

The Challenges and Practices of Teaching Young Learners

For Zsombor and Mátyás



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Andrea Puskás



Introduction

The main goal of the monograph is twofold. On one hand it aims to provide researchers, practitioners and teachers of English as a foreign language to young learners with a useful theoretical framework and set of principles for teaching young learners. On the other hand, it intends to create a resource bank, a collection of practical tips, exercises, activities, tasks and games that can help teachers develop their teaching and make their lessons more colourful and effective. Teaching young learners requires sufficient theoretical knowledge to approach young language learners properly taking into consideration their special needs, characteristic features, as well as different aspects of foreign language teaching in the primary classroom.

The monograph is intended for researchers and language professionals who want to extend their research experience as well as for teachers interested in the subject area. The book aims to provide readers with knowledge and tools they need in order to develop their experiences and research. The focus throughout the monograph is to exploit the relationship between research and practice in the field of teaching young learners and to examine how research and theory can answer questions that occur in teaching practice.

The book identifies some key questions and issues such as the characteristic features of young language learners, the role of playfulness, creativity, using coursebooks, teaching vocabulary, the place of grammar, using games, drama techniques and assessment in teaching English to young language learners. It emphasises the importance of making the context of foreign language learning relaxed, motivating and meaningful. The monograph considers methodological challenges in research with young learners, topics for practitioners and also offers a comprehensive list of resources.

The activities collected in the practical part of the book are based on the priorities identified in the preceding chapters. They exploit and develop young learners' creativity, imagination, capacity of interaction, the capacity for playfulness and fun and the capacity for indirect learning. The activities can be used occasionally to supplement a concrete coursebook or they can stand alone and can be used as the basis of an independent lesson or programme. They can be adapted to different language levels and age groups

as well.

Primary language teaching is a unique and dynamic ongoing learning experience, not only for children but for the teacher as well. The very first years of language learning have an enormous influence on the following years; it has an impact on the motivation and general approach of language learners to learning the particular foreign language. Therefore, teaching English to young learners involves great responsibility and important challenges. This book offers ideas for creating optimal learning conditions and help teachers and researchers make both their and the learners' experience efficient and rewarding.

1. Who are young learners?

The number of English language programmes, courses and lessons for children is increasing at a high rate nowadays. Governments introduce English language programmes earlier and earlier at primary schools and there are several kindergartens that offer their children English language classes already during their pre-school years. Introducing English in pre-school and primary school years is a general trend though the phenomenon has both supporters and opponents. The aim of this monograph is neither to justify, nor to oppose the idea of teaching foreign languages to children at an early age. The main objective is to point out certain principles and approaches to teaching young language learners when primary school language teaching starts and to illustrate the context in which children's second language learning should take place.

Teaching children is a very broad term since 'child' and 'childhood' cannot be fixed into strict age brackets. However, it is crucial to clarify what we mean by the concept of 'young learners' in terms of English language teaching. Young learners have been defined by a variety of scholars and researchers, focusing mainly on children of pre-school and primary school ages. Even within this definition there are differences from country to country.

Annamaria Pinter (2011) divides young learners into three groups. The

first is children who start pre-school at about the age of three, the second is the group of children who start primary school at around the age of 5-7 and finish primary school 11 or 12, although in some countries it happens at around the age of 13 or 14. Pinter calls children from the age of 13 onwards 'early adolescents'¹. In Slovakia, children usually start their primary school education at the age of 6 or 7 and finish at around the age of 15, whereas primary schooling is often divided into lower primary and upper primary years. It means that at the age of 13 children are still in their primary school years and do not change to secondary or high school yet. Of course, the variation in school types and ages shows a complex picture across different countries.

Lynne Cameron defines young learners as "those between five and twelve years of age"². Scott and Ytreberg understand young learners as "pupils (...) between five and ten or eleven years old"³. Of course, there is a big difference between a five-year old child and an eleven-year old. Nevertheless, children develop differently, their pace and approach can vary. Some of them achieve goals more quickly, others more slowly, however, they can catch up with the former after a certain period of time.

In order to maximize learning and provide support and challenge in learning, it is crucial for the teacher to be well-informed about the learner. It is vital to have information about the physical, emotional, conceptual and educational characteristics of the young learner and consider certain issues and views on how children think and learn.

Young learners have a variety of skills and characteristic features that help them learn a foreign language. Susan Halliwell (1992) points out several qualities of young learners that she considers really useful for language learning. She claims that children:

- are already very good at interpreting meaning without understanding the individual words
- can use limited language in a creative way

1 Pinter 2011: 2.

2 Cameron 2001: xi.

3 Scott – Ytreberg 1990: 1.

- learn indirectly rather than directly
- tend to find and create fun in what they do
- have a wonderful imagination
- have a great delight in talking⁴

Wendy A. Scott and Lisbeth H. Ytreberg summarize further characteristics of young learners. They assume the following features:

- They understand situations more quickly than they understand the language used.
- Their understanding is based on the physical world – it is always connected with direct experience.
- They have a short attention and concentration span.
- Young children are enthusiastic and positive about learning. Therefore, it is especially important to praise them to keep them motivated and enthusiastic.
- They will rarely admit they do not know something.⁵

The above characteristic features can be exploited in the foreign language classroom and provide the teacher with wonderful opportunities to build on them. Indirect learning, creativity, imagination and fun are the key words not only in the description of the young learner, but should also be the integral part of the teacher's approach to young language learners.

⁴ Halliwell 1992: 3.

⁵ Scott – Ytreberg 1990: 2-4.

2. General approaches to teaching young learners

Jean Brewster, Gail Ellis and Denis Girard (2002) examine English language learning policies at primary level from different perspectives and claim that as an initial point it is necessary to underline that in the European Union, teaching English to young learners is part of a wider picture of a policy for foreign language learning where it has been suggested that EU citizens have a personal document called a European Language Portfolio (ELP)⁶. They add that as far as the policy and the introduction of teaching English to young learners is considered within the above document, several conditions need to be met. Brewster, Ellis and Girard claim that the most important conditions are the following:

- 1) Teaching English to young learners should be properly planned, based on the discussions and experiences of other countries which have succeeded in it already. Teachers, educators, curriculum designers, material writers and other specialists connected with the given field must have a clear idea of the goals, objectives and outcomes of the teaching process.
- 2) Adequate resources must be provided by governments and private institutions in order to ensure that there are optimal conditions for teaching English to young learners. This means that there must be material resources, optimal coursebooks, classroom aids as well as trained teachers and teacher educators.
- 3) The evaluation of the learning outcomes after a certain period of teaching must be carried out in order to provide information on the validity of the teaching.

The above criteria and conditions set a very general framework to teaching English to young learners, it highlights the importance of a thoughtful policy and physical environment of teaching and emphasizes the need for qualified teachers and professionals. However, it does not go into details when setting the objectives of teaching, the applied methods

⁶ Brewster et al. 2002: 4.

and techniques. This leads to the fact that different countries have different language programmes and policy documents. Fortunately, more and more countries seem to realize that the aim of language teaching should be more complex than simply teaching language structures or fulfilling an officially pre-set goal.

Brewster, Ellis and Girard identify three major areas within the aims of teaching languages to young learners: psychological preparation, linguistic preparation and cultural preparation⁷. They understand that language is not an isolated set of structures, but should be understood in a context, and they also seem to note that the young learner has specific characteristic features that need to be respected. Learning to communicate in a foreign language, therefore, involves raising the child's awareness of the mother tongue and the foreign language, developing a positive attitude to language learning and the foreign language itself as well, and helping young learners discover and develop a positive attitude to the culture the given foreign language embodies.

Angelika Kubanek-German has examined primary English language teaching in Europe and has come to the following conclusion: "regional and national guidelines unanimously point out that the children's experience with a foreign language ought to be enjoyable and not put an extra burden on them"⁸. According to her findings, more and more European countries not only seem to note the importance of motivation in foreign language teaching, but even officially justify or 'legalize' the inclusion of playfulness and the concept of enjoyable teaching and learning in state documents and policies. Wasył Cajkler and Ron Addelman write that "teachers should not take it for granted that children will arrive in the classroom with a strong positive attitude to foreign language learning"⁹. It suggests that the teacher is an important factor in the process of raising student motivation and thus encouraging language learning.

The years spent at primary school are extremely important not just from the point of view of establishing a strong basis for students' knowledge and

⁷ Brewster et al. 2002: 5.

⁸ Kubanek-German 1998: 198.

⁹ Cajkler – Addelman 2000: 1.

cognitive skills, but also from the perspective of developing the students' intellectual, physical, emotional and social skills. Nevertheless, this is the period when children should be taught how to learn so that they can be more successful in their further studies and should be able to maintain motivation in learning. Teaching a foreign language in the first four years of primary school should definitely keep the above assumptions in mind and should be aware of the fact that teaching a certain skill always relies on some other skills, since several different skills and abilities are interdependent at this stage of development. It means that for example if a child finds it difficult to enter an imaginary world or dissociate himself/herself from the here and now, s/he may also find it difficult to make deductions from concrete facts and to apply his/her knowledge and experience to other situations. Therefore, teaching a foreign language should rely on the interdependence of different skills as well as areas and should focus on the child as a complex phenomenon rather than the target of language acquisition, who needs to absorb fixed grammar rules.

During the first four years of primary school, children need to develop physical skills – for example they need to develop balance, spatial awareness, perform several everyday activities independently. Secondly, children need to acquire certain social skills, a series of forms of behaviour and characteristics that help them fit into society. These skills and abilities include the ability to cooperate, to share, to be assertive without being aggressive, to be helpful and empathetic. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation published the research results of a 20-year study, which showed a link between children's social skills in kindergarten and their well-being in early adulthood. The findings of the research, which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, were published in the American Journal of Public Health, 16 July 2015.¹⁰ The researchers conclude:

“Children who were more likely to “share” or “be helpful” in kindergarten were also more likely to obtain higher education and hold full-time jobs nearly two decades later, the study found. Students

¹⁰ <http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/articles-and-news/2015/07/new-research--children-with-strong-social-skills-in-kindergarten.html> Accessed: 6 May 2016

who lacked these “social competence” skills were more likely to face more negative outcomes by the age of 25, including substance abuse problems, challenges finding employment or run-ins with the law.”¹¹

The study underlines the fact that early learning and the integration of social and emotional skills in the curriculum is a must, not only in kindergartens, but also in the first grades of primary education. From the point of view of foreign language learning it means that learning and teaching a language should not be isolated from the development of social skills, it is rather one of the elements of a complex phenomenon.

Though teaching a foreign language to young learners requires a lot of theoretical background and a prepared and well-informed teacher, children do not consider language learning as a mere intellectual activity. Sarah Phillips argues that “As a general rule, it can be assumed that the younger the children are, the more holistic learners they will be. Younger learners respond to language according to what it does or what they can do with it, rather than treating it as an intellectual game or abstract system.”¹² The main emphasis from children’s perspective should be placed on practice; the language learning process should have a practical and meaningful aim.

We can help children learn English more effectively, if what we do with them is meaningful, purposeful and enjoyable. Most activities for the younger learners should include plenty of movement and involve the senses. The teacher needs to involve a lot of visuals, pictures, objects and posters. Playfulness should be the key word when describing the teacher’s approach. Playing with the language is a natural way of learning a foreign language for young learners. Since concentration and attention spans are short, especially at the early stages of language learning, a variety is a must – a variety of activities, a variety of classroom organization, a variety of space, and of course a variety of techniques and methods.

11 <http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/articles-and-news/2015/07/new-research--children-with-strong-social-skills-in-kindergarten.html> Accessed: 6 May 2016

12 Phillips 1993: 7.

The aims of teaching English to young learners should include the following:

- To encourage open-mindedness and tolerance by learning different ways of thinking and learning.
- To improve creativity.
- To improve cognitive skills and support abstract thinking.

When choosing a task or an activity for young language learners, several aspects should be taken into consideration. Cameron Lynne lists six task demands placed on the student, which she considers as the key to assess whether the particular task or activity is suitable for the student or not, which also helps the teacher evaluate its learning potential. The six types of task demands are cognitive, language, interactional, metalinguistic, involvement and physical.¹³

Cognitive demands – these are demands connected with concepts and understanding the outside world. They also involve understanding connections, links and abstract ideas, recognizing actions, drawing parallels and differentiating between phenomena or objects.

Language demands – are demands connected with the foreign language, e.g. if the student knows a concrete word in the target language or if s/he can use the past tense correctly.

Interactional demands – These are connected with the type of interaction carried out during the task or activity. For example, when the students are asked to work in pairs, they need to listen to each other and pay attention to their partner. They need to ask and answer questions, interact with other children or with the teacher and they also might need to find a solution together with a classmate.

Metalinguistic demands – these are connected with using special language, technical terms to talk about a language. For example, students might get an instruction to use the past form of certain verbs. The younger the child is, the less metalanguage s/he needs or understands, since it is connected with the child's ability to think in abstract terms.

¹³ Cameron 2001: 24-25.

Involvement demands – the learner has to be engaged with the task or activity, therefore, it is important to check whether the task can involve the student from the beginning till the very end. It includes the length of the task or activity, the students' interests and concerns, suspense and novelty.

Physical demands – It is important to check whether an activity requires students to sit still or it offers some opportunities for movement. Physical demands also include the usage of fine motor skills, i.e. writing and drawing.

The teacher has to check the chosen tasks and activities from the point of view of the above demands and has to examine them in terms of student needs.

Brewster, Ellis and Girard conclude that young learners share the following characteristics and learn a foreign language most effectively in the following way:

- They often respond to an initial stimulus such as a set of pictures, however, they need guidance about how to set about doing an activity or a task.
- Children need to be given a clear goal when starting on an activity.
- They learn better if there is a relaxed classroom atmosphere and they are not afraid of making mistakes.
- Children need time to absorb all the input they receive so they can later produce related work on their own.¹⁴

The above list can be extended by several other principles and assumptions. Teachers usually generate their own ideas about teaching and learners in many different ways. First, they remember their own experiences from childhood, secondly, they gain information during their teacher training, thirdly, they gain experience in the classroom, where they can reflect on their activities, children behaviour or they can have discussions with colleagues. Finally, teachers can gain further knowledge by professional development and further training and development.

¹⁴ Brewster et al. 2002: 37.

2.1. Practical tips for teaching young learners

- The activities should be as simple as possible so that the children can understand them.
- Instructions should be clear and straightforward so that the children understand what is expected from them.
- The emphasis should be put on oral activities – speaking and listening – rather than writing and reading. With very young learners (from about 3 to 7 years) listening activities should take up a large proportion of class time so that the children can get a large proportion of language input.
- Use plenty of repetition to give children the opportunity to revise and learn what you have taught them.
- Go slowly, take into consideration the principle of ‘less is more’ – do less language items within a longer period of time. Children should be given positive experience of language learning and must feel that foreign language is manageable and can be learnt in a funny and enjoyable way so that they stay motivated for the later stages of learning.
- Start with simple vocabulary, just words, not sentences. Sentences should be introduced gradually, only when the teacher makes sure the children understand the language.
- Tasks should be within their abilities, they should be achievable but at the same time sufficiently stimulating for them to feel satisfied with their work in the end of each lesson.
- Use games, songs, stories to make the lesson more enjoyable and fun.
- Try to involve plenty of physical movement in the activities.
- Always have a routine, children need to be familiar with certain actions, repeated motives, tasks or characters, it is important that they know what to expect and feel comfortable.
- Use shorter activities. Children have a short attention span; they will not follow the activity if it is too long and complicated.
- Vary the type of activities frequently, children need to be involved

and must be kept attentive, otherwise they start fidgeting or become distracted.

- Use plenty of visual aids; they help children understand language before knowing or using it.
- Use body language, facial expressions, mimics, gestures as often as possible. They are useful not just for making your lessons more enjoyable and understandable, but also help avoid immediate translation.
- Try to focus less on grammar and more on communication.
- Respect your students and be realistic about what they can manage and have realistic expectations from them.
- Like your students equally – show them you care and do not have blue-eyed boys or girls, do not show that you prefer certain children.
- Children have very clear sense of fairness.
- Always be organized, well-prepared and have a plan. Children feel more secure if they know that the teacher is reliable, s/he knows what s/he is doing and is reliable.
- Do not give children English names or change their names in any other way. They should be allowed to keep their identity and names no matter what other language they are using.
- End the lesson with a quiet activity to calm the children down for their next lesson.

3. With or without a coursebook?

Choosing the most appropriate coursebook for a course of English as a foreign language for young learners is one of the most challenging tasks of teachers. Selecting coursebooks is complicated by the wide variety of published materials for ELT available on the market, each with wonderful advertising and promotion. This applies not only to courses to young learners but also to mainstream courses – general English – and to special English courses – English for special purposes (ESP).

Coursebook evaluation is one of the most crucial processes of teaching English as a foreign language. Therefore, it is important to be informed about the most appropriate available coursebooks and teaching materials on the market as well as about the needs of the students, the purposes of the course, the requirements of the curriculum and a series of further evaluation criteria. In fact, the secret of coursebook evaluation lies in the teacher's ability to identify the most significant elements of his/her course and the teaching/learning situation and to a large extent depends on the teacher's own preference and personal (as well as professional) judgement of evaluation criteria.

A variety of evaluation procedures and questions has been published on coursebook selection and evaluation criteria. The aim of this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive review of EFL (English as a foreign language) coursebooks and other teaching materials available on the market. The main goal is to summarize the key criteria of coursebook selection focusing on different aspects of coursebooks and to help researchers and teachers do their own evaluation and selection. Some further aims include providing assistance in adapting coursebooks and using supporting materials to make lessons more flexible and effective.

3.1. Advantages of coursebooks

There are many reasons why English teachers use ELT coursebooks in the classroom. In addition, teachers use a particular coursebook in the classroom for different reasons. First, there are many teachers who do not choose coursebooks themselves; they are given coursebooks that have been previously selected by the school and bought either by the school or the students. Secondly, there are teachers who are given the chance to choose their own coursebooks and make decisions on their own teaching materials.

Most teachers agree that using a coursebook in the English language classroom has got a number of advantages and only certain teachers totally question their necessity. A lot of teachers emphasize a compromise between the two extremes (on one hand heavy dependence on the coursebook and on the other hand neglecting the coursebook) and argue that a coursebook should be used in combination with several supplementary materials and techniques. Penny Ur (2012) argues that using a coursebook seems to carry a certain prestige; she explains that using a selection of materials carefully chosen and collected by the teacher might give students the impression that they are not taken seriously¹⁵. Ur lists a number of advantages and disadvantages of using coursebooks. She highlights the following advantages:

- Framework – a coursebook provides a clear framework for the course.
- Syllabus – very often the coursebook is used as a syllabus, which can be followed systematically.
- Ready-made texts and tasks – the coursebook provides texts and learning tasks that are suitable for the language level of the class. This saves time for the teacher, who does not have to prepare texts and materials on his/her own.
- Guidance – a coursebook, as Ur argues, provides guidance and support for inexperienced teachers, who are unsure of their knowledge of the language or teaching skills¹⁶.

¹⁵ Ur 2012: 199.

¹⁶ Ur 2012: 198.

- Autonomy – the students can use the coursebook to learn new material and monitor their own progress autonomously. Ur claims that a student without a coursebook is more teacher-dependent¹⁷.

The list of the advantages of coursebooks can be expanded by several arguments and several scholars highlight different aspects and benefits of coursebook usage. For instance, Peter Tze-Ming Chou (2010) explains that one of the main advantages of coursebooks is that it contains carefully balanced selection of language content that can be easily followed by teachers and students. In addition, he claims that in each unit in the coursebook there is a consistency in the topics and genres in the four skills area (listening, speaking, reading and writing), which allows greater autonomy in the learning process (Chou 2010). Chou agrees with Ur in the fact that the ready-made activities and lessons provided by the coursebook are easy for the teacher to prepare. In fact, it saves much preparation time for the teacher.

Many ELT coursebooks and more particularly their teacher's books contain prepared photocopiable achievement tests (e.g. half-term tests, end-of-term tests, an achievement test for each unit) and detailed guidelines for the teacher with practical tips and guidance in order to teach each lesson successfully.

In addition to the above arguments for using coursebooks in the ELT classroom, it can be assumed that coursebooks serve as a resource both for teachers and learners. They provide sources for communicative activities, they serve as stimulation for further classroom activities, they also encourage learners to learn independently and they initiate self-directed learning.

3.2. Disadvantages of coursebooks

The main argument against the usage of coursebooks, or more specifically the overuse of coursebooks in the ELT classroom is that it lowers student motivation. It is hard to sustain motivation by doing the many times

¹⁷ Ur 2012: 198.

repetitive activities and tasks included in the coursebook. Students often get bored after a few lessons and may find the learning process uninteresting, if the only learning material is the coursebook.

Penny Ur claims that the main objections against using coursebooks are the following¹⁸:

- Inadequacy – no single coursebook can meet and satisfy all needs and wants.
- Irrelevance, lack of interest – the texts and tasks included in the coursebook might not be as up-to-date as materials chosen by the teacher and might not be interesting for students.
- Cultural inappropriateness – the content of the coursebook might not be culturally appropriate for the class and might cause discomfort.
- Limited range of level – coursebooks do not satisfy a variety of levels of ability or proficiency present in most classes.
- Possible negative effect on teaching – Ur argues that teachers may follow the coursebook without being critical and might be discouraged from using their own initiative¹⁹.

Chou claims that coursebooks do not provide enough details in certain aspects of language study. He points out that for example the study of grammar might be a sensitive point; the grammar section in each unit of the coursebook does not provide enough explanation or practice (Chou 2010). The solution could be to bring additional materials to class carefully chosen or designed by the teacher. It is equally important to avoid overusing coursebooks. It is unnecessary to go through each single task and activity in a coursebook – the teacher should make decisions and choices on what is important and relevant for the students and what can be omitted. Another typical misuse of coursebooks is running through the coursebook within a year ignoring the speed of the students and the fact whether the students have absorbed and digested what has been taught or not.

Definitely, coursebooks have their limits; however, it is the teacher's task

18 Ur 2012: 198 .

19 Ur 2012: 198.

to use them in a balanced and efficient way to make the best out of them. They provide a framework for teaching and learning and also provide a basis for own supplementary materials and ideas.

3.3. Coursebook selection and ELT contexts

Coursebooks often come with a Student's Book, a Teacher's Book and a Workbook. However, many coursebooks have Mini-dictionaries, CDs, a DVD, a CD Rom, a Test Booklet, Photocopiable Materials or an extensive reader booklet as well. Currently, it is more and more widespread that instead of a free CD Rom, the Student's Book includes a digital code for online interactive activities, which means free access to several vocabulary and grammar activities and many different types of activities and tasks accessible for the student usually for about a year. Coursebooks are therefore big business, different publishing companies seem to compete with each other and do their best to catch the most possible number of customers by attractive designs, layouts, innovative methodology and promise efficient learning and teaching.

J. C. Richards argues that materials can only be meaningfully evaluated in relation to their intended teaching situation²⁰, which means that it is essential to assess the situation in which the materials will be used. Coursebook selection requires taking several factors into consideration. It is equally important to evaluate the teaching and the learning situation, to have a look at the needs and wants of the students and the teacher as well. Each learning and teaching situation is unique, choosing the most appropriate coursebook for a given situation requires detailed investigation.

The context in which the coursebook will be used can be of various types. Different teaching and learning situations may require different coursebooks in order to meet the target group's needs and wants. Hitomi Masuhara and Brian Tomlinson make a sharp difference between two kinds of teaching contexts: General English (GE) in English-speaking countries and English

²⁰ Richards 2001: 256.

as a Foreign Language (EFL) in non-English-speaking countries²¹. Their argument is based on the assumption that these two different kinds of teaching contexts involve different student motivation and different learner's needs and wants, therefore, different criteria in coursebook selection are needed. They explain that GE is typically taught in the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where various learners from different parts of the world wish to learn English for various purposes – including academic and professional reasons. These courses are carried out in language centres, further education colleges or language centres in higher education institutions. These learners are more interested in enlarging their vocabulary and improving their speaking skills. They wish to be fluent in English in order to get a better job, gain more opportunities in a professional field or in order to be able to use English for everyday interaction. In most cases there is no pressure of passing exams and obtaining good grades, the purpose of learning is more practical and also more urgent.

The second type of learning context mentioned by Masuhara and Tomlinson is learning English as a Foreign Language²². It is usually taught by non-native teachers at schools – state institutions, where they are under the pressure to cover the syllabus and also to prepare their students to pass an examination (e.g. secondary school leaving exam). Both learners and teachers are much more concerned with examinations, since they are aware of the fact that exam results may influence their further studies or can determine their academic and occupational future. It is a significant and determining feature of such courses that there is no immediate communicative need outside the classroom, since these courses are carried out in different linguistic environment (other than English), usually, there is no urgent need to acquire a lingua franca to communicate.

Though Masuhara and Tomlinson focus on the distinction between English-speaking environments and non-English-speaking environments, their identification of different student motivation can be applied when talking about the differences between institutionalized – compulsory language learning (learning English at primary and secondary schools) and

21 Masuhara – Tomlinson 2008: 18.

22 Masuhara – Tomlinson 2008: 18-21.

optional language learning (learning English at language centres or with private tutors). From the perspective of young learners, children who were encouraged by their parents to learn English voluntarily – e.g. in language schools – are more likely to appreciate activities and tasks in the class that are more connected with what happens or will happen to them outside the class. They are more likely to be satisfied and their motivation is sustained longer, if the materials they are given leads to effective language acquisition keeping in mind the goal of learning rather than providing the ‘general’ input and assuming that teaching will somehow lead to learning anyway.

Identifying the learning context and student motivation is crucial for using effective teaching methods and materials. Selecting a coursebook should rely on detailed evaluation and identification of whether the coursebook is able to satisfy the needs and wants of the students of the particular learning/teaching environment.

3.4. Types of coursebook evaluation

Cunningsworth differentiates between two basic approaches to coursebook evaluation²³. He calls the first the **impressionistic overview**, which is a kind of general and quick evaluation of the coursebook, when the teacher checks the quality of the visuals, how attractive and clear the layout is, what the main components of the whole course package are, s/ he checks the price of the coursebook as well as the general syllabus offered by the coursebook and gains a general picture about its strengths and weaknesses. This kind of general impressionistic overview gives a general introduction to the material and is particularly useful when the teacher needs to go through a number of coursebooks before making a shortlist for more detailed analysis.

The second kind of coursebook evaluation is called **in-depth evaluation**²⁴, which is a much more detailed investigation of the given coursebook. It includes the examination of how specific items are dealt with,

²³ Cunningsworth 1995: 1-2.

²⁴ Cunningsworth 1995: 2.

more concretely how the coursebook relates to students' needs, syllabus requirements and course objectives. When comparing the two different approaches to coursebook evaluation, Cunningsworth explains:

“The in-depth approach is characterized by its active nature: we actively seek out information about the material in line with an agenda that we have already decided on. The impressionistic approach is more receptive in that we look for anything that is noteworthy and interesting”²⁵.

It is evident that the combination of both approaches is needed in order to select the more suitable coursebook for adoption.

Another distinction between the types of coursebook evaluation is explained by Cunningsworth (1995), Ellis (1997) or Tsiplakides (2011): predictive evaluation and retrospective evaluation. Predictive evaluation generally refers to evaluation with the aim of deciding which coursebook to use for a specific course or class, while retrospective evaluation usually refers to the examination of coursebooks or teaching materials that have actually been used. **Predictive evaluation** involves evaluating coursebooks and determining which ones are the most suitable for the purposes of the students, the teacher and finally for the aims of the course. Several evaluation criteria are taken into consideration. A checklist and sets of relevant criteria may be provided by several scholars to assist teachers conduct their own evaluation process in a systematic way. Teachers can consult books and articles dealing with coursebook evaluation to collect more detailed information and tips on how to choose the best possible coursebook for their purposes and teaching situation.

Retrospective evaluation is one of the most useful and necessary processes in material evaluation, since it encourages the teacher to reflect on previously selected methods and decisions. After using a coursebook for a couple of years it is advisable to check whether the coursebook was worth using and whether it is in accordance with the learner's needs, whether it has helped language acquisition and whether it has been motivating both

²⁵ Cunningsworth 1995: 2.

for learners and the teacher. Tsiplakides explains that at the end of a course the teacher should do a kind of summative judgement of the materials s/he has used to check whether a specific coursebook is worth using again or if a new one has to be selected and used²⁶.

Each kind of coursebook evaluation draws attention to different factors of teaching EFL and points out that continuous feedback is necessary to make both the learning and teaching process more and more effective.

3.5. Selecting a Coursebook – Practical Tips

It is crucial to determine the main criteria for evaluating a coursebook based on the learning and teaching situation. The general criteria listed in this chapter are partially based on our own experience and partially rely on various ideas suggested by scholars and reference books (Ur 2012, Shave 2010, Cunningsworth 1995), which refer to general coursebook evaluation. Specific criteria might differ according to e.g. the age of students, their level or their specific purpose of learning. For example, attractive and colourful pictures and illustrations might be important for young learners; however, the language type and level used in coursebooks should be equally important.

Before examining concrete coursebooks it is important to check the context of language learning and teaching in details. Cunningsworth suggests investigating concrete questions (a kind of checklist) concerning four major areas: aims and objectives, the learning/teaching situation, the learners and the teachers²⁷. Cunningsworth's checklist can be further subdivided into detailed questions and areas that should be answered before coursebook evaluation:

Aims and objectives:

- What are the aims of the course?
- What kind of syllabus is given to the course?
- How is achievement measured?

²⁶ Tsiplakides 2011: 760.

²⁷ Cunningsworth 1995: 6.

The learning/teaching situation:

- What are the main reasons of students for learning English?
- How much time is available? Is it an intensive course? How often do they have lessons?
- How many students are there in one class? Is it a homogeneous class (concerning the students' age, language level, ability, etc.) or is it a mixed-level class?
- What resources are available (teaching rooms, equipment, access to photocopying, interactive whiteboard, computers, supplementary materials, etc.)?

The learners:

- How old are the learners? What is their language level?
- What is their motivation?
- What is their previous language learning experience?
- What are their learning styles?
- What are their interests?

The teachers:

- What methodological approach do they tend to prefer?
- How much freedom do they have in diverging from the official syllabus?
- What is their motivation?

Coursebook evaluation criteria can be summarized as follows:

- Standards and objectives – It is important to check whether the coursebook is in accordance with the objectives of the course.
- Layout and appearance – The coursebook has to be 'navigable' and clear, easy to follow and easy to read (e.g. it is not a good idea to put pictures behind texts, which makes reading difficult).
- Language study and language skill activities – It is necessary to check how much emphasis the coursebook puts on vocabulary and grammar practice, and to what extent it provides opportunities to

practice the four skills.

- **Relevance** – It is crucial to check if the coursebook uses relevant vocabulary suitable for the language level of the target group as well as relevant topics, which serve the needs and wants of students.
- **Teacher's guide** – Coursebooks should be examined according to the fact how teacher-friendly they are. This means how much support they provide for teachers to save preparation time. Teacher's books provide not only answers to exercises but also useful tips on how to teach concrete units. It is useful to check if the coursebook package or teacher's book contains supplementary materials – photocopiable worksheet, achievement tests and other activities.
- **Price and availability** – Even the most effective and desired coursebook is unsuitable, if it is too expensive for the institution or the students cannot afford it, or it is not easily available.
- **Interest** – The topics listed in the coursebook syllabus should match students' interests, should be appropriate for their age, language level and should be culturally acceptable.

3.6. Coursebook adaptation

The selection of effective and challenging coursebooks and engaging teaching materials is vital in ensuring student motivation, language acquisition and development. However, it is equally crucial – or even more significant – how the teacher exploits that texts and activities in the selected coursebook.

A very essential skill each teacher should have is to be able to adapt the coursebook they use to match the students' needs, their level of English and the teacher's expectations and his/her teaching situation. There is no coursebook that would satisfy all needs and fit each particular classroom, therefore it is crucial to identify not only the strengths of the coursebooks, but also its possible weaknesses, parts that need to be adapted to the requirements of the concrete class and teaching situation. A coursebook can be adapted in several ways. Tsiplakides lists five different types of adaptations

that can be carried out to a coursebook²⁸:

1. Modification of the content of the coursebook
2. Addition or deletion of the content of the coursebook
3. Reorganization of the content of the coursebook
4. Dealing with important omissions of the coursebook
5. Modification and alteration of language tasks and activities

Modifying or omitting a certain part or task in a coursebook might have several different reasons. Some of them might be the following:

- a) Learners are already familiar with a language point or are already competent in a particular skill.
- b) There are too many exercises or tasks on a specific area.
- c) The item or task concerned is not a priority or not included in the curriculum.
- d) The topic is inappropriate for the learners –either for their language level or for their interests, or not suitable for the age of the learners.
- e) The task or a text can be left out if it is too long and is considered inefficient for the class or if it contains inappropriate vocabulary unnecessary for the language level of the learners.
- f) Tasks or materials can be omitted if they are unclear, confusing or misleading.

Coursebook tasks should be used to facilitate communication, encourage students for self-directed study and motivate them to be engaged in further language-learning activities.

Effective coursebook evaluation is based on asking appropriate questions and interpreting answers to these questions. Selecting a coursebook should rely on identifying the peculiarities of each individual learning/teaching situation and the intention of satisfying students' needs and wants. Institutionalized EFL learning needs to correspond with the given teaching standards, objectives and syllabi, which should be respected when selecting a coursebook for the given English class.

²⁸ Tsiplakides 2011: 761.

The process of coursebook evaluation can increase understanding the factors involved in the English language class, such as course objectives and aims, the learning/teaching situation, the students and the teacher. Coursebook evaluation is a significant step and puts much pressure on the evaluator, since the selected coursebook will be used in class for a considerable period of time. Therefore, it is important to evaluate coursebooks not only before usage and class implementation, but also during its usage and after a certain time to assess whether it has been worth using it and whether it should be used in the future or not.

A carefully selected coursebook can improve language acquisition and assist teaching; however, it is always crucial to avoid putting too much emphasis on the coursebook and overusing it. Nowadays, a wide variety of coursebooks is offered on the market, which are suitable for both GE and EFL classes, however, there is no single coursebook that would be able to satisfy all students' needs and wants. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to adapt coursebooks and vary their teaching materials as well as methods in order to sustain learners' motivation and improve creativity.

4. Teaching vocabulary

When designing a course for young learners, the most central questions a teacher has to answer include:

- How much vocabulary do children need?
- How much vocabulary is manageable for them to learn within a given time period?
- How do children learn new words?
- What vocabulary should be taught and how should it be taught?

When teaching foreign language vocabulary to children, the teacher needs to keep in mind that young learners are still building on their first language vocabulary and are still in the process of acquiring and organizing concepts. The first language background needs to be taken into account in order to know what will work and what may be too difficult for children. It is also common sense that teaching names of animals will go fine with young learners, however, teaching more complex adjectives e.g. *relevant*, *significant* or *exhausted* to seven or eight year-olds is rather a pointless effort. Basic level words are likely to be more appropriate for young learners, while building up more sophisticated, complex and abstract vocabulary should come later and should rely on basic vocabulary.

Teachers should also note that learning a new word is not a simple task that is done once and then completed. Lynne Cameron puts it in the following way: “Learning words is a cyclical process of meeting new words and initial learning, followed by meeting those words again and again, each time extending knowledge of what the words mean and how they are used in the foreign language.”²⁹ Teaching vocabulary is a continuous activity, words need to be continuously revised, refreshed and used again and again. Children need to be exposed to words in many different situations, which means that learning a word takes a long time. In addition, the above quote also suggests that teaching words should be carried out in intervals; teachers should go back to previously taught words regularly, e.g. in different activities where the same words are used or met again.

²⁹ Cameron 2001: 74.

The question of the relationship between vocabulary and grammar has been a central issue in recent years. More concretely, it was in the 1990s that several research results were published and vocabulary started to gain a central role (Coady and Huckin 1997, Schmitt and Meara 1997, Singleton 1999, Read 2000). The traditional split between grammar and vocabulary is not that sharp nowadays and more and more researchers and practitioners seem to understand that much important grammatical information is tied into words, teaching words and expressions can lead students to grammar and that teaching vocabulary does not necessarily mean abandoning grammar.

Vocabulary development does not only mean memorizing words, it is much more than that. Children need to know more about those words, e.g. not only what the word means, but also how it is pronounced or how it is spelt. They need to understand a complete web of meanings, interconnected links, ideas and associations. Vocabulary development is also about expanding and deepening word knowledge.

The practicalities and nature of the young learner classroom demand not only the constant recycling, revising and exposal to words, but also a wide range of creative and enjoyable ways of presenting and practicing vocabulary. The processes of both teaching and learning vocabulary should be dynamic and entertaining.

Brewster, Ellis and Girard explain that children go through five main stages in their efforts to learn new words and attach the words they already know³⁰. The stages they identify are the following:

- 1) Understanding and learning the meaning of new words
- 2) Attending to form
- 3) Vocabulary practising, memorizing and checking activities
- 4) Consolidating, recycling, extending, organizing, recording and personalizing vocabulary
- 5) Developing strategies for vocabulary learning³¹

30 Brewster et al. 2002: 85.

31 Brewster et al. 2002: 86-91.

The first stage of vocabulary learning introduced by Brewster Ellis and Girard is connected with the introduction of new words and the several different ways of presenting vocabulary. They claim that new words are ideally presented in a context which is familiar to the child and that visual support is very important to help convey meaning and to help students memorize new vocabulary. They claim that it is helpful to introduce new words in groups, based on certain similarities, e.g.:

- Lexical sets, e.g. *shops, fruit, clothes, house, etc.*
- Rhyming sets, e.g. *bat, rat, hat, man, etc.*
- Colour sets, e.g. *things that are green: frog, pea, apple, leaf, etc.*
- Grammatical sets, e.g. *adjectives, verbs, nouns, prepositions, etc.*
- Partners or collocations, e.g. *play the piano, ride a bike, loud noise, get up late, etc.*
- Opposites or male and female, e.g. *hot/cold, boy/girl, husband/wife, etc.*³²

Grouping words together definitely helps students associate new words with words they already know and assists them in recalling words. When learning new words, the emphasis should definitely be placed on consolidating words that students know and practising a fewer number of words rather than presenting a huge amount of words and expecting children to memorize them.

The stage of 'Attending to form' refers to learning the right grammatical form, spelling and pronunciation of words. Students also need to learn if the word has an irregular plural form (e.g. *child – children*) or whether a given noun is countable or uncountable (*apple – apples, information – no article 'an'*). This stage should involve a lot of listening and repetition as well as organizing and copying.

Vocabulary practicing, memorizing and checking activities involve the active participation of students. Children need to do certain activities with words in order to learn them properly and to make strong memory connections. The more things they do with the new words, the more

³² Brewster et al. 2002: 86-87.

frequently they use them, the more likely they are to remember them. This stage is interrelated with the stage of consolidating, recycling, extending, organizing, recording and personalizing vocabulary. The fourth stage of learning vocabulary is based on the very same principle as the third stage, i.e. children need to work with the new words a lot so that they stay in their long-term memory. However, this stage also underlines the importance of personalizing vocabulary, to help children build up their own vocabulary systems. It is not only about students creating their own vocabulary books, but also about deepening children's knowledge of words, and helping them discover connections between words. They can make their own sets of vocabulary, colour cards, flashcards and vocabulary bags or even create a class dictionary or sets of words.

Children also need to develop their own strategies for vocabulary learning so that they can memorize words more effectively. They need to be actively involved in the learning process and become more and more independent in learning new words.

4.1. Vocabulary selection

It is many times difficult for the teacher to decide on how many words should be taught and which specific words should be selected for young learners. This very burning question may depend on several different factors such as learning conditions, time available and of course the concrete age of the learners. However, a variety of general rules can be formulated that are useful to take into account.

Penny Ur (2012) summarizes the following implications for the teaching of new vocabulary in the following way:

- The easier a word is to say and spell, the more quickly it will be remembered.
- It is useful to link words together rather than teaching a larger set of isolated items. E.g. better results can be obtained if you present words in pairs rather than large sets, e.g. *fat* + *pig*, and not *pig*, *cow*, *crow*,

mouse, sheep, etc.

- Children remember words better if they have some emotional connection with them. So when presenting new words, the teacher should try to establish links to students' own lives, feelings and experiences.

The above listed assumptions give us a clear guideline in the selection of vocabulary to young learners. The younger the student is, the more basic and simple words should be taught. It is also important that the words they learn are meaningful for them; this means that they can connect it to their own personal lives and experiences. Teaching words connected with working on the fields, agriculture, growing plants or harvesting crops would be too distant for the vast majority of children. Vocabulary learning should be personalized and connections between words should be reinforced. Children should also be encouraged to develop independent and individualized learning skills and strategies so that they can extend their vocabulary in logical and systematic ways.

4.2. Presenting new words

There are several different ways of presenting new vocabulary to young learners. The most frequent ones are the following:

1. Realia – Bringing the things the words represent into the classroom (e.g. *postcard, ruler, pen, ball, etc.*). The teacher holds up the object or points to it, says the word and then gets students to repeat it.

2. Pictures – Bringing a pen into the classroom is not a problem. Bringing in a car, however, is. One solution could be bringing in pictures (board drawings, wall pictures, charts, flashcards or magazine pictures). They can illustrate concepts such as *above* and *opposite, clothes, parts of the body, forms of transport, etc.* Visual support is extremely important for young learners.

3. Mime, action and gesture – Action is probably better explained by

mime, especially with young learners: e.g. it is easier to present *running* or *eating* with mime. The teacher can establish a common gesture for a certain concept, e.g. for the past tense – hand jerked over the shoulder.

4. Contrast – It means presenting the meaning of a word by contrasting it with its opposite, e.g. *empty* – *full*, *cold* – *hot*, *big* – *small*; it can be carried out verbally but also with the help of pictures or miming, by simply drawing attention to the contrast in meaning.

5. Enumeration – It is a great and creative way of presenting meaning by enumerating or listing various items: e.g. *clothes*, *vegetables*, *furniture*, etc.

6. Explanation – It can be very difficult, especially with young learners, at beginner and elementary levels. It is more suitable for older and intermediate students; however, if it is done with care, it can be effective even with younger children. For example, when explaining the word ‘dog’, the teacher can say ‘*It is an animal. It says woof, woof and it is man’s best friend*’. The teacher can combine explanation with miming or even acting.

7. Translation – It is a quick and easy way to present meaning, but not without problems. It seems to be the most straightforward and the fastest way of explaining new vocabulary to young learners, on the other hand, it may be a bit too easy and it discourages students from interacting with the words in English.

8. Pointing, touching, tasting, feeling, smelling – It is about getting children using their senses. It helps memorize words and understand their meanings.

9. Using digital technology – Using the Internet, the interactive whiteboard, tablets and smartphones.

All of the above presentation techniques either singly or in combination are useful ways of introducing new words. What must be remembered with vocabulary presentation, too, is that pronunciation is just as important here as it is for structural material. We should not introduce words without making sure that students know how they are said: they must know how to use the words in speech.

4.3. Practical tips for teaching vocabulary to young learners

- Ask children to use vocabulary notebooks, which can be used for later review. It is important that children should not only write the L1 translation of words into their notebooks, but also certain sentences, collocations, synonyms, antonyms, etc., everything that helps them remember the word more effectively.
- Do not teach more than four or five items at one time in one lesson. The principle of '**less is more**' should be applied in foreign language teaching, since there is a limit of words that young learners can absorb, above that it only causes frustration and the feeling of failure. If children get the right amount of words that they can cope with, it gives them the feeling that learning a foreign language is manageable and it motivates them for further learning.
- Teach new items early in the lesson, when students are fresher and better at learning new material than they are later.
- Use plenty of revision and practice before testing vocabulary knowledge. Children need to be confident in using new vocabulary, which is only assured by the continuous usage of words in several different contexts and activities.
- Use word cards. These can be slips of paper or pieces of cardboard with the target item on one side and the L1 translation on the back.
- Display the new items (semi-)permanently. New vocabulary items can be displayed on classroom walls or boards so that children are exposed to them for a certain period of time. If they can see it more often, they can easily refer to them.
- Recall at the end of the lesson. The new items that have been covered during the lesson should be summarized and recalled at the end of the lesson to remind children of what they have learnt.
- Go back to earlier items at regular intervals. You have to review items you taught e.g. a month ago or even before.

5. What about grammar?

The idea of teaching grammar to young learners is a frequently debated issue in English language teaching. Nowadays, it seems to be widely accepted that grammar is interconnected with vocabulary, while both areas should be taught and learnt in a playful and creative way.

Annamaria Pinter (2011) claims that “The development of metalinguistic awareness is slow in young children. The ability to think about language as a system is emerging gradually.”³³ The development of metalinguistic awareness as well as metacognitive awareness develops gradually in the primary school and it is connected with the physical and cognitive development of the child. Therefore, it is crucial to keep in mind that six or seven year-old children not only have difficulties with understanding grammatical categories and abstract terms connected with language they are also discouraged by and simply not interested in such matters. They concentrate more on the context, the concrete and the familiar rather than abstract and distant phenomena. Teaching metalinguistic terms and highlighting linguistic interrelations, grammar rules explicitly would be not only ineffective, but also demotivating and discouraging for them. Pinter explains that “understanding non-literal meaning and irony is a fairly late development, emerging after the age of 10”³⁴. This also supports our argument that providing children with abstract ideas, metaphors, word puns, abstract reasoning and explicit grammatical concepts – e.g. a range of complex structures – should come later in their primary school years.

When constructing messages, children concentrate on the immediate environment, directly perceivable and observable aspects of everyday life. Therefore, communication in a familiar setting is a must, since it creates a stress-free environment for the child. As they get older, children become less spontaneous and more deliberate in their language use, at around the age of 10 they become more conscious about using language and understand relationships and theoretical assumptions. Pinter explains that “complex

33 Pinter 2011: 43.

34 Pinter 2011: 44.

grammatical structures are used more often³⁵ only in post-primary school years.

Lynne Cameron (2001) concludes on several starting points for thinking about grammar and young learners:

- Grammar is necessary to express precise meanings in discourse.
- Grammar is closely connected with vocabulary in learning and using the foreign language.
- Learning grammar can evolve from the learning of chunks of language.
- Talking about something meaningful with the child can be a useful way of introducing new grammar.
- Grammar can be taught without technical labels (metalinguistic terms e.g. auxiliary verb, intensifying adverb, etc.)³⁶

There have been several approaches to teaching grammar to young learners over the last fifty years ranging from the grammar-translation method to the communicative approach. A number of attractive books on teaching grammar to children have been published (Ur 2009, Nixon – Tomlinson 2003). One of the most frequently discussed issues is the emphasis on accuracy and fluency, whether we should worry about grammatical accuracy when it does not interfere with effective communication or a message.

The most commonly used terms when explaining the forms of grammar teaching are explicit and implicit ways of teaching grammar. The explicit form is when the teacher explains all grammar rules, provides students with the form and meaning of a grammar item, explains the usage in details and makes conventional grammatical rules clear. This approach is based on the assumption that the most important part of the language is its grammar and language learning is nothing else but the accumulation of mastered rules of grammar. It uses metalinguistic labels to talk explicitly about grammar, e.g. the past participle, gerund and infinitive, special terms and specialized

35 Pinter 2011: 47.

36 Cameron 2001: 98.

language is used to talk about language. One of the most popular grammar-centred language teaching methods and approaches was the grammar-translation method, which was originally used to teach dead languages such as Greek and Latin.

Implicit grammar teaching means that students are allowed plenty of opportunities to hear, read and use the correct forms of a grammar item. They are given plenty of comprehensive input – listening, reading activities and they find out grammar rules independently, on their own. This approach to grammar teaching was the dominant approach in communicative language teaching in the late 1970s and 1980s. A form of communicative language learning is Total Physical Response (TPR) developed by Asher (1972). Based on this approach students listen to commands in the foreign language and respond through movement and action.

Both explicit and implicit ways of teaching grammar have both supporters and opponents. For example, Stephen Krashen (1999) argues that grammar is best acquired implicitly; however, there has been a large amount of evidence against this view, e.g. Norris and Ortega (2001) or Ur (2012). Lynne Cameron (2001) lists several examples of researchers and researches carried out in Canada, Spain and the USA on learning a foreign language through communicating in the foreign language. She explains that recent research and evaluations show mixed results³⁷. Though children exposed to the foreign language environment and learning a foreign language through the communicative approach develop very good accents and listening skills and pick up the foreign language really quickly, in terms of grammar, they do not develop the same level of accuracy as native speakers without paying attention to the form of the language. They also have problems with basic structures. Cameron explains that grammar may emerge naturally in first language, “it may even be genetically determined”³⁸, but the grammar of a foreign language is ‘foreign’, and grammar development requires skilled planning of tasks and lessons, and explicit teaching³⁹. Penny Ur concludes that most recent researchers come to the conclusion that those students who

³⁷ Cameron 2001: 107-108.

³⁸ Pinker 1994 quoted in Cameron 2001: 108.

³⁹ Cameron 2001: 108.

receive some explicit instruction in grammar perform better than those who do not receive any⁴⁰. We can assume that though grammar explanation is helpful, the golden road must be found between direct explanation and implicit, communicative input and intuitive acquisition. In case of young learners, teaching grammar becomes an extremely great challenge, since at this early stage of language learning the main emphasis should be placed on motivation and playfulness and children should not be discouraged by the stiff memorization of grammar rules.

Teaching grammar to young learners should rely on presenting grammar through topics and meaningful contexts. Children need to be provided with both controlled practice and creative language use. Grammar items need to be presented in interesting contexts in which children are involved actively. There should be a combined focus on accuracy and fluency, while children should be provided with opportunities from an early stage to use grammatical structures for real communicative purposes. This will make language learning more meaningful and motivating. It also means that the very explicit way of teaching grammar, e.g. writing structures of the present simple on the board, underlining and translating auxiliary verbs, questions, etc. should all be forgotten in the young learner classroom. Instead, plenty of drills, directed practice and creative games should be used. In addition, children should not be afraid of making mistakes, and they should be encouraged to correct their own mistakes, too.

The most frequent activities combined with teaching grammar for young learners are project work, chanting and drilling, songs or even colouring activities. Grammar structures and items need to be hidden in games, playful activities, simple reading and listening activities as well as simple communication activities. Visual support is also important, therefore the teacher should use flashcards, colour cards or even posters to present grammar items.

⁴⁰ Ur 2012: 79.

The most frequent activities for practicing grammar:

- Mechanical drills
- Ordering dialogues
- Multiple-choice questions
- Reordering sentences or words
- Grammar quiz
- Team competition
- Naughts and crosses grid
- Prepare questions for the other team
- Information gap activities
- Memory test
- Picture dictation – 1 student describes, the other draws
- Miming an action
- Growing stories – each student adds one sentence to the story
- Questionnaires – students survey each other
- Grammar auctions – Students get a mix of correct and incorrect sentences, they work in groups, they are given a certain amount of pretend money, the teacher reads the sentence, they “bid” on the correct sentence
- Board games
- Matching sentence halves

Developing the grammar of a foreign language is a long process. There is no need to rush with young learners; they have a long time ahead of them. The teacher should encourage their curiosity and raise their motivation in language learning rather than explaining patterns and grammar structures or introducing metalanguage immediately during their first lessons. Instead of teaching grammar directly, plenty of meaningful practice should be provided with the teacher being sensitive to opportunities for grammar learning that arise in the classroom and exploit these opportunities in a creative and playful way.

6. Using games with young learners

Playing games is a natural part of childhood and growing up. It is the very natural way children explore the surrounding world and gain knowledge. Through games children are given real opportunities to discover and understand procedures and phenomena.

Lewis and Bedson (1999) argue that games not only increase motivation, they also represent the primary and most important way of learning in case of young language learners. They claim the following:

“(...) for many children between four and twelve years, especially the youngest, language learning will not be the key motivational factor. Games can provide this stimulus. The game context makes the foreign language immediately useful to the children. It brings the target language to life. The game makes the reasons for speaking plausible even to reluctant children.”⁴¹

The above assumption suggests that to be able to use English properly is not necessarily a motivational factor for young learners. They will probably not be enchanted by the fact that they will be able to use the present simple in English. However, by giving them enjoyment, playfulness and creativity that games can provide, we can motivate them to practice and produce language structures.

Carol Read (2007) claims that “Games are the stuff of life in the primary classroom”⁴². She explains that games provide stimulation, variety, interest and motivation; they help to promote positive attitudes to language learning. She adds that games encourage active participation and improve children’s self-esteem and confidence⁴³. Games are enjoyable and funny; however, they also develop a wide range of social skills. Children have to play a game according to a certain set of rules that they have to respect and follow, they have to interact with others to reach several goals, and they have to

41 Lewis – Bedson 1999: 5.

42 Read 2007: 150.

43 Read 2007: 150.

cooperate, make compromises and learn what fair play means. Games help young children improve their memory and concentration skills.

It is very important that a game must be more than just entertaining. Though it is significant to make the lesson funny, entertaining and motivating, a game should always be purposeful from the point of view of language learning. It should have a clearly recognizable objective, e.g. to practice a certain language structure, to revise certain areas of vocabulary, to improve speaking skills, etc.

6.1. Types of games

It is useful to keep in mind the different types of games as well as a variety of game objectives in order to make lessons colourful and effective. Lewis and Bedson distinguish between two basic types of games: ‘rousers’ and ‘settlers’⁴⁴.

- **‘Rousers’** – games that help children wake up. These are typically connected with movement. They also include games that contain the element of competition and guessing games.⁴⁵
- **‘Settlers’** – games that calm children down. Typical ‘settlers’ include art and craft activities, games that focus on listening and writing games. There are some types of board games that can be listed in this category.⁴⁶

In addition to the above distinction, we can list further types of EFL games:

- Movement games
- Card games
- Board games

44 Lewis – Bedson 1999: 7.

45 Lewis – Bedson 1999: 7.

46 Lewis – Bedson 1999: 7.

- Dice games
- Drawing games
- Guessing games
- Role-play games
- Singing and changing games
- Team games
- Word games

6.2. Tips for using games with young learners

- Always make sure that children cannot hurt themselves or each other when playing a game. Pay attention to safety. Change the seating arrangement or move desks, if necessary.
- Introduce games only if you have established rapport and the children respect your authority. This helps prevent discipline problems and helps the teacher keep control. It is very important that children know their boundaries and do not start throwing objects, running up and down when playing a game.
- Each game should have clearly set and fair rules and a well-defined goal in advance. Children need guidance and assistance for playing and they also need to know exactly how the game is played and what their tasks are.
- Vary competitive games with games that require cooperation. Competition is challenging for kids, however, they also need to learn how to cooperate with others in order to achieve a certain goal. The application of the two types should be balanced.
- Make sure you have everything needed for the game. Get everything ready – preferably before the lesson starts and the children arrive. You can prepare everything on a desk. Searching for items in your bag may lead to discipline problems.
- Make sure that all the children are involved all the time.
- Give clear instructions and explain and demonstrate how the game works so that the children are not confused or misunderstand the

rules.

- Teach children the language related to playing games and encourage them to use it while playing, e.g. dice, board, It's my turn. It's your turn.

7. Drama techniques

Alan Maley and Alan Duff define drama activities as “activities which give the student an opportunity to use his or her own personality in creating the material on which *part* of the language class is to be based. These activities draw on the natural ability of every person to imitate, mimic and express himself or herself through gesture”⁴⁷. They summarize the benefits of using drama activities in the foreign language classroom and point out that these activities enable the student to use and improve his/her imagination and memory as well as his/her past experience, they arouse interest, foster co-operation among the students and are mostly based on co-operative learning⁴⁸. Drama activities definitely have a series of advantages for the language learner. They increase self-expression and creativity, they provide a framework for communication and they develop confidence and are motivating. Drama provides space for physical involvement and gives children the chance to be actively involved in learning – not just mentally, but also emotionally and physically.

Drama techniques have been used successfully in education for a couple of decades. Drama in ELT does not necessarily mean staging a play or dramatizing dialogues from coursebooks. Though drama activities and drama classes may lead to a final performance, the most important aim is not this. The emphasis in ELT is on the people who take part, rather than on an audience. Using drama techniques in the English classroom has educational objectives – teaching the foreign language as a subject, rather than theatrical goals. The application of drama techniques in ELT is based on the assumption that in real life people talk slowly, quickly, they do not always have pronounceable names like Mr. Brown or Mr. Black, they use gestures, are in a hurry, are angry, sad, disappointed, over-excited, etc. It is necessary from the very start of language learning to express disapproval, surprise, enthusiasm, and many other feelings. Many times these moods and feelings influence the grammatical form as well. The language of coursebooks is often artificial: “The chair is next to the table.”, or “This is a

47 Maley – Duff 2004: 6.

48 Maley – Duff 2004: 6-14.

girl.” Children need to be taught how to transfer the knowledge gained from coursebooks to real-life situations. When using drama techniques, students are asked to move moving physically, express emotions and use several language functions such as persuading, agreeing, accepting, etc. Maley and Duff claim that the different roles different people have in communication should not be ignored in the foreign language classroom. They explain: “If we deliberately ignore the roles, we end up teaching language in a vacuum”⁴⁹.

Using drama with young learners is especially effective, since it exploits children’s extreme need for movement, imagination and creativity. They are given the opportunity to move around in the classroom, which is especially beneficial for kinaesthetic learners, and are asked to make contact with other learners. Therefore, using drama techniques often requires the rearrangement of the classroom, moving desks and chairs. This may also change the status of the teacher; s/he is no more the source of knowledge, an authoritative figure, but rather a facilitator and a helper.

Most scholars (Maley and Duff 2004, Phillips 2003, Read 2007) agree that drama activities should be introduced to the language classroom gradually in activities which are short so that children can get used to them. Drama activities with children can be risky in a way that the teacher has to pay attention to discipline and keep control. Classroom management has to be handled carefully.

49 Maley – Duff 2004: 11.

7.1. The most commonly used drama techniques

Improvisation

In short, 'impro', encourages spontaneous reactions and language. Even though its basic frame, the roles and the situations can be, and usually are given, it is a non-scripted drama and the plot, characters and language develop in the course of the action. Improvised scenes provide experiences that would be difficult or impossible to achieve throughout a traditional lesson or while dramatising a dialogue in a course-book. Improvisation is the most difficult drama technique.

Teacher-in-role

A method in which the teacher takes an active part in the drama activity. This technique creates a more relaxed atmosphere in the class, as the teacher becomes a kind of partner. However, the teacher always has to be ready to monitor and help if necessary.

Sculpting

The students work in pairs or in threes, one of them is the sculptor and the other(s) is (are) a sculpture. The aim is to make a sculpture of a person, idea, notion or scene (might be from a story), trying to express it through the posture and the face of the sculpture. The sculpture can either work manually (holds up the hand of the sculpture, etc.) or just verbally (he/she is not allowed to touch the sculpture; he/she can only give verbal instructions).

Still image (Tableaux)

Also known as 'freeze frame', 'frozen picture' or 'tableaux'. A group-work strategy, where the students are to create a live 'photo' of a situation or an idea which emerges from the drama. This way they can develop their visual imagination, the skill to work in teams and to negotiate their ideas with other members. Still images are especially helpful at the beginning of the drama when the basic idea is only developing.

Thought bubbles

This technique is mostly used during a 'still image', where on a given signal (e.g. tapping on the shoulder) they 'come to life' and in their role they say one sentence or answer different questions about the feelings or thoughts of their characters.

Teacher narrative

With the help of narration the teacher can move the plot of the drama forward, has the power to create fitting atmosphere for the development of the drama, or encourage the students to focus on one particular point.

Hot-seating

This technique can be used in the advanced stages of the drama when the teacher wants to create a better picture of different characters, explore their background and personality, and to make them more dimensional. A student or students is/are placed on an imagery 'hot seat' in front of the group, which may function as professionals (e.g. psychologists, sociologists, lawyers), parents, friends or other people who can be possibly connected with the main character(s). They ask questions about the character's actions, its motives, about feelings and thoughts.

Mirroring

This techniques fosters collaboration, it is usually used as a warm-up. The students work in pairs, sitting face to face. Student A makes a slow movement with his/her hands, which Student B has to 'mirror'. After about a couple of minutes partners change roles.

Miming

Mime is a non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement and expression. It helps students to become comfortable with the idea of performing in front of their peers without concern for language. Mime is often involved in warm-up exercises.

Mingling

Mingling means to just walk in the middle of the room aimlessly, you may change directions; you walk and try not to think of anything.

7.2. Some Dos and Don'ts in drama

- Do try to integrate drama into your curriculum, even if it is not an instant success. Gradually it can develop into a meaningful and effective way of learning/teaching. Especially at schools where other than traditional methods of teaching are rarely practised, the students are not familiar with different techniques, which give them and the teacher as well a greater freedom of choice.
- Do have patience, the atmosphere in the lesson must be friendly, the students should know that they will not be ridiculed, told off or judged.
- Do try to be flexible and prepared to change your lesson plan when a new, unexpected situation occurs in the lesson. Have more activities ready in case of an emergency.
- Do leave your students enough independence and accept their suggestions and ideas.
- Do start your lesson with warm-up activities, they are extremely important to relax the students' body and bring up their concentration. Of course, not every activity suits every day and every student. Sometimes you have to calm them down at the beginning of the class if, for example, they have just finished their Physical Education, or wake them up if it is raining, if it is the first lesson on a Monday or they are having their last lesson that day.
- Do give precise, clear and unambiguous instructions for each activity. Make sure students know who their partners are, which group they are working in, what they are expected to do.
- Do keep close control over the time. Set clear time limits. Avoid the temptation of letting an activity overgrow its own limitations – it is better to stop too early than too late.

- Don't tell students directly how to approach different situations or characters or how to solve a situation or task. Guide them by questions and hints.
- Don't act as a superior teacher who judges, assesses and punishes. Act as one of the students, show your interest and consideration for their work and results – you are all in the same boat. You need friends, not enemies.
- Don't comment on whose job was the best/worst or give students marks for their performance (e.g. for miming, improvisation, etc.). Any drama – no matter how good or bad – can provide them with a new experience. Students' effort and creativity should be appreciated and supported, however imperfect it may be.

8. Assessing young learners

Assessing the achievement of young learners is one of the most complex and at the same time most sensitive issues. It is extremely important to choose the right assessment techniques for each age group; however, for young learners it is even more significant, since it can influence their further approach to the foreign language. Assessment is an integral part of the language learning process, since it gives feedback both to the teacher and the learner about progress and achievements. It helps the teacher monitor the child's learning process and set out further goals for the future. Assessment can motivate children by showing them they have reached a certain level and have achieved a certain goal. For example, it shows them that they have learned the names of colours in English or they are able to tell the time. This suggests that they have achieved a short-term goal and indicates that learning a language – reaching a long-term goal – is manageable.

The majority of appropriate assessment techniques take into consideration the age and the language level of the children, though most scholars and researchers (Cameron 2001, T. Linse 2005, Szóköl 2015, Szóköl – Horváthová – Dobay 2016) suggest a much longer list of criteria and recommend using a number of possible variations of assessment techniques.

The teacher's choice of assessment techniques also reflects his/her approach to language teaching, motivation and his/her overall attitude to learning. It shows what s/he wants the children to achieve and how s/he understands achievement and making mistakes. Handling mistakes and errors is a part of the teacher's approach to language teaching. Allowing students to make mistakes and giving them the change to correct them leads to a more learner-centred type of assessment, where the main emphasis is put on the student, not on the curriculum. An encouraging system of assessment can contribute to a positive and motivating learning atmosphere, where the student can feel safe and is enabled to view learning as a process s/he can benefit from, rather than a situation pointing out the student's weaknesses and threatening his self-esteem. When discussing the importance of assessment in the foreign language classroom, Ioannou-

Georgiou and Pavlov point out the importance of attitude:

“Fostering positive attitudes in childhood should be a priority, since this is the best time to form strong positive attitudes towards learning, the target language, and the target culture. Negative attitudes formed at this stage are hard to change in the future.”⁵⁰

Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlov point out a very important element of language learning that needs to be assessed: attitude. It is though-provoking not only because it expands the field of assessment with emotional elements, but also because it suggests that attitude – both of teachers and learners – can be changed. The teacher’s task is not only assessing the language improvement of the child, but also assessing how his/her attitude to language learning develops and changes. The teacher should regularly observe and monitor the children’s motivation and individual relationship with the foreign language and should intervene immediately if the child expresses negative feelings or shows signs of discouragement.

The methodologies of teaching young learners seem to have realized the importance of playfulness, motivation, creativity in the teaching process as well as children’s special needs connected with short attention span, need for movement and their specific areas of interest. Similarly, the assessment of young learners should take into consideration the very same factors and should be based on the above mentioned principles. We cannot give a multiple-choice grammar test based on the past simple after having sung songs, rhymes, chants and having played games during the weeks preceding the test.

Children need to be familiar with assessment techniques in advance and the form of assessment tasks. It is very important that they do not face tasks that are alien to them or tasks that might create anxiety or other negative feelings.

Assessing learners provides a feedback on students’ learning, which can help the teacher make the next teaching event more effective. Lynne Cameron claims that teaching and learning needs should dictate the form

⁵⁰ Ioannou-Georgiou – Pavlov 2003: 8.

and timing of assessment⁵¹. However, in practice, it happens very frequently that unlike the above situation, assessment seems to determine teaching by forcing teachers teach what is going to be assessed. The main reason is that teachers follow the state curriculum very precisely and strictly and might forget about that the main aim of teaching should not be teaching the coursebook or the curriculum, but the student. Similarly, assessment should not only be based on what the curriculum prescribes, but should also take into consideration the progress that the student has made. It happens many times that the teacher teaches the present perfect to kids who hardly recognize the present simple or cannot produce correct structures in the past simple. This can only lead to confusion, frustration and the loss of motivation both on the teacher's and the students' side.

Assessment should be complex, checking different areas and skills. Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlov highlight the importance of assessing all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, though language often involves the use of all four skills in an integrated way⁵². In addition, they suggest that sometimes this task might be difficult, because assessing one skill often requires the use of another. In such case they suggest focusing on the particular skill the teacher wants to assess⁵³. For example, if the teacher wants to assess listening skills, the teacher should also pay attention to whether the child can predict the meaning and content of the recording, get the main idea or listen for details, and should not ignore answers with a spelling mistake, since the main focus of assessment was listening, not writing. On the other hand, assessing skills separately should be combined with assessing integrated skills, since they reflect real-life language use in the best way. Assessing integrated skills is connected with situations that simulate real life and encourages children to cope in these situations by using more than one language skill.

51 Cameron 2001: 215.

52 Ioannou-Georgiou – Pavlov 2003: 6.

53 Ioannou-Georgiou – Pavlov 2003: 7.

Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlov suggest the following types of assessment for young learners:

- Structured assessment tasks and activities
- Take-home assessment tasks
- Portfolio assessment
- Projects
- Self-assessment
- Peer-assessment
- Traditional tests
- Learner-developed assessment tasks
- Observation⁵⁴

Some further types of assessment include:

Formative assessment – is a type of assessment which aims to inform on-going teaching and learning. It provides immediate feedback⁵⁵. E.g. after a listening activity the teacher assesses the students' understanding and changes her plan to do more practice before moving on with a speaking activity.

Summative assessment – assesses learning at the end of a unit, term, year or course.

Diagnostic assessment – it aims to establish what a child can and cannot do yet, so that the teacher can determine further learning opportunities⁵⁶.

Achievement assessment – it aims to determine what the child can do.

54 Ioannou-Georgiou – Pavlov 2003: 8-12.

55 Cameron 2001: 222.

56 Cameron 2001: 223.

8.1. General rules for assessment

- The area to be assessed should be defined clearly and it should be isolated from other areas – if we want to assess reading, for example, children should not be asked to write.
- Assessment should have measurable results – and assessment task should produce concrete, measurable evidence about the child's language level or development.
- You should only assess children's skills and knowledge if you have taught those specific skills and knowledge. Assessment should not aim at proving what the kids do not know, but rather diagnose what they already know or can do.
- Assessment should be carried at specific times during the learning process, e.g. when you have finished a unit or have practiced a specific language item or skill.
- Teachers should focus on the child as a whole person, therefore, it is crucial to take into consideration skills and abilities other than the ones connected with using a specific language item. Becoming a good team player, being polite and sensitive to other's feelings, respecting hard work and appreciating efforts are also parts of the education process, therefore teachers should regularly monitor and assess these skills as well.
- Assessment should be seen from a learning-centred perspective.
- Assessment should not be limited to testing. A wide range of assessment techniques should be used such as portfolio, observation, etc.
- Both children and parents should understand assessment issues. They need to know what is being assessed and how.

8.2. Testing

Most schools request teachers to prepare tests for their classes and check what the children have studied in a written form. Tests are the most common basis for assessment; they are easy to design and check, are generally accepted as reliable bases for giving children grades. Many times, these tests are called traditional 'pen-and-paper' tests, which are usually made up of two types of questions. The first is discrete item tasks, which means testing a particular language item, the other is integrative tasks, which means that a number of items or language skills are tested in the same question.

A good test is fair and appropriate for the students, it is easy to mark and it provides clear results.

Possible problems with tests:

- they are not always valid (not always testing what they say they are)
e.g. a listening
- test based on long multiple-choice written questions may actually test reading rather than listening comprehension + the students may guess the answer and might get it right
- they may not be reliable – different teachers might mark it differently (e.g. essays)
- they might not give an overall picture of the students' overall abilities
students with test anxiety might not perform well under test conditions
- if they are the basis for crucial summative assessment in the student's career, they can
- be extremely stressful for all students

The most common test items

- Gap-fill
- Multiple-choice
 - e.g. Choose the best answer to complete the gap.
_____ can swim very well and they live in the lake.
A) Cats B) Birds C) Fish
- Rearranging words
 - e.g. Put the words into the correct order to make a correct sentence.
chocolate much very I like
- True/False
 - e.g. Are these sentences true or false?
Lemons are yellow.
Apples are black.
- Matching pictures with words/sentences
- Placing words in correct sets, lists, word categories
 - e.g. Put the following words into one of these three categories:
FOOD, TRANSPORT, SCHOOL.
bicycle, hamburger, car, exercise book, train, banana, sandwich,
bus, bread, blackboard
- Putting jigsaw pieces together
 - e.g. Match the sentence halves.
A) Mary is writing 1) a book.
B) Peter is driving 2) a car.
C) Jack is reading 3) her homework.

9. Resource Bank

The Resource Bank presents a number of activities based on the theoretical principles and practical guidelines in the previous chapters. Most of these activities can be adapted and modified according to the language level, the number and the needs of the students. The suggested activities and procedures can be carried out with different topics or grammar items as well. The presented activities exploit the children's capacity for interaction and talk; they build on their capacity and need for movement and play.

• Animals

Students work in groups of three or in pairs. Each group is given a sheet of paper. They are asked to collect as many names of animals as they can in one minute. Then they pass the piece of paper to the group or pair on their right. They also receive the paper of the group or pair on their left. They are given another minute to complete the list of their classmates, they add more animals to the list. Students continue rotating the sheet of paper until it returns to the original group. In large classes, the paper should be passed round about five pairs.

When the activity is finished, the teacher writes three categories on the board: Farm animals, Pets, Wild animals. Students are asked to call out the names of animals that fall into these categories. E.g. *farm animals: cow, chicken, duck, goat, horse, sheep, goose, cock, pets: cat, dog, hamster, mouse, fish, wild animals: crocodile, lion, tiger, leopard, elephant, giraffe, etc.*

• Animal description

The teacher draws the following chart on the board.

Animal	Size	Colour	Touch
frog	small	green	cool
elephant	long	black	wet
fish	big	brown	hard
snake	short	grey, gold, blue	smooth
		red, orange	

Children choose an animal from the given list and they are asked to describe the selected animal by combining the characteristic features in the above chart. The teacher demonstrates the activity by providing an example. E.g. The frog. It is small. It is green and smooth.

After children have written their definitions, they read it to the rest of the class and the others have to find out which animal they are reading about. The above list can be extended by several other animals and also by abilities of animals e.g. what the animal can do (e.g. *jump, run fast, climb trees*, etc.)

• **Animal movements**

Each student chooses an animal and an activity or movement that the animal can do. E.g. *I am a fish and I can swim. I am a monkey and I can climb trees. I am a lion and I can run fast. I am a dog and I can bark. I am a cat and I can catch mice. I am a bear and I can eat a lot of honey.* etc. The teacher helps students choose animals and form correct sentences. As soon as everyone has it correct, students stand in a circle and the first student says or reads his or her sentence aloud. The student next to him repeats, e.g. *You are a fish and you can swim. I am a monkey and I can climb trees.* The third student repeats the previous two sentences and adds his or her own. In large classes, students should be divided into two circles. An alternative of the activity can be that instead of saying *You are a fish and you can swim.* children say: *He is a fish and he can swim.* In this case children have to pay attention to using the right personal pronoun *he/she*.

• **Beat out that rhythm**⁵⁷

Students sit on the floor in a big circle. One person starts to beat out a regular rhythm on the floor (or by clapping hands, clicking fingers, etc.) The next person adds in a variation on the rhythm, then the next person, and so on until a composite beat results.

Variations are to build up to a climax and fade away to a scarcely audible beat. This activity requires considerable self-control (in keeping the overall noise level down) and concentration. It is better done with groups of up to twelve.

⁵⁷ Maley – Duff 2004: 53.

- **Blind**⁵⁸

Students form pairs. One is blindfolded (or has eyes closed); the other guides the 'blind' partner silently and carefully about the room by holding his or her arm. No speaking is allowed. Partners then change roles, and repeat the exercise.

Remarks: A very good exercise for developing confidence between members of a group.

- **Bobity Bob**⁵⁹

Students form a circle with one student/leader standing in the middle. The leader turns to different people in the circle and says 'Bobity Bob'. The one addressed should immediately say 'Bob', if, however, the leader just says 'Bob', the addressed person should remain silent, if he makes a mistake by saying 'Bob', he should exchange the leader in the middle. The quicker this game is performed, the more concentrated the students have to be not to make the mistake. This game can be used as a wonderful concentration activity.

Variations: Together with the phrases, the leader can also use action commands which involve three people who must make a correct formation before the leader counts to five (very quickly), or else the person, who makes a mistake goes in the middle. The formations are infinite and you can make up your own. Some include:

Elephant: the addressed makes an elephant trunk, people on the sides make big ears;

Palm tree: the addressed stands with arms up to be a palm tree, and the people on the sides are hula dancers singing a Hawaiian song;

Airplane: the addressed is a pilot with goggles; the people on the sides are airplane wings;

Duck: the addressed is a duck beak, the people on the sides put their arms around the person's waist and wave their arms bent at the elbow like duck wings.

58 Maley – Duff 2004: 55.

59 Maley – Duff 2004: 63.

• Broken Sentences

Children work in pairs. Each pair gets a set of slips of paper with a sentence half. They have to match them.

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. They're drawing | a) orange juice. |
| 2. She's reading | b) television. |
| 3. He's drinking | c) a tree. |
| 4. They're playing | d) a picture. |
| 5. I'm riding | e) music. |
| 6. She's wearing | f) a comic. |
| 7. I'm doing | g) table tennis. |
| 8. He's driving | h) an exercise. |
| 9. We're eating | i) a dress. |
| 10. You're climbing | j) chocolate. |
| 11. You're listening to | k) a bike. |
| 12. We're watching | l) a car. |

Key: 1d, 2f, 3a, 4g, 5k, 6i, 7h, 8l, 9j, 10c, 11e, 12b

• Catch!⁶⁰

In pairs, students throw an imaginary ball to and fro between them. Details about the kind of ball can be given to make the mime more concrete, e.g. 'You are throwing a tennis ball/football/a very heavy ball/balloon, etc.'

A possible variation is to have the partners playing imaginary table tennis. Emphasis should be placed on the need to really feel and see the imagined ball – its size, weight, etc. Both partners should be able to follow it with their eyes as it is thrown. It should be done in a way so that an outsider too can 'see' what is not there.

• Correct the mistakes

Students work individually. They get text A. They are given a couple of minutes to go through the text to get a general hint about what it is about. The teacher reads text B, which is very similar to text A, however, there are

⁶⁰ Maley – Duff 2004: 51.

minor differences that the students are supposed to identify. While listening to text B, the students need to correct the wrong information they have in text A and they also have to write the right words.

Text A

My name is Michael. I am eight years old and I am a student. I have a brother and a sister. We live in Hollywood in a small house. I get up early every day and I go to school by bus. I like school very much. My favourite subject is Maths. In my free time I usually read a book and go cycling. I like going to the theatre very much.

Text B

My name is Michael. I am seven years old and I am a student. I have a brother and two sisters. We live in Hollywood in a big house. I get up early every day and I go to school by car. I like school very much. My favourite subject is Music. In my free time I usually watch TV and go cycling. I like going to the cinema very much.

• **Count to 20**

Students sit or stand in a circle. The idea for the group is to count to twenty, one person saying one number at a time. Somebody is chosen to start the count. Anybody can say the next number – but if two or more people speak at the same time, counting must start again from the beginning. It is possible to get to twenty if everybody really concentrates. It can be done with or without eye contact – the students closing their eyes or facing outwards the circle.

• **Enormous Elephant**⁶¹

Students stand in a circle. The teacher gives them key words from the story, each accompanied with a gesture or movement. For example, when saying *Magic*, students make a movement with an imaginary magic wand, and when saying *Monkey*, students skip, one hand on their head and the other on their belly. When saying the word *crazy*, they make a circular

61 Phillips 2003: 19-21.

movement with their index finger next to their head or ear. Other words are: *crocodile* (two arms held out to the front, then clapped), *bored* (deep sigh), *idea* (clicking fingers), *New York* (pretending to be the Statue of Liberty, one hand in the air, holding a book with the other), *enormous* (drawing a huge circle with their arms and hands), *elephant* (showing the trunk with arms), *What's the matter?* (students draw a large question mark in the air), *sleep* (students put their head on their hands). In addition, every time the word *walk* is uttered, the whole circle starts walking in the same direction. The activity is most successful when told and not read.

“This is the story of Enormous Elephant, Magic Monkey and Crazy Crocodile.

One day Enormous Elephant was bored, very, very bored. Then he had an idea.

‘I know,’ he said, ‘I’ll go to New York.’

So he started to walk, and he walked, and he walked, and he walked.

On the way he met Magic Monkey.

‘Hello, Magic Monkey,’ he said.

‘Hello,’ said Magic Monkey.

‘What’s the matter?’ said Enormous Elephant.

‘I’m bored,’ said Magic Monkey, ‘very, very bored.’

‘I’ve got an idea,’ said Enormous Elephant, ‘why don’t you come to New York with me?’

‘OK,’ said Magic Monkey.

So they started to walk, and they walked, and they walked, and they walked, and they walked. On the way they met Crazy Crocodile.

‘Hello, Crazy Crocodile,’ they said.

‘Hello,’ said Crazy Crocodile.

‘What’s the matter?’ said Enormous Elephant.

‘I’m bored,’ said Crazy Crocodile, ‘very, very bored.’

‘I’ve got an idea,’ said Enormous Elephant, ‘why don’t you come to New York with us?’

‘OK,’ said Crazy Crocodile.

So they started to walk, and they walked, and they walked, and walked,

and walked.

And they walked, and they walked, and they walked.

And they walked, and they walked, and they walked.

'Oh, I'm tired,' said Enormous Elephant.

'Oh, I'm tired,' said Magic Monkey.

'Oh, I'm tired,' said Crazy Crocodile.

So they all went to sleep.⁶²

• Envelopes and Letters

The students work in groups of three or four. Each group gets a numbered envelope with a set of letters, each letter written on a separate card. The letters come from one word or expression and are mixed up. The task is to rearrange the letters in order to make words. Each letter can be used only once. The groups are asked to write down the words. Each envelope contains a different set of letters. The groups are given a time limit of about 1 minute. As soon as it is over, they have to pass their envelope to the other group and they receive a new one, too.

Possible sets of letters:

1. p o l i c e s t a t i o n
2. w a s h i n g m a c h i n e
3. r a i l w a y s t a t i o n
4. p o s t o f f i c e
5. t i c k e t o f f i c e

• Fruit salad⁶³

Children are sitting in a circle with no spare chairs. The teacher stands in the middle of the circle and assigns a fruit to each child going round the circle, e.g. *apple, strawberry, banana, peach*. Children are asked to remember their fruit. Then the teacher says one fruit, e.g. banana, all the children assigned the name banana have to stand up and change chairs immediately.

⁶² Phillips 2003: 20.

⁶³ Read 2007: 175.

When the teacher says *Fruit salad!*, everyone should change chairs. The teacher plays a few rounds until the children get familiar with the game, and then sits down on one chair while the children are changing chairs so that one child remains in the middle of the circle and takes over as the leader and the game starts again.

This well-known game can be used for practising specific vocabulary and does not necessarily need to be limited to fruit names only. Any lexical set e.g. *animals, food, vehicles*, etc. can be used as an alternative. In case the teacher uses another lexical set, an alternative instruction to *Fruit salad* should be used, e.g. if the game is based on wild animals, the teacher can say *Safari*, if the game is based on food, the instruction could be *Dinner time*.

• ‘Going to’ matching

Students work in groups of three or four. Each group gets a set of slips of paper with sentences on them. There are slips of paper with situations (e.g. There are dark clouds in the sky) and there are ones with predictions (It is going to rain). Students have to match each situation with the correct prediction.

Some possible examples:

The children are opening their exercise books.

They are going to do an exercise.

The children are putting their swimming costumes on.

They are going to swim.

It is very late.

We are going to bed.

Rachel is getting a book from the shelf.

She is going to read.

The dog is very dirty.

The children are going to bath their dog.

Jack is riding his bike very fast.

He is going to fall off his bike.

• **Grab the word and run**

Students work in groups of three or four, each group occupying one corner or part of the classroom. In the middle of the class, there are different words placed on a desk or a chair, each written on a piece of paper. Every group gets a particular category of words and must get those words that fit into the category, certain words fit into more categories, so the group that is the most skilful gets them. Each student can go to the desk and grab only one word. Then, another student takes over. The activity involves word distribution and can be used for both revising and introducing new vocabulary.

The categories can be: weather (e.g. *cloudy, sunny, windy, foggy, hot, warm*, etc.), adjectives to describe people (e.g. *fat, slim, tall, short, tired, happy, sad*, etc.), free time activities (e.g. *swimming, windsurfing, playing football, running, playing golf*, etc.) or parts of the body (e.g. *head, hair, arm, leg, neck, hand, eyes*, etc.).

• **Handshakes⁶⁴**

Students walk freely about the room. The object is to shake hands with everyone in the room, without speaking, but with appropriate facial expression. (Instructions may be given, which involves a change in expression, e.g. *'Each person you shake hands with is a very good friend'*, or *'You are at a very formal reception, you do not know any of the people you meet'*, or *'Each person you shake hands with is an enemy of yours'*, etc.) This simple activity is good for getting the students on the move and making some sort of contact with everyone else in the room. This is a good starting exercise with groups who are meeting for the first time.

• **"I don't want to!"**

The teacher gives instructions to the pupils and they respond by saying 'I don't want to!'. However, when the instruction refers to a dog, e.g. "Feed the dog!" or "Play with the dog!", the children must agree and say "Yes, I will!". The activity can be done by showing the picture of a dog as well. It is a great concentration activity, based on the very fact that children enjoy

64 Maley – Duff 2004: 39.

disagreeing. It is important to keep the rhythm of the activity.

Possible instructions can be:

Sit on your chairs! – I don't want to!

Open your exercise books! – I don't want to!

Do your homework! – I don't want to!

Put away your mobile phones! – I don't want to!

Tidy the class! – I don't want to!

Feed the dog! – Yes, I will!

Walk the dog! – Yes, I will!

• **Judy the Monster**

Students get a text describing Judy the monster. They read the text and have to decide if the sentences are true or false.

Judy is a monster. She is short and fat. She has got long pink hair and big orange eyes. Her mouth is green and very big, but her nose is red and very small. She has got long arms and short legs. Her feet are very dirty. Today is her birthday and she is wearing a long red dress and yellow shoes. She has got a lot of friends. They are all coming for her birthday party. She is very happy.

Are these sentences true or false? Circle the right answer.

- 1) Judy is tall. True/False
- 2) She has got short hair. True/False
- 3) Her eyes are big and orange. True/False
- 4) Her mouth is blue. True/False
- 5) Her nose is red and big. True/False
- 6) Her feet are very clean. True/False
- 7) Her birthday is tomorrow. True/False
- 8) She is wearing a long red dress. True/False
- 9) Her shoes are pink. True/False
- 10) She hasn't got a lot of friends. True/False
- 11) She is very happy. True/False

The activity can be altered or modified in a number of different ways. For example with more proficient students, the description of Judy can be more challenging with plenty of adjectives or with the description of Judy's programme the previous day in order to include the past tense.

• **Listening Grid**⁶⁵

Children get the following grid (prepared and printed in advance):

name	get up	have breakfast	go to school	have lunch	go home	have dinner	go to bed
Vanessa	7.30						
Jack							

They listen to a text read by the teacher about the daily routines of two children, Vanessa and Jack. They have to complete the times in the grid individually, then they compare and check their answers.

Daily routines:

Vanessa gets up at half past seven. She has a shower and cleans her teeth and then she has breakfast at 8 o'clock. Vanessa goes to school with her father at half past eight. She has lunch at half past twelve and she goes home on the bus at quarter to four. After school Vanessa does her homework and watches TV. She has dinner at seven o'clock with her mother and father. She goes to bed at half past nine.

Jack gets up at seven o'clock. He goes to the bathroom, has a wash and has breakfast at half past seven. He goes to school with his friends at eight o'clock. He has lunch in the school canteen at twelve o'clock and he goes home at quarter past two. He does his homework and plays tennis with his brother. He has dinner with his family at six o'clock. He goes to bed at half past eight.

⁶⁵ Adapted from Read 2007: 34-35.

• Map making

Children work in groups of three or in pairs. They are given a large sheet of paper and a set of instructions for making a map. They have to follow the instructions and draw the map.

Possible instructions:

Draw a big blue lake.

Draw a small green hill.

Draw a big blue mountain.

Draw a school in the middle of the map.

Draw a small church.

Draw a railway station.

Draw a big cinema.

When the maps are ready, students pass their maps to the group on the right and they also receive a map from the group on their left. Their task is to make sentences about the received map by using the structure *There is* and words such as *next to, in front of, opposite, between, on the left, on the right, behind*. E.g. There is a green hill next to the lake. There is a cinema opposite the railway station.

• Mirror hands⁶⁶

Students stand facing each other in pairs with their hands raised to shoulder height, palms facing outward, and as close as possible to their partners' without actually touching.

One student is the 'leader', and begins to move both hands in a plane, i.e. always keeping the palms facing outward no matter in which direction the hands are moved. His or her partner has to follow as accurately as possible, as if in a mirror. After this the students change roles and the student who was the leader becomes the 'follower'.

This exercise demands a very high degree of concentration. The activity usually develops a high degree of eye-contact between partners. In some cases

66 Maley – Duff 2004: 40-41.

it may be necessary to stress that this is a cooperative not a competitive activity.

• **Physical line-up**⁶⁷

Students are divided into groups of four or five. A set of word cards is given to each group on cards large enough to see for the whole class. The words make up one sentence. Each student takes one card and the group is asked to stand in a line to make the sentence without speaking to each other. Once they are ready, students are asked to hold up their word cards and show their sentence to the rest of the class. The groups can be given different sentences, examples can be: *We are very hungry. He has got a ball. There is a monkey.*

The teacher can chose sentences according to the area of vocabulary or grammar you are working on, for example when you want to revise past simple questions, sentences could be: *Where did you go? Were you at home?* Of course, sentences can be longer, e.g. *Where were you going when I saw you?* In that case you need bigger groups, e.g. of 6-8 people.

• **Pirates**

The teacher asks children what they know about pirates. Where do they live? What do they look like? What do they wear? The teacher says s/he has written a small description of a pirate but some words are missing from each sentence. Students have to choose words from the list and complete sentences.

- 1) I _____ on a boat.
- 2) I _____ fish every day.
- 3) I _____ on a wooden leg.
- 4) I _____ a black hat.
- 5) I _____ to my parrot
- 6) I _____ treasure.
- 7) I _____ a lot of rum.

eat, talk, wear, live, walk, drink, like

⁶⁷ Read 2007: 105.

Answers: 1) live, 2) eat, 3) walk, 4) wear, 5) talk, 6) like, 7) drink

After they complete the sentences and check the answers, children can draw their own pirates or add more sentences to the list. As a follow-up activity they can be asked to write a description of their own pirate.

• **Queen's family**⁶⁸

Students work individually or in pairs. They are given colour cards (e.g. red) with names of relatives: uncle, granddaughter, daughter, cousin, son, aunt, grandson, mother. Then they are given different colour cards (e.g. green) with the following names: a monster, a doll, a fairy, a robot, a pirate, a witch, a rabbit, Cinderella.

The teacher reads a small story to the students and while listening, they have to match each family member (red cards) with the correct person (green card).

The story is the following:

I am the Queen of Fairies. My uncle is a monster. My granddaughter is a doll. My daughter is a fairy. My cousin is a robot. My son is a pirate. My aunt is a witch. My grandson is a rabbit. My mother is Cinderella.

The teacher reads the text two times, then the students check their answers. As a follow-up activity, students can draw a family tree or create their own enchanted families by writing funny sentences like the ones in the above text.

• **Sentence scramble**

Children work in pairs or groups of three. Each pair/group receives a numbered envelope containing word cards. Children work with their partners and arrange the cards from the envelope on their desk to make a sentence. Each group receives a different set of words.

68 Adapted from McKay – Guse 2007: 65-66.

Possible sentences:

If it rains tomorrow, I will stay at home.

I went to play football with my friends yesterday afternoon.

Look at those clouds, it is going to rain.

We were having dinner when the taxi arrived.

I usually go to school by bus at 7 o'clock.

• **Sorting**

The teacher writes words on colourful cards and sticks them on the left side of the blackboard. Each word is on a separate card. Then the teacher writes four categories side by side on the right side of the board. The children come to the board and have to rearrange the words, stick them under the right category, the one they belong to.

Possible categories: 1. Classroom, 2. The Body, 3. Colours, 4. Adjectives.

Words: head, blue, ears, small, orange, leg, beautiful, ugly, nose, red, brown, black, long, book, CD player, grey, hair, scissors, yellow, arm, orange, mouth, sad, ruler, blackboard, pink, eyes, thin, tall, angry, chalk, notebook, knee.

Other variations can be done as well by choosing different categories and words. The activity is a physical warm-up and is suitable for revising vocabulary.

• **Ten second objects**

This activity is played in small groups of 3 or 4. The teacher calls out the name of an object and the group has to make the shape of that object out of their own body shapes, while the teacher counts down slowly from ten to zero. Usually every group will find a different form of forming the object. Examples could be: a car, a ship, a washing machine, a fire, a clock. Objects or words can be chosen from the lexical area you are revising or from a theme you are going to explore. A rule can be set before the activity starts that after ten seconds the group members must completely be frozen in position. This reduces noise level.

• Tennis

This game is played in pairs and is scored like a game of tennis, but the 'ball' is words. Student A 'serves' a word to student B who 'returns' a word in the same word family. Student A then 'returns' another word, and so on, until someone 'misses', that is, cannot think of a word. For example: Student A: rabbit, Student B: dog, Student A: cat, Student B: mouse, Student A: cannot think of a word, the game is over. This activity is a great concentration activity and good for revising vocabulary. With higher levels the chosen word families can vary from crime and punishment words to adjectives to describe feelings. With lower levels they can be types of vehicles, furniture, family members, etc. As a variation, instead of word families words beginning with the same letter can be used, or a word beginning with the last letter of the previous word.

• Touch it⁶⁹

Students are grouped in the middle of the room, they are asked to walk around and fill in the space. They are then asked to touch a variety of objects, surfaces, colours, textures, etc. (e.g. 'Touch something yellow...something rough...something round, etc.'). This activity helps students to observe their environment and to practise or revise some vocabulary. It is also a good warming-up activity.

• Toys

Students work in pairs, where one of them gets worksheet A and the other worksheet B. For this activity, the structure of 'has got' and 'have got' must be pre-taught. Students take turns and ask questions from their partner in order to complete the chart, e.g. Student A: *Has John got a ball?* Student B: *Yes, he has.* Student A: *Has Sylvia got a balloon?* Student B: *No, she hasn't.*

69 Maley – Duff 2004: 55.

Worksheet A

	ball	computer	bicycle	kite	balloon
John	yes		yes	no	
Sylvia		no			no
Jack	yes	no	no		
Mary	no		yes		yes
I					
you					

Worksheet B

	ball	computer	bicycle	kite	balloon
John		no			yes
Sylvia	no		yes	yes	no
Jack				yes	no
Mary		yes		no	
I					
you					

After they have completed the chart about the four children, they also complete their own answers and then may ask their partners as well. In this case they ask: Have you got a ball? Yes, I have./No, I haven't.

• Transport odd-one-out

The teacher reads out four transport words. The children write down the words and try to find out the odd-one-out in the list by underlining it, either in pairs or individually. They should also give a reason for their choice.

Possible examples:

car, bike, helicopter, plane – A large number of people can travel in a plane.

boat, motorbike, train, car – A boat travels on water, the others travel on land.

boat, plane, lorry, bus – Boats, planes and buses carry passengers, but a lorry carries goods.

bike, motorbike, bus, train – Bikes, motorbikes and buses travel on the road, but a train travels on tracks.

• True or false?

Each student gets two cards, a red and a green one. The teacher reads sentences aloud, the students listen and have to decide whether the sentence is true or false. If it is true, the students have to respond by lifting up the green card. If the sentence is false, they have to lift up the red card. Sentences can be different according to the language level of the students.

Some examples:

- a) Elephants can fly.
- b) Cats are yellow.
- c) Tigers have got two legs.
- d) Dogs can run fast.
- e) The horse is red.
- f) The duck is yellow.

The activity is also suitable for using visuals, flashcards or pictures. The teacher can show pictures to the class and say sentences about it. The students have to indicate whether the sentence is true or false in the above-mentioned way. E.g. The man is driving a car. There are two houses in the background.

• Wall dictation⁷⁰

The class is divided into four groups. The teacher sticks four texts on coloured cards (different colour for each group) on the board at least 2-3 meters far from where the groups are sitting. The objective of the activity is for the groups to get the text from the card on the wall into their notebooks as fast as they can. One person from each group should go to their text, reads and remembers two or three words or even a sentence from the text,

⁷⁰ Read 2007: 66-67.

then goes back and dictates it to the rest of the group. Whenever the teacher says Change! the person who is dictating must immediately sit down and another member of the group takes over. While dictating, they can leave a gap in the text, which can be completed later. Once they have finished, they take their text off the wall, compare it to what they have written and correct any mistakes. After reading the whole text again, students are asked to identify the description and match it with the name of the dinosaur. As a helper, pictures of the four dinosaurs can also be put on the board, and then students are asked to match their texts with the dinosaur being described. It is important to have different texts for the groups so that they cannot listen in and copy. It is necessary to make sure that desks are moved aside and there is nothing to trip over and that students do not run widely. As a variation, more difficult texts can be used as well, depending on the age and language level of the group.

1. This dinosaur has got a big body and is very long. It has got a very long neck and a very long tail. It has got a small head and small eyes. It has got small teeth. This dinosaur has got big legs and feet like an elephant. It eats plants. (*Diplodocus*)
2. This dinosaur is very big and tall. It has got a big head and very long, sharp teeth. This dinosaur has got a short neck and a big body. It has also got a big tail. This dinosaur has got two long legs and two very short legs. It eats meat. It is very dangerous. (*Tyrannosaurus Rex*)
3. This dinosaur has got a big body and a big head. It has got two long horns and one short horn. It has got small eyes and a big mouth. This dinosaur has got a frill on its neck. It has got four short legs and a tail. It is very strong. It eats plants. (*Triceratops*)
4. This dinosaur has got a small head and small eyes. It has got a big body and a big tail. It has got lots of spikes on its back and its tail. This dinosaur has got four short fat legs and big feet. It can't run very fast. It eats plants. (*Stegosaurus*)

Conclusion

Foreign language learning at primary level, curriculum development, teaching materials for young learners, teaching vocabulary and grammar, evaluation and assessment, motivation and creativity are just a few examples of the most frequently investigated areas in English language teaching. Teaching a foreign language to young learners is one of the most demanding, yet at the same time most challenging and rewarding tasks. The teacher needs to be a highly skilled professional who has to combine theoretical assumptions and background with practical experiences and the practical needs and circumstances of the foreign language classroom.

The main aim of the book was to introduce and discuss theoretical assumptions and key issues that directly relate to foreign language teaching to young learners and to provide several strategies, techniques and concrete applicable activities for the practice of teaching young learners based on this theoretical background. Wherever possible, we have included concrete practical examples, tips and guidelines to illustrate and support our point. The book is divided into nine chapters, which reflect key areas in primary language teaching. Each chapter gives an overview of methodological issues related to the topic.

For the sake of clear orientation and introduction to the teaching of a foreign language to young learners, a brief overview of young learner development and characteristic features was provided in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2, several approaches to teaching young learners were compared and contrasted. The main objective was to emphasise the importance of motivation, playfulness, meaningfulness and creativity.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the selection, usage and adaptation of a coursebook in the young language learner classroom highlighting both the advantages and disadvantages of using a coursebook in ELT as well as the various types of coursebook evaluation. The main objective was to demonstrate that no perfect coursebook exists; therefore, adapting the coursebook to the needs of the students should be one of the teacher's most important priorities.

Chapter 4 and 5 deal with teaching vocabulary and grammar to young

learners. These two areas are many times interconnected; however, both of them request a very sensitive and careful approach from the teacher. Continuous practice, constant exposure to words, a variety of creative and colourful contexts, the personalization of vocabulary and developing own vocabulary learning strategies are the key components of successful vocabulary learning. Teaching grammar to young learners should rely on guided practice, creative language use and playfulness. This will make language learning more meaningful and motivating.

Playing games is an integral part of learning and gaining knowledge in childhood. Chapter 6 highlights that games not only increase motivation, they are also one of the most important ways of learning. Therefore, using games in the foreign language classroom with children is a must. On the other hand, it is very important that a game is also purposeful and has a recognizable objective, mere entertainment and amusement is not enough.

Chapter 7 deals with the introduction of drama techniques to young learners. Drama techniques have been used in education for a couple of decades. The application of drama techniques in ELT with young learners helps exploit children's capacity to be creative, imaginative and is built on their powerful need for movement.

Assessing young learners is the integral part of foreign language teaching. Chapter 8 points out that the most appropriate assessing techniques should take into consideration the learner's age, language level and several other factors related to children's peculiarities and needs. Teachers should develop an encouraging and motivating system of assessment rather than a one that destroys students' self-esteem or enthusiasm.

The last chapter of the book is a Resource Bank with a list of suggested activities for young language learners. All the indicated activities are based on the principles and guidelines discussed in previous chapters. They are designed to take into account the learning specialties and development of young learners. They can be used in a creative way, in various possible variations, depending on the characteristics and needs of the concrete class. They are supposed to generate further personalized teaching ideas.

The main aim of teaching a foreign language to young learners should not only be a linguistic goal. Helping the child to learn and develop becomes

more important than simply teaching the language. It should also include creating and maintaining a happy and relaxed learning environment in which children are engaged in purposeful and motivating activities. The teaching of children is rewarding, energizing and exhilarating. Children have huge amounts of energies, curiosity and involvement. This book intends to help researchers and teachers configure parts of these energies into productive learning and development.

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The Challenges and Practices of Teaching Young Learners

Recenzensek:

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