecting the environment, etc.) and hang them in the corridor of the school on June 5<sup>th</sup> to encourage other pupils to be environmentally conscious.

## **July**

### Star Gazing (Science)

Start off by explaining to the children that the stars they see at night are not the same as those seen by children in other parts of the world and that different constellations are visible in different hemispheres once the sun sets. Point out that in the Northern Hemisphere summer is a great time to star gaze as it's usually warm at night and doesn't tend to rain as much as in other seasons. Draw a picture of the Big Dipper on the board and explain that this is one of the best-known star formations. Point out that it looks like a ladle or 'dipper'. Show images of other popular constellations such as Orion's Belt or the Ursa Minor (the Little Bear/Bear Cub)



then encourage children to draw different constellations or to invent their own constellation.

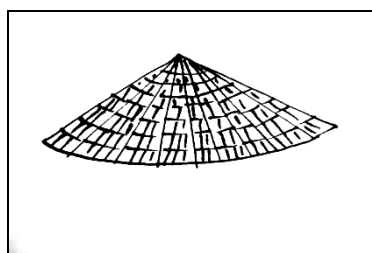
### The Tour de France (Physical Education; History)

Find out how many pupils in the class have bicycles, enjoy cycling or enjoy watching cycling events. Ask them if they have ever seen or heard of the Tour de France and elicit information from them about what it is, where it takes place or how many people participate. Explain that the 'Tour' takes place in July and that it is cycle race across France. Tell the class that sixty cyclists participated in the first 'Tour' which took place in July 1903, but only twenty one of the cyclists managed to finish the almost 2500 kilometre race. Over a hundred years later, the 'Tour' is one of the most popular international sporting events. In 2008, 180 cyclists took part in the almost 3500 kilometre race. If possible, bring in a map of France and plot out the stages of a Tour de France on the map. For more information on the 'Tour' go to: [http://www.letour.fr/us/homepage\\_horscourseTDF.html](http://www.letour.fr/us/homepage_horscourseTDF.html)

## **August**

### Hats On (Socials)

All over the world, especially in hot climates, people wear hats to help keep them cool. If possible, bring in a sun hat and point out that wearing a broad-brimmed hat offers shade from the hot sun. Talk to the pupils about different hats and head coverings around the world and, if possible, bring in visuals to show different headgear. Explain that in Southeast Asia most hats are conical-shaped and made of straw while, for example, in Palestine and in other countries, boys and men often wear a cloth head covering called a *keffiyeh* to protect them from the sun. In many parts of Africa and India people wear turbans when the weather is warm. If possible, bring in different images of hats, turbans and headgear then encourage the pupils to work in pairs or groups to design a warm-weather head-covering and to share their idea with the rest of the class.



## **September**

### Autumn Leaf Rubbings (Arts and Crafts)

Tell the children to collect leaves that have fallen off the trees in the playground or in the neighbourhood. Show the leaves to the class and explain that they are going to do leaf rubbings. Demonstrate the activity then hand out white paper, leaves and crayons to pupils or groups of pupils. On a piece of paper, place the leaf vein side up then lay another piece of paper on top. Select a crayon and, if there is a wrapper around it, peel it off. Turn the crayon on its side and rub over the sheet of paper until the leaf image appears. Show the rubbing to the pupils then encourage them to do their own using different sized leaves and different colours.

## **October**

### World Food Day (Socials; Health Education)

In 1979, on October 16<sup>th</sup>, the World Food Day was proclaimed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The aim of this day is to draw attention to the fact that nearly half the people in the world do not have enough to eat and that millions die of starvation each year. Explain that, for example, half the world population depends on rice as their most important filler. Point out that wheat and corn are also very important staples for a millions of people. If possible, take a look at a world map and talk to the pupils about different areas where people have not got enough to eat. Encourage them to come up with suggestions on how we can help others. For more information on diets around the world go to: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/info/agexporter/2000/Apr/diets.htm>

## **November**

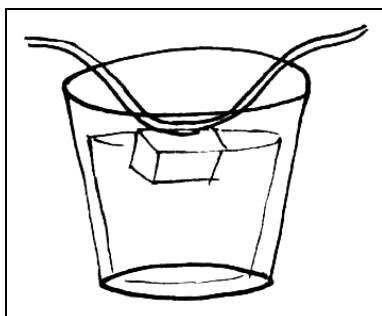
### Shichi-Go-San (Socials)

In Japan, on November 15<sup>th</sup> or the closest weekend, they celebrate “Shichi-Go-San” which means “Seven-Five-Three”. This is special day when girls of age three and seven and boys of age three and five dress in their finest clothes and visit shrines and temples. After the visit, children are given a long, thin, red and white sweet called ‘*chitose-ame*’ in a long, white paper bag with symbols of good luck such as the pine tree, bamboo, the crane or the tortoise. If possible, bring in pictures of Japanese children celebrating Shichi-Go-San to show the class. Ask the pupils what types of clothes they wear for special occasions and if there is a special sweet or food associated with these events.

## December

### Impressive Ice Experiment (Science)

Fill up a glass of water and place an ice cube in it. Ask the pupils if they think you will be able to pick up the ice cube using a string (without picking up the ice cube). See what they think. Lay a piece of cotton string across the ice cube, count to ten and lift it. They will see that the string does not 'stick' to the ice cube. Show them a container with salt and ask if they think you will be able to lift the ice cube using salt. See what they think. Place the string on the ice cube again, sprinkle salt over the string, count to ten then lift the string. What happens? It sticks! Do the experiment again if necessary and have pupils record the results in their notebook.



### Final Thoughts

By combining content and language, pupils develop language skills while simultaneously becoming more knowledgeable about the world around them. There are endless ways that English teachers or content area teachers can link language and content in order to make learning more real and meaningful for their pupils.

Good luck and happy teaching!

*Thanks to Emilio for his illustrations.*

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## Teaching English in a Mixed-Ability Class

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to show ways and methods which teachers can use in order to perform successful teaching in a mixed-ability class. Teaching English in a mixed-ability class implies adjusting teaching materials to the needs of each and every pupil in the classroom. Every pupil has his/her own interests, learning styles and abilities. With a little good will and organization, every teacher can adjust/adapt teaching materials to suit all pupils in the classroom. In order to prove this, I carried out some research over the course of three months, among sixth grade pupils in a primary school in Martinci, Serbia, based on the application of differentiated instructions in the classroom. During this research, two groups were compared, a control one and an experimental one, in order to examine whether there was a significant difference in performance in the experimental group. The research results showed that pupils in the experimental group improved more than those in the control group. These pupils remained motivated and ready to study and work hard even after the research was completed, and they even showed better success in other school subjects.

**Key words:** abilities, learning styles, differentiated instruction, adjustment of teaching material, advanced pupils, pupils with standard abilities, weak-ability pupils, pupils' strong sides, pupils' potentials, lesson organisation

### Introduction

Pupils populating classrooms in Serbia today are a diverse lot. They come from different cultures and backgrounds, and have different learning styles, hobbies, personalities, likes and dislikes. Of course, pupils do have many things in common – they are all children and human beings, they love to laugh and play. However, pupils today arrive at school with different levels of emotional and social maturity, they have different interests, different learning styles and, most important, they are at different levels of

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ability. Pupils' differences become an important element of today's teaching process. What teachers get when they enter a classroom with pupils who have different interests, abilities and learning styles is a mixed-ability class.

In today's educational system, teaching mainly consists of presenting teaching materials in the same way to all pupils in the classroom, where each and every pupil is assigned to work on the same type of task. In this kind of system, many pupils become demotivated, give up studying and do not show any progress, while the image of their failure at school has a negative impact on their general development. On the other hand, pupils who find assignments easy do not always use their full capacity and do not try to strengthen their advanced potential. These pupils will do only the tasks which they are supposed to do to achieve the best grade, and then they tend to stop making an effort, unaware that they might damage their high potential.

Teaching English in a mixed-ability class implies adjusting teaching materials to the needs of each and every pupil. Every pupil has his/her own interests, learning styles and abilities. With a little good will and organization, every teacher can adjust teaching materials to suit all pupils in the classroom. This can be done by identifying pupils' strengths and potential and by reinforcing them. As a result, pupils will be more satisfied, more successful and more motivated.

### **Applying differentiated instruction when teaching a mixed-ability class**

In a mixed ability class, pupils may be divided into: advanced or gifted pupils, average pupils and weak pupils. Advanced pupils often show a high level of intellectual development and potential. Average pupils work at a regular pace, they can sometimes be brilliant and express high potential but they can also sometimes fall behind the advanced pupils. Weak pupils often can't catch up with the rest of the class in terms of studying, and they often fail tests and fall behind because for some reasons they can't keep up with what is being taught.

The differentiated instruction (sometimes called the differentiated learning or, simply, the differentiation) means organizing and developing teaching materials so that all pupils within a classroom can learn effec-

tively, regardless of differences in ability. Differentiation is a teaching concept in which the teacher plans for the diverse needs of pupils.

### **Group work in a mixed- ability class: homogenous and heterogeneous grouping**

There are several means/methods of differentiation in a mixed-ability class. One way is grouping pupils. There are two ways of doing this. One is homogenous grouping and the other is heterogeneous. Homogeneous groups are organized so that students of similar abilities, interests and learning styles are placed together, working on materials suited to their particular level. If teachers apply this type of grouping in a mixed ability class, they may have one group that consists of advanced pupils, two or three groups that consist of pupils who have average abilities, and one or two groups that consist of pupils with weak abilities. Homogenous grouping is also called ability-based grouping.

In homogeneous grouping, the teacher divides class into several groups according to pupils' abilities and readiness. The teacher ensures that differences between pupils in their group are reduced to a minimum. During the lesson, the teacher prepares different tasks for each of the groups. The advanced group gets more challenging tasks, groups that consist of average pupils get different tasks, and group with so called "slow" pupils gets tasks which are appropriate for their level of ability. For example, after reading a new text, groups with average pupils may do the task called "answer the questions about the text", the advanced group can do another task – "think of and write a different ending to the story" or to write their own composition on a similar topic, whereas the group of weak pupils may have to link the names of the characters from the text with their basic descriptions or answer simple questions.

The advantages of homogeneous grouping are numerous. First of all, pupils have the chance to work at their own pace. Secondly, they are motivated to work on the tasks designed for their ability levels because if they show progress, they can move from a weaker to a stronger group. Finally, all the pupils become active and learn. Weak pupils now have their own different tasks and they can't hide behind the advanced pupils.

The other way of grouping is to put pupils of different abilities within the same single group. This is called heterogeneous grouping. In this kind of grouping pupils are at varied learning levels. The important thing is to

prevent weak pupils from hiding behind the advanced and average ones in the group. In order to make everyone participate in the lesson, group work should start with weak pupils. After reading the text, weak pupils should have the task of connecting the names of the characters from the text with their descriptions, or to answer simple yes/no or true/false questions. Stronger pupils may assist them. After that average and advanced pupils answer the questions about the text and after that advanced pupils think about possible different endings of the story. The teacher makes sure that everyone is active within each group by choosing a leader. The leader's task is to report the results of the task. Groups change leaders so that every member of the group gets the chance to be a reporter. The hard work of every individual within a mixed ability heterogeneous group is very important. The result of the group work lies in the effort of each individual, no matter if the pupil is weak, average or advanced.

### **Individualisation in a mixed-ability class**

What would be the ideal condition for learning in a mixed-ability class? Most of you may agree that it would be ideal if each and every pupil could get his/her own teacher. But let's face the facts, this is impossible. Although we (teachers) can't literally divide ourselves into twenty-five pieces, we have to find a way to devote ourselves and our teaching to the needs of each and every pupil in a mixed-ability class. This is not an easy task. Some pupils would ask for more attention, some will need help more often. In order to meet each pupil's needs, teachers should organize additional classes. Weak pupils who find it hard to follow regular school lessons should attend such additional classes. In this way they have an opportunity to work at their own pace, there isn't any strict time limit and what's more, there is no peer pressure. Also, every school should provide mentors for advanced pupils. Their tasks would be to work with advanced pupils, motivate them, encourage them to be better and keep track of these advanced pupils' achievements.

### **Teaching advanced pupils in a mixed- ability class**

Advanced pupils, also called "gifted" or "talented" pupils have several common characteristics. First of all, they have excellent problem-solving skills and they easily connect things in the lesson and recognize hidden



principles. Secondly, they have excellent communication skills and use appropriate vocabulary. Thirdly, they learn quickly and do not forget what they have learned. Also, advanced pupils have an excellent attention span, they are flexible and creative, and they solve problems by applying different approaches. Finally, they set high standards for themselves and they show initiative and originality, and look forward to more demanding challenges.

One of the most important and most demanding tasks that teachers have when teaching advanced pupils is to motivate them. Advanced pupils often have problems with motivation because they usually do regular tasks at school easily, with very little effort. In order to solve this, teachers should give them more challenging and more demanding assignments. Teachers should motivate advanced students to think about and solve more complex problems.

In a mixed ability class, gifted pupils should be treated as gifted! Teachers should apply different criteria when marking and evaluating the work of advanced, weak, and average pupils. Advanced pupils should always do more complex and more demanding tasks, they should be encouraged to express abstract thinking and to compare ideas, and they should always be given tasks which activate the process of thinking.

In a mixed ability class, not all advanced pupils are the same. Some advanced pupils will show their excellence at the beginning of the school year, but not at the end. Some will show progress in many different fields for a short time, while others will show progress in only one field of study but this could last throughout the school year.

It is very important for gifted students not to fall into the trap of their own success. In other words, it is important for advanced students to know that, even if they get the best grade, their learning should not stop. Having better grades than the rest of the class is one thing but meeting expectations is another. Advanced pupils should be taught not to compete with other pupils but to compete with themselves and their own abilities. Also, in order to learn better, advanced pupils should have access to a computer room, library and other school facilities which can help them improve their knowledge.

### **Teaching weaker pupils in a mixed-ability class**

When teaching weaker pupils in a mixed ability class, teachers should pay attention to criticizing. Teachers should not criticize their pupils for doing a task in the wrong way. Weak pupils almost never do tasks correctly and if they are criticized, they may even lose their already low motivation and self esteem. Instead of criticizing, teacher should focus on good things that weak pupils do. Each and every pupil has his or her strong sides. Every teacher should find pupils' strong sides and try to strengthen them. Also, teachers should always give weak pupils some kind of feedback and reward for good work. Teacher should always say "excellent" and "very good" when a weak student has done a task correctly. In this way, weak pupils become motivated and may for the first time think, "I can finally do it" or "I am good at this". To sum up, it is very important for teacher not to focus on what a pupil doesn't know, but to focus on what a pupil does know.

Weak pupils have knowledge gaps, so they should be assigned to work with mentors or teaching assistants. Sometimes advanced pupils can have these roles and help weak pupils to overcome learning problems. Weak students should be given clearly defined, not so demanding activities and tasks. Also, they should be given activities where they have to follow a few simple steps in order to finish the task, or activities which are connected with their personal interests, and which are simple and easy to understand.

### **Problems which teachers encounter when teaching a mixed-ability class**

There are several problems that each teacher may encounter when teaching a mixed ability class. First of all, pupils differ a lot. Teachers should find out about pupils' interests, experiences, learning styles, backgrounds, culture, and level of ability in order to adjust teaching materials to each and every pupil's needs. Secondly, pupils do not respond in the same way to teaching materials. Teachers should be able to make their lessons interesting and to adjust them to pupils' ability levels. Thirdly, not all pupils participate actively in the lesson. While some pupils will want to speak and answer the questions, others will be silent and will hide behind talkative ones. Teachers can solve this by assigning a presentation to each

pupil in the class, where they will have to talk about a particular topic such as music, sport, books etc. Also, within successful group work, every member of a group gets the chance to be a group leader, so in this way teachers encourage all pupils in the class to talk. Also, discipline of pupils who have completed their tasks may be a problem because they may disturb other pupils. Teachers can deal with this by preparing tiered activities – additional exercises and tasks suitable for each ability group in the class. Furthermore, pupils should be able to answer open questions that emphasize the process of solving a problem and encourages critical thinking. Finally, different homework activities should be given to different ability groups! In this way a teacher avoids the problem of weak pupils never doing their homework. Advanced pupils may get to finish the story, write their own opinion, average pupils can have the task of retelling the story or answer the questions, weak pupils may answer simple questions about the text or they can connect drawings with characters' names etc.

### **Evaluation in a mixed- ability class**

How should pupils in a mixed-ability class be evaluated? First of all, the teacher should make it clear that pupils are not supposed to “study for grades” but for knowledge. Secondly, pupils shouldn't compete with friends from the class, but with themselves and their own abilities. Pupils will show real progress only if they become better than they used to be. In other words, if pupils show progress (compared to their state at the beginning of a month), they deserve a higher grade. Thirdly, grades should motivate pupils to work harder! The accent is not on what grades pupils get. The accent is on areas in which pupils show progress and on areas in which they don't. Finally, there should be various methods for evaluation: written tests, oral exams, conversation etc. Pupils get marks regularly, and they can be graded during each lesson (for their participation). The teacher's task is to follow the progress of each and every pupil in a mixed-ability class!

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, adjusting teaching materials to the needs of each and every pupil in a mixed ability class is a key to pupils' success, motivation and satisfaction at school. Every pupil has his/her own interests, learning

styles and abilities. With a little good will and organization, every teacher can adjust teaching materials to all the pupils in the classroom. This can be done by using differentiated instruction, by identifying pupils' strong sides and potential and by strengthening them. As a result, pupils will be more satisfied, more successful and more motivated. The aim of this kind of teaching is to show that each and every pupil, whether with advanced, normal or weak abilities, can make progress, strengthen his/her potential and achieve better success in school.

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## Teaching Languages to Children with Disabilities

**Abstract:** The School for primary and secondary education "Milan Petrović" in Novi Sad, provides education and rehabilitation of children with various disabilities and impairments from their birth to their inclusion into society. It has early intervention service, preschool and school levels, working centre, service centre, etc with over 1200 clients (they can age from just a few months old – to even 50 years old). The school cooperates with relevant institutions, constantly contributing to and helping children with special needs at local, regional, republic and even international levels. It takes part in assisting mainstream schools with students with developmental disorders and special needs in creating individual educational programs for every particular subject. Our mission in teaching young learners requires selecting and creating appropriate teaching materials, adapting texts from existing textbooks and meeting students' needs. We face different challenges in the classroom and adjust our teaching strategies very often in order to achieve a satisfactory level of student performance in the classroom. Our classes in school are usually mixed ability students groups and there is a lot of mediation in order to achieve the aims of each lesson plan. For the purpose of the needs of our students we use different teaching methods, such as the well known Method of Maria Montessori, TEACCH method, PECCS method, and numerous activities that include interactive learning, music, games and craftwork. As a service to inclusion in mainstream schools, we take an active part in helping create a general Individual Educational Plan for the student and continuously cooperate with the language teacher in the school which the child attends. We also provide services that create appropriate teaching materials, depending on the particular needs of the student and his or her impairment. We also organize seminars which help language teachers to get more familiar with the special educational needs of students and appropriate teaching methodology that serves best in language classes. Our aim is to raise the quality of inclusion by supporting language teachers by meeting students' needs and parents' expectations.

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**Key words:** Young learners, special education needs, inclusion, individual educational planning, teacher seminars

*“Language is not given to enable the child to read and write. It is given to enable him to explore.”* Maria Montessori

Working with children with special needs is definitely special, so teaching those English is also unique. Taking into account the specific needs of these children and that modern society takes care of both physical and mental health of children, separate schools were created with specialized treatments and classes that do not exist in the mainstream educational system. “Milan Petrović” Primary and Secondary school specializes in working with children in a different way, for example, English classes are conducted in a white room, silent room, sensory room, room for the visual impaired, playroom, multicolored room etc. The school’s growth is in sync with the current needs of children, their parents and the community. The school has 1200 students who participate in various programs. Their age ranges from a few months to middle-age. The school works in cooperation with relevant institutions at local, regional, national and international levels. It helps mainstream schools that have students with special needs in creating individual educationa plans (IEPs).

Our approach to education and occupational specialization is based on proven traditional methods, as well as many modern ones. It has in mind the development of each child to his highest potential. Our mainstream teachers work closely with special education teachers from our school as well as with specialists from different universities all over the world.

Our school is a scientific resource centre for the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation in Belgrade and the Faculty of Medicine in Novi Sad. We have a shared project with the Department of Neonatology of Novi Sad and the developmental counseling unit of pediatric department of Novi Sad. In September 2008 we reached an exchange program agreement with Hilton Perkins Program and Small House in Zagreb. Presentations of various lectures and the latest scientific achievements are held in the school’s Blue Hall.

In the Montessori corner classes are conducted for both regular students and those with special needs. We cover expressions and topics from everyday life in Serbian first and then we introduce their English equivalents.



In our school, the term YOUNG LEARNERS encompasses students of various ages and level of ability. We have 13 different categories of disability (Autism (AUT), Deaf-Blindness (DB), Deafness (D), Emotional Disturbance (ED) Hearing Impairment (HI), Mental Retardation (MR), Multiple Disabilities (MD) Orthopedic Impairment (OI), Other Health Impairment (OHI), Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Speech or Language Impairment (SLP), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Visual Impairment including Blindness (VI). Here we teach not only the standard subjects such as mathematics, English, art or science, but also the ones that are not included in the curriculum. Those include daily-skill exercises, relaxation in the white room, the sensation of sight and hearing in the colorful room, speech exercises with the help of a speech therapist, psychomotor exercises for fine and gross motor skills, job training, etc. Some of the older pupils live in small housing communities and at school they are prepared for inclusion into society.

This holistic approach defines our school, where many different units function as a whole. The school provides an advanced system of support and services adapted to the specific needs of its users. The primary function of the school is the education of pupils with disabilities; however we should not neglect to mention numerous other programs and services that are offered. These include Early intervention service, pre-school, elementary and secondary school, apprenticeship, work centre, employment center connected to the local employment market, independent living, deinstitutionalisation of children with special needs from infancy to adulthood. All these departments operate with the continuous interaction of children, parents, teachers and other specialists (special education teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, orientation and mobility instructor, psychologists, pediatrician, psychiatrist, dentists, nurses). Our secondary school is the first secondary school with boarding facilities in Serbia. It was built to meet the needs of students with disabilities in physical development. There are over 900 students along with 97 teachers, business instructors, therapists, and technicians. This is proof that time brings changes – children with special educational needs should be part of the mainstream school. Today we have students from mainstream schools being enrolled in our new secondary school.

Since each one of our students has unique needs, their educational plans are therefore adapted to meet their individual requirements. The

teachers cannot create these individualized plans without in-depth knowledge of each child. The students are not addressed as a group but rather as individuals. This is the main difference between the regular and special classroom style. Sergi: "Education, it is true, does not exist in measuring one's head, height and so forth, for we can not educate anyone until we have first-hand knowledge of him." "Once an individual came to be known through experimentation, the art of educating him would naturally develop" (Montessori 1972: 2).

### **The art of education:**

The art of education is the appropriate selection of particular teaching methods, depending on the subject that is being dealt with, mood and structure of classes, as well as a number of other factors that influence the effectiveness of an organized class. "At certain times there is an internal energy which leads us to the creation of magnificent works, and in others there is indifference that makes us blind and incapable" (Montessori 1964: 168).

The task of the teacher is to teach the unit that is provided for the class but how and in what way she will do it, represents the freedom of her choice. Since every child and every class is different, the teacher should find a way to get the most out of that child at any moment. So, for the moment, the teacher should stop and feel the pulse of classroom and their internal creative energy brought to the class. (Only then can he/she actually decide on methods that would be most appropriate. It's never just one method, but a combination. It looks like an impossible mission, but it's not because the children are very intuitive and very understanding.

A period of intense sensitivity appears in every child, and it occurs in approximately the same period. The children with special needs pass through this period with a possible or certain delay. There are periods of intense fascination with learning a particular action or skill. Because of the limited duration of these moments, the duty of teachers is to recognize and exploit them. With such firsthand knowledge of the child and its absorbing mind, the teacher can select a methodological approach to her class.

## **Specific Methods Above and Beyond the Curriculum**

### **1. The Montessori Method**

Teaching languages to young learners with special educational needs connects the contemporary English language methodology with specially designed instructions and the theory of Maria Montessori. “I watched and studied the children. I took from them what they gave me and I expressed it. This is what is called the Montessori method”. She pointed out that no human being is educated by another person. “The goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a preselected course of studies, but rather to cultivate her own natural desire to learn” (Wolf 1995: 3).

### **Universality of the Theory**

Montessori’s theory and philosophy of education were initially heavily influenced by her work with children with learning disabilities. She had developed teaching methods and materials after which she adapted them for use with children from mainstream schools. A school that permits a child to develop “his own personal life” must be supported by national educational programmes. The Montessori Method is based on three elements: the child, the Montessori environment, the teacher.

#### **a. The discovery of the child**

This educational concept is based on children’s natures. The adult’s role does not only consist of teaching, but of helping children’s brains to work and develop. It reveals the internal energy of the child. During his or her developmental period, every child goes through a period of special sensitivity for receiving certain types of stimuli. This so-called absorbent mind, particularly sensitive neurological mechanisms that receive stimuli from the environment, is encouraged to develop by natural human instincts.

Due to Montessori’s thoughts on periods of special sensitivity and the importance of the early years, the school established the Early Intervention Service. Dr. Montessori’s observation on the importance of the sensitive period for early learning has been reinforced by modern research. There are periods of intense fascination for learning a particular characteristic or skill, such as going up and down steps, putting things in order,

counting and reading, etc. These are periods in which a child develops a particular ability to receive certain types of stimuli to which the body reacts spontaneously. They appear periodically during the developmental period with its biological purpose. A child is then endowed with a special sensitivity that encourages the perception of certain characteristics of the environment, and the acquisition of certain skills in anything else, apparently, remain neglected.

The Absorbent Mind is a form of unconscious mind that has a creative strength. From conception to age 3 the child absorbs things completely unconsciously. At age 6 the child begins to distinguish impressions it receives from the environment. A child becomes more aware of himself. Using language skills, adults directly reach the child's mind. The child develops an understanding and willingness. The purpose of the absorbent mind is in helping to develop a child's personality, indirectly preparing him or her for later learning and causing inner spiritual development. The importance of the natural human tendency in teaching methodology is in fostering development of the child into a human being. A child must meet his natural human tendencies for discipline, orientation, research, work, activity, handling things, opinion, repetition, accuracy and precision, communication. The order and discipline represent the period of special vulnerability; children show a characteristic love for discipline – through discipline they achieve pleasure in life. An anxious and insecure child is born by disorder.

#### b. Montessori environment

There are six basic components of Maria Montessori classroom: liberty, structure and discipline, reality and nature, beauty and atmosphere, Montessori materials, development of community life.

Liberty, order and discipline create freedom of movement, freedom to choose, repeat, express feelings, entry into social contacts, rest. The pedagogical method of observation has for its base the liberty of the child and liberty is an activity. It is a great educational principle, very different from the old-time absolute and undiscussed coercion to immobility. The child can be discovered only in an atmosphere of freedom. The child is free to choose what he wants to do. However, we offer him a variety of exercises and activities that are designed for his education.

“A special technique is necessary to the teacher who is to lead the child along such a path of discipline, if she is to make it possible for him to continue in this way all his life, advancing indefinitely toward perfect self-mastery.

Since the child now learns to MOVE RATHER THAN TO SIT STILL, he prepares himself not for the school, but for life; for he becomes able, through habit and through practice, to perform easily and correctly the simple acts of social or community life. The discipline to which the child habituates himself here is, in its character, not limited to the school environment but extends to society” (Montessori 1972: 78).

### c. Montessori teacher

The task of the Montessori teacher is to observe the child, maintaining and monitoring equipment and the environment, as well as the development of new materials. She is to present exercises and respect what is achieved. Maria Montessori asked the teacher to commit fully to the child. The teacher prepares for the class activities on different levels: personal, vocational, spiritual.

“One who desires to be a teacher must have an interest in humanity that connects the observer with the observed more closely than that which joins the biologist Zoologist or to nature, and since this union is more intimate, it is necessarily more delightful” (Montessori1972: 7).

## **2. Visual stimulation**

In addition to the curriculum there are numerous different types of training. Visual stimulation is an exercise of eyesight in order for its full potential to be achieved. The teachers train the eye to register relevant information from everyday life as much as possible.

## **3. Orientation and mobility**

The goal of orientation and mobility training is to enable users to move independently (with a long, white cane) in a social environment and to prepare beneficiaries for independent living. Independent movement is an important condition for inclusion of individuals with visual impairment into the community. Under modern life conditions, the student will certainly end up in a situation where he or she needs to use the English lan-

guage, whether in his/her own country or abroad. Therefore, the important terms and experiences that are covered in the class are: street, stairs, floor, numbers, crossings, traffic-lights, busses, underground prepositions, situational play activities.

#### **4. Reeducation of fine motor skills**

The schoolroom was made for children with dysfunctions in sensory integration. These children are unable to coordinate or organize their sensation. In this room they perform exercises in front of a mirror, which helps them improve their coordination

#### **5. The speech therapist**

Speech therapy is a daily routine for children in “Milan Petrovic” school. It helps us with the pronunciation of difficult sounds and making meaningful sentences. The task of the speech therapist is to simulate students with speech and writing, to form a particular sound, sentences, grammar rules, to express some thoughts and feelings, delays in speech, language and response. The most important part of the child’s work in the classroom on any level is his language work. All other work is based on this. Dr Montessori said that ‘fuzzy writing reflects fuzzy thinking’.

#### **6. The IRRMA method**

This is an integrated approach that embraces traditional approaches of stimulation of psychomotor development and contemporary methods in treating behavior and communication disorders.

The IRRMA approach in work with children with disabilities combines Imitation, Reeducation of psychomotor development, method Calendar, Music, Augmentative and alternative communication and assistive technology. All four methods are compulsory contents of curricula in special education worldwide. We also integrated imitation of gestures and motor skills as compulsory activities because they appear in everyday life and communication. Children with special needs may not develop these skills naturally. Therefore we succeed in enriching their abilities, communication and cognitive development through the curriculum based on IRRMA approach. Creating new methodology helps children learn, helps teachers in everyday work. In this way parents have an aid at home and can prac-

tice with their children in the same way at home. It helps the child function independently.

### **7. The PECS Method**

It is a Picture Exchange Communication System PECS is designed to teach functional communication with an initial focus on spontaneity. It has been and continues to be implemented in a variety of settings (home, school, community) so users have the skills to communicate their wants and needs. PECS does not require complex or expensive materials since it uses picture symbols as the modality. Research has shown that many preschoolers using PECS also begin developing speech.

### **8. The TEACCH Method**

This is a program that attempts to respond to the needs of autistic people, mainly using the best available approaches and methods known so far for educating them and to provide the maximum level of independence that they can achieve.

### **9. English language teaching – all senses included**

“Because of human tendency for exploration, language must be presented as an avenue for exploration” (Montessori 1964).

English language teaching comprises communicative language teaching, total physical approach, cooperative learning and numerous interactive activities, music, games, flashcards and craftwork, since obligatory craftwork develops fine motor skills. We use sensory strategies to get a response and to meet the child’s needs.

The entire educational learning process is organized in accordance with the needs and abilities of the student. Our practice shows that teaching children with disabilities must involve concrete issues experienced by all the senses. Therefore, in addition to the ordinary use of teaching tools there is a need for specific use of the image material, realia, as well as concrete objects, so that children can organize their senses for sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing. We have to include all their senses. The more senses are involved, the longer the retention.

The structure of a lesson must be weighed in accordance with the abilities and needs and interests of the child. Even the daily mood of the child

is the indicator. The sentence must be clear, concise, and of useful content for a student.

The methods are various: we use visuals (images, concrete object, flash cards) and verbal methods, as well as demonstration (rain, at the market, etc).

As followers of the Montessori Method, we usually change both classrooms and activities. This involves flexibility of movement in space. We have to adapt the content, environment and teaching (IEP), constantly repeating topics and following the right sequence of activities.

Working with children at school, we experienced that music is a prerequisite to spontaneous communication. The teacher can establish easy and spontaneous communication with a child who unwittingly initiates the activity. Classes are usually conducted in the halls (the architecture of the school is based on the design for all), music classroom or in the Library, in the English Corner.

“Reading implies the understanding of words which someone else has constructed” (Montessori 1995).

The child can use specially made tactile books, flip charts, rocking chair, interactive whiteboard in the multimedia room and various English language courses as well as assistive technologies. We sing and play the piano and other musical instruments, which are designed to meet the needs of the children with Cerebral Palsy.

“Musical education as a school subject is specific for motivating its contents and provides many possibilities of integration with other school subjects, areas and contents. Among those contents we may certainly choose the English language... music works presented to young learners have the power to form a specific relationship with students and listeners. It will certainly affect their emotions and their mood” (Ćirković, Miladinović, Milić 2012: 55).

Music and rhythm is a natural ability and need. It helps us express our emotions and our social interaction. Music and singing are also very rewarding activities and can be used as reinforcement for children's positive behavior. We all know that music has always had a special and an extremely important role in work with children with visual impairment. We usually add simple physical activities to improve fine and gross motor skills along with singing songs that supports psychomotor development, cognition and vocalization, too. Movement, motor activities and exercises accompanied by music and singing stimulate all senses, and create specific



learning experience. Music and singing operate as important motivating factors and help develop correct articulation, verbal behavior, speech and different communication skills. Repeating words from the lyrics in the songs presents an activity of imitation. This is a natural way develop language in children and also improve child's overall development. We base our activities on prompting and errorless teaching that promotes quick learning and is always a positive experience. We include pauses and intra-verbal moments that stimulate children to continue singing on their own.

The lyrics of the song and words are meaningful for children's needs and wants. The songs also practice polite social and communication skills. Each song is followed by simple choreography, simplified gestures or sign language. Knowledge and communication skills acquired in this way allow the transfer of knowledge and generalization in everyday life.

This method presents the multi-sensory approach in work with children. Repetition of songs in the same way stimulates imitation, vocal and verbal behavior. It helps children to develop anticipation skills as part of intellectual development. Proprioceptive and sensory-motor experience integrated through music are needed for emotional and psychomotor development at early ages. Activities with music and singing also help stimulate growth and emotional memory at the same time. Singing songs enriches the receptive and expressive language skills.

The activities can be done in groups and individually. For work with children with multiple disabilities or children with visual impairment we suggest individual work or working in pairs in the beginning. It is designed to allow work in a mixed ability class. However, if we work with children with specific learning disabilities we suggest working with a class as one group. In this way, the children do not feel bad when they make mistakes, the group encourages them to continue because music does not stop. They are neither winners nor losers. They are not competing therefore they feel protected and safe. Even the children with orthopedic impairment feel happy while participating in such activities. The structure of activities is not rigid and it depends on the creativity of the teacher and students.

#### Adapted teaching materials

- Link the content to students interests
- Stimulate development of cognitive skills and language
- Reduce all unnecessary distraction and materials

- Include visuals, animations, tables, visual organizers, design page layout
- Enlarge the text print
- Simplify the tasks
- Be interesting and use recyclable materials
- Build productive learning and socialization
- Fit into the National curriculum

## **10. Individual educational planning**

Individual learning characteristics guide the learning program. It is necessary to review the accommodations and modifications of the program for each developmental level. Implementing specific strategies in an integrated class can be for the benefit of students without learning disabilities.

The process of transformation of schools in the Special Resources Centres started in 2010. Our country is to complete the implementation of inclusion in the school system by 2015. The educational reform in Serbia includes both mainstream and special schools. The Special Education term that was once used still discriminates children with developmental disorders. The terminology used is very important for ways in which a political system of one country will be promoted. It is politically more appropriate to use terms such as a School with Special educational programs or Individual Educational Programs.

The educational laws impose strict time requirements for elements of the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

- A statement of the student's present levels of educational performance and his potential for education
- A statement of annual goals and short term objectives.
- A statement of the special education, related services, modifications and accommodation the student may need
- A statement of the projected date of beginning the service.
- A statement of how the student's progress should be measured

### First step – evaluation

The IEP process starts with teachers recommendations first. Then parents permission is required in order to start the evaluation process for the child.. It identifies areas of concern (academic, social, behavioral, commu-

nication, etc.). It completes observations and assessments and obtains input from current teachers and parents. The team (including school psychologist, teacher (s), parents, principal) determines eligibility based on criteria established by law.

### Second step

The IEP is a legal contract between the school district and the parent / student. IEP team consists of parents, special educational teacher, regular teacher, principal, student (if 14 or older), specialists (speech therapist, OT, PTetc). Again, the IEP team must include the required members and parent signature. Approval is required.

### IEP Development

Identify abilities, identify needs, set goals, a set of outcomes and the timeline, identify strategies for support (methodology, materials, technology, etc.), evaluate the IEP

### Possible Causes for Foreign Language Learning Difficulties

- Memory difficulties
- High anxiety
- Poor productive skills
- Understanding the usefulness of the language/topic for future goals
- Feelings connected to learning success, self-confidence, independence
- Support from others (teachers, parents, society)

### Tips for success

1. Personalize the learning process
2. Make your classes interesting
3. Present in an interesting way
4. Offer choice
5. Give achievable tasks
6. Familiarize learners with the language culture
7. Create a relaxed learning atmosphere

8. Develop a good relationship with learners
9. Set a personal example

## **Conclusion**

Planning the educational process as well as the instruction itself for this unique group of students require a creative, team-based, dynamic and individualized approach. Its success is based on team effort.

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