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**THE APPLICATION OF WALDORF PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING ORAL
SKILLS IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY**

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

The main approach to teaching foreign languages as advocated by the National Curriculum is communicative language competence which is, among other things, aimed at the development of oral skills. One of the interesting approaches to the development of oral skills is Waldorf method which is known for being a learner-oriented educational system that fosters creativity. This study focuses on the way oral skills are developed during the lessons of a foreign language at primary and lower-secondary level at Waldorf schools.

The first chapter of the thesis provides an overview of Waldorf education, as well as discusses how it is recommended to teach foreign languages at Waldorf schools. After that, a more detailed discussion follows which addresses the techniques that Waldorf approach recommends using to develop students' oral skills at primary and lower-secondary school.

The empirical chapter of the thesis provides an analysis of the lessons of English that were observed at Tartu Waldorgümnaasium, which was chosen for closer examination. The second part of the thesis also discusses the interviews that were conducted with two teachers of English who work at Tartu Waldorgümnaasium to gain a better insight into the topic.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of teaching foreign languages has become a point of increasing interest and concern in Estonian schools in recent years. The National Curriculum for Basic Schools (henceforth the National Curriculum) indicates that nowadays learning foreign languages focuses on communicative needs of the students and is centered on their communication goals. It is also emphasized that the main goal of learning a foreign language is developing the ability to communicate later in this language, not merely knowing language structures. The National Curriculum also indicates that by the end of the second stage of study (by the end of grade 6) students should be able to “get by in at least one foreign language in everyday communication situations that require direct and simple exchange of information on familiar and routine topics” (Riigiteataja 2011). Considering the techniques and methods that the National Curriculum recommends using when teaching speaking at lower-basic school, it is said that the teacher should use group work, games and role play in the lesson in order to encourage the students to communicate with each other. It is also pointed out that at this stage the students should start doing short presentations, which are likewise considered to develop their language competence.

The main approach that the National Curriculum recommends to use when teaching a foreign language is communicative language teaching (Est. *kommunikatiivne õpetus*). This method sets as its main aim the development of learners’ communicative competence and it sees the language as a social tool which speakers use to exchange information (Richards 2006: 2). Communicative competence can be defined as a combination of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences (CEFR 2001: 108). This means that the students know how to use the language for a number of various purposes and can produce and understand different types of texts. It also means that the students know how to vary their use of language according to the situation and the participants involved in the conversation. Last but not least, it means that the students are

able to maintain a conversation despite the limitations in their language knowledge. Communicative language approach also indicates that communicative competence cannot be achieved without focusing on linguistic competences, including grammar competence. Linguistic competence, however, should always be taught in combination with other skills (Richards 2006: 3). The communicative language teaching approach recommends to learn through interaction in the target language, to use authentic texts in the lesson, and to connect classroom language learning with the language outside the classroom (Sreehari 2012: 88). The communicative language approach is also aimed at the development of oral skills, which can be defined as the combination of acquiring basic vocabulary as well as pronunciation and interaction skills (Huuskonen & Kähkönen 2006: 19).

When looking at the Estonian educational landscape, Waldorf schools might be considered an interesting example of an alternative approach to developing oral skills. Erhard Dahl, a Waldorf scholar who specializes in foreign language teaching, indicates that one of the most important aims of Waldorf approach to learning a foreign language is developing oral skills while taking into account the student's individuality (Dahl 2014: 19). Thus, it can be said that Waldorf educational system is a learner-oriented system that has been successfully operating for more than one hundred years as the first Waldorf school was founded in Stuttgart, Germany by Rudolf Steiner in 1919. The reason for choosing Waldorf schools as an object for studying is also connected to the fact that among other schools that promote alternative approach to education, Waldorf schools are internationally represented, with 1092 schools in 64 countries (Waldorf World List 2018). Thus, it can be said that Waldorf schools continue functioning because parents still send their children there, which probably means that they consider this environment beneficial and suitable for their children. At Waldorf schools foreign language instruction starts in the first grade, which might be

one of the considerations that parents have when choosing a certain school for their children (Kellerova 2013: 7). In Estonia, there are eight Waldorf schools, out of which Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium was chosen for a closer examination because it is one of the biggest Waldorf schools in Estonia and has a convenient location, since the author of this MA thesis had to carry out several lesson observations and interviews with the teachers in order to gain a better understanding of Waldorf approach. Another reason for choosing Waldorf schools as a research object is the fact that Waldorf school students seem to have quite good oral skills and pronunciation, probably as a result of the first three years being dedicated entirely to the recitation of poems, singing songs and other oral work. Therefore, the author of the present MA thesis found it interesting to investigate how oral skills are developed at Waldorf schools. In addition to having good oral skills, Waldorf students dare to experiment with the language and are creative with their language skills, as was pointed out by one of the teachers of English who works at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium. Good oral skills, in turn, provide a good and solid foundation for future development of speaking skills. However, it is important to point out that the difference between Waldorf approach to developing oral skills and the techniques used at mainstream schools in Estonia is not so big, especially at the primary school level. Therefore, the main motivation for writing this MA thesis is the author's interest towards Waldorf approach and the continuing popularity of this alternative approach to teaching foreign languages.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The literature review gives an overview of Waldorf education in general while also discussing the notion of anthroposophy in which Waldorf educational system is rooted. The first part of literature review also outlines the main principles of Waldorf education. For instance, it discusses child development stages in the light of Waldorf education as well as the holistic approach to education that is applied at Waldorf schools. The next

part of the literature review is dedicated to the way Waldorf approach recommends to teach foreign languages at primary school and lower-basic school. Finally, the last section of the literature review discusses how it is recommended to develop students' oral skills at Waldorf school.

In the empirical part of the thesis the lessons of English that had been observed at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium are analyzed. Also, a comparison is drawn between the way it is recommended to teach oral skills by the Waldorf scholars and the methods and techniques that are actually used by the teachers of English during the lesson. Parallels are drawn between methodological materials and the activities that were observed during the lessons. The next section of the empirical part is dedicated to the analysis of the interviews that were carried out with two teachers of English who work at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium in order to have a better understanding of Waldorf method. Following the analysis of the interviews, there is a discussion of the lessons observed and the interviews conducted with the key principles of Waldorf approach to teaching foreign languages being pointed out. The author of the thesis also includes the detailed lesson plans of the lessons observed, the interview questions as well as representative examples of the poems and songs that were used during the lessons.

As a result of this case study, the author wishes to discover how oral skills, which later serve as a foundation for developing speaking skills, are developed at Waldorf schools. In addition to that, the author of the present MA thesis intends to examine the structure of the lessons at Waldorf school, to find out how much time during the lesson is usually dedicated to the development of oral skills as well as how methodological materials support this approach.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The present chapter gives a general overview of Waldorf pedagogy as well as briefly describes anthroposophy that lies in the basis of Waldorf approach. It also discusses child development stages in the light of Waldorf education and outlines other basic principles of Waldorf pedagogy. This chapter also considers how Waldorf scholars recommend to teach foreign languages at lower-basic school, and more importantly how to develop students' oral skills.

1.1 Waldorf pedagogy

In order to speak about Waldorf education, it is necessary to, first of all, define anthroposophy which provides the basis for this educational movement (Kubeckova 2013: 16). According to Kellerova (2013: 10), the main idea of anthroposophy is that spiritual knowledge that stems from personal inner experience can provide the same scientific evidence as knowledge arising from physical experience. This means that people need to relate to the world around them not only theoretically, but also need to develop a relationship with their surroundings based on their individual inner experience. Templeton (2007: 165) further explains the notion of anthroposophy as well as how it is related to Waldorf pedagogy.

./../ Anthroposophy provided the basis for a new type of school where the syllabus of all subjects is based on a clear picture of how children learn, how their consciousness changes, and how their emotional and intellectual capacities develop.

According to anthroposophy, people develop in seven-year cycles (Kubeckova 2013: 18), which was taken into account by Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf education, when he developed the main principles of Waldorf pedagogy in the early 1920s. Thus, Steiner believed that up to the age of 6 or 7 children's will must be addressed by using rhythm in the lessons and forming children's habits by imitation. Next, from the age of 6 or 7 to the age of 14, children's feelings must be addressed by the teacher by using pictorial presentation and encouraging students to use

their imagination. Finally, from the age of 14, students' thinking must be addressed by challenging their intellectual capacity.

In addition to taking child's development stages into account, there are other important principles of Waldorf education. One of the fundamental principles of Waldorf education is the holistic approach to teaching (Kellerova 2013: 20). This means that the teachers pay attention not only to training students' intellectual skills, but also make effort to awaken children's social conscience, cultivate their means of self-expression as well as dedicate time to children's spiritual development.

Another important aspect of Waldorf education is following the rhythm of the day. This means that the lessons that take place in the morning should be dedicated mostly to the intellectual activity which addresses thinking and imagination. The next part of the day should be devoted to the activities that address rhythm and movement, whereas training of the practical skills (for example craftwork, knitting, sewing etc.) should be postponed to the early afternoon (Kubeckova 2013: 20). This principle is usually followed by the timetable.

Working with temperament is another important feature of Waldorf approach (Kubeckova 2013: 21). Steiner indicated that the teacher should recognize the child's temperament and act accordingly. This means that there are students who prefer quiet activities when they get a chance to concentrate on the task whereas others like lively activities with a lot of movements and choral recitation. The teacher therefore has to organize the lessons in such a way that all students get the chance to participate in the activities that they find enjoyable and motivating due to their temperament.

It is also important to point out that at Waldorf schools two foreign languages are introduced as early as in the first grade. One of the reasons for doing so is the fact that children

are more likely to acquire a near-native pronunciation if they start learning a foreign language early in their school years (Jaffke 2005: 3). Another reason is connected to the idea that children should learn foreign languages not only in order to be able to use them in the future, but also as a means of encountering a new culture, and thus expanding their horizons.

Another key principle of Waldorf education is related to how reading and writing are taught. During the first three years the language is taught orally with students singing songs, reciting poems and playing various games. The reason for doing so stems from the idea that the main aim of language teaching at this stage is to awake children's emotions or feelings that would lead towards understanding later (Kubeckova 2013: 30). This means that the teachers try to awaken in the students the appreciation of the beauty of the language and do not focus as much on translating everything. Therefore, the students start learning how to write only in the fourth grade when they start recording the texts that they have learnt by heart in the previous three years. Only after that do they start reading them, which is easier for them because they are already familiar with the texts. The fourth year is dedicated to writing and reading the texts that are familiar to the students, whereas printed texts are introduced in the fifth grade.

In addition to that, at Waldorf school there are no grades, instead students are given written reports once or twice a year which describe their progress, their attitude towards the subject, their strengths and weaknesses as well as their social interactions. Until the fourth grade students are given written reports once a year, whereas starting from the fifth grade they receive the report twice a year. From the ninth grade onwards the teacher assesses students by giving them numerical grades. It is important to point out that this is the practice of Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium, and it depends largely on the school when the students start getting grades and whether they start getting them at all. However, it is general practice at Waldorf schools to give written reports to the students

instead of numerical grades at least at the elementary level. The reason for not giving grades during the first eight years of education is connected to the belief that by doing so it is impossible to follow the holistic principle discussed earlier (Kubeckova 2013: 21). This means that it is very difficult for the the teacher to take into account not only the child's intellectual skills, but also the awakening of their social conscience, cultivation of means of self-expression and their spiritual development while giving them a grade.

The last principle of Waldorf education to be mentioned here is the fact that there are no printed textbooks. Instead, students at Waldorf schools usually make textbooks themselves. Some teachers prefer to have one exercise book where students write down grammatical rules, poems, songs, vocabulary and texts, while others use more exercise books. The students pay attention to the layout and are encouraged to make an effort to make their textbook look nice and neat (Kubeckova 2013: 26). It is interesting to note that quite often the students keep their textbook for years as an interview with Czech Waldorf school graduates indicates (Dvorakova 2016: 396).

1.2 Teaching foreign languages at Waldorf school

Teaching foreign languages is considered very important at Waldorf schools. In fact, Rudolf Steiner recommended to start with two foreign languages as early as in the first grade (Kellerova 2013: 11). At the time, at the beginning of 20th century, this idea was quite revolutionary, yet Steiner explained the need for early introduction of foreign languages saying that the children's ability to imitate, which enabled them to learn their mother language, decreases significantly during the first years at school; therefore, the teaching of foreign languages should start as early as possible (Wiechert 2013: 22). It is debatable whether at primary school foreign languages should be taught by class teacher, as is often the case, or by the teacher of foreign languages. Templeton (2007: 182) suggests that it is better when foreign languages are at first

taught by the class teachers since they have less problems with discipline and can probably use group dynamics more effectively to achieve lesson objectives than the teachers of foreign languages, who only see the students twice a week. However, it is somewhat questionable whether the class teachers have the necessary qualifications for teaching foreign languages, which is the reason why Templeton emphasized that the teacher should have a good command of the foreign language to start teaching it, especially what concerns pronunciation.

When the first Waldorf school was founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1919, foreign languages were allocated three lessons a week. However, nowadays the situation has changed and it is not always possible to devote so many hours to foreign languages anymore. In case of Waldorf, at primary school and lower-basic school foreign languages are usually allocated two to three lessons a week, depending on the school. At Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium, students start learning two foreign languages in the first grade - English and Russian. During the first three years, there are two lessons of English and two lessons of Russian. Starting from the fourth grade, there are three lessons of English and two lessons of Russian. The choice of languages is usually determined by the geographical closeness of the countries in question as well as the importance of the language on the international stage.

At this stage, during the first three years of learning, reading and writing skills are not developed yet. This issue usually sparks concerns among parents as well as gets questioned by the people outside Waldorf community. However, the reasons for introducing reading and writing as late as in the fourth grade, are two-fold as pointed out by Jaffke (2005: 18). First of all, taking into consideration the developmental stages of children, it is important to remember that they undergo an important phase between their ninth and tenth year. During this time, it is said that children start distancing themselves from their surroundings which makes them see the world around them from

a new perspective. This means that it is the right time for the teachers to introduce a new skill - a written mode in the foreign language. Secondly, over the first three years of studying the students have an opportunity to build up an extensive repertoire of various poems and songs. Therefore, by the fourth grade the students have at their disposal some basic vocabulary and texts that can be used when making the first steps mastering a new skill. Knowing various poems and songs by heart also facilitates the next stage, the transition from writing to reading because at first, the students write only familiar texts. Therefore, it is much easier for students to read them and they experience an instant feeling of success which usually boosts their motivation. It is important to point out that at Waldorf schools the students learn how to write in their mother tongue only at the end of the first grade, probably for similar reasons.

It is often pointed out that the aim of teaching foreign languages at Waldorf school is not merely for students to be able to use it as a communication tool, but also recognize the stylistic and phonetic qualities of it (Kubeckova 2013: 30). Although this might seem to be somewhat unnecessary, it is to achieve this goal that Waldorf scholars recommend using poems that have complicated structure and a vocabulary that some students might find difficult to understand. The main idea is that the students do not have to understand everything but rather learn to appreciate the beauty of the language. The means for doing so are using rhythm and rhyme in the lesson, as well as the inner pictures that appear in the students' imagination when they try to understand the meaning of the poem. It is also underlined that even though the students often ask for translation when tackling a new poem or song, ideally the teacher should try to explain the meaning using body language, pictures or miming or explain the word in the target language.

Another feature of teaching foreign languages at Waldorf school is the importance of switching between contrasting activities as children become older. Dvorakova (2005: 198) writes

that it is very beneficial for the students to combine productive activity with moments of attentive listening. This way, the focus of their attention switches, which helps them to concentrate. Alternating between singing songs, reciting poems, listening to stories, playing games and responding to questions is also believed to lead to more productive work (Kubeckova 2013: 30).

The description of the methods and techniques used to teach foreign languages at Waldorf school would be incomplete without mentioning the importance of using different physical movements during the lesson. When reciting poems or singing songs, the students accompany them with various movements which often reflect the meaning of the words. For instance, if the poem is about winter and snow, the children would show with their hands how the snow falls from the sky. An experienced Waldorf teacher of foreign languages, Alec Templeton (2007: 74) also writes that children find it easy and enjoyable to learn through acting and movement. He proceeds, saying that students learn the language subconsciously when accompanying words and phrases with physical movements. The Total Physical Response method which is quite often used at mainstream schools also recommends using various movements and other forms of physical activity (Savic 2014: 447) which means that this technique is not unique to Waldorf approach. The advocates of this method claim that it meets the children's need to stay active during the lesson, to learn through doing, and to learn language in a meaningful and stress-free atmosphere. Waldorf scholars also seem to share the belief that movement is beneficial for language learning process. Namely, Templeton (2007: 167) writes that using purposeful movement plays a significant role when teaching a second language at primary school.

Waldorf approach to teaching grammar is also somewhat different from the traditional methods. The students are introduced to the first grammar structures in the fourth grade because by that time they have already encountered various grammatical structures in the texts that they

read and the poems that they learnt by heart. It is a common practice at Waldorf schools to present the students with different examples of the same grammatical rule and wait for the students to point out the rule themselves (Kubeckova 2013: 33). It is believed that due to this inductive approach (which is actually nowadays actively used also in mainstream schools) the students memorize the rule better and in general approach grammar more consciously. After the students indicate the rule, a discussion usually follows as to whether the same grammatical structure also exists in the students' mother tongue or not. Kubeckova also states that there is no need to use proper grammar terms at this stage, instead the teacher should simply ensure that the students understand the meaning of a certain grammatical structure. The decision to introduce grammar so late is often questioned and criticized by other educators who point out that grammatical rules actually help the students to start expressing themselves in this language. However, it is also important to point out that fourth grade is considered by Waldorf scholars to be the last moment for the teacher to start introducing basic grammar structures to the students because it significantly helps them to gain a systematic understanding of the language (Templeton 2007: 121).

Considering the structure of the lesson, it can be said that Waldorf scholars recommend to balance artistic, intellectual and physical activities during the lesson (Kellerova 2013: 21). The same author suggests starting the lesson with a rhythmical part which can include, for example, reciting poems or singing songs. The next part of the lesson should be dedicated to the instruction, or giving new material, while the final part ideally should involve storytelling. Templeton (2007: 175) recommends a similar structure, the only difference being that he stresses that the teacher should always find time and energy for practising the existing repertoire of poems and songs. He also stresses that it is important to use storytelling during the lesson because it arouses interest in the students, stimulates them and is a good way of developing students' comprehension skills. In

addition to that, storytelling makes students actively use their imagination especially if the teacher asks them to draw while listening to the story, which is a common practice during the first years of learning a foreign language.

Another important aspect of foreign language instruction at Waldorf schools is the fact that it is very artistic, meaning that the teacher should incorporate painting and drawing as well as miming and acting into the lesson (Dvorakova 2005: 198). The reason for doing so is connected to the belief that the children should develop in a holistic way, which means that in addition to training students' intellectual skills, the teachers should also help students to find ways of expressing themselves. Templeton (2007: 165) also shares this view, stating that the teacher of foreign languages should be an artist because they need to appeal to heart, imagination as well as intellect. The lesson of a foreign language at Waldorf school often starts with a poem that deals with spiritual matters. Although it might be questioned whether these poems should actually be used, the main aim of incorporating them into the lesson is to touch the artistic side of the children, to make them see how beautiful the world around them is and to start appreciating it (Kubeckova 2013: 26).

When discussing the way foreign languages are taught at Waldorf school, it is important to mention that the teachers do not use electronic media in primary and lower-secondary school. This topic is probably the cause of most disagreements between people advocating contemporary methods of education and Waldorf scholars. However, it should be pointed out that the main reason for not using electronic media is connected to the belief that authentic experience is more beneficial for the children in comparison to the mediated sense experiences. It is also assumed that mediated reality is somewhat deformed and that students are not so active when watching a video or listening to the recording. Therefore, it is feared that the development of fantasy can be prevented by the

use of the electronic devices during the language learning process (Kubeckova 2013: 26). Fantasy and imagination, in turn, are considered to be central to the healthy development of an individual (Dvorakova 2005: 200). As a result, electronic devices are not used at all during the first years at school. However, Templeton (2007: 182) points out that if there is an opportunity of occasionally inviting a native speaker to the lesson, the teacher should definitely consider using it. He explains that a native speaker is a “living representative” of the language that the students learn, as well as the culture of that land. The students can then observe how they act (including how they use body language, gestures etc.) and listen to them, and will hopefully find some inspiration from these encounters. However, it should be emphasized that the teachers at Waldorf schools eventually start using listening exercises with older students in order to prepare them for state exams. The only difference is that they introduce them later than at mainstream schools.

Another interesting aspect of the way foreign languages are taught at Waldorf school is the fact that ideally translation is to be strictly avoided at primary and lower-secondary school. The lessons are to be conducted entirely in the target language, whereas the children’s mother tongue should be reserved for the so-called “emergency situations”, like dealing with discipline problems (Jaffke 2005: 5). Dvorakova (2005: 198) indicates that although students might be very impatient at times and anxious that they do not understand the meaning of a certain word quickly, the teacher should not provide the translation at first request. Instead, the teacher should convey the meaning using body language, gestures, miming and other non-verbal expressions. Dvorakova adds that the students need to realize that they do not always have to understand every single word in the poem, but rather the general meaning and idea behind it. This way they will become tolerant of ambiguity which is considered to be one of the main characteristics of a successful language learner (Ur 1996: 275).

1.3 Developing students' oral skills

During the first three years at Waldorf school, children usually learn the language almost exclusively in the audio-oral way, meaning that they listen and repeat what the teacher says, respond to questions, recite a lot of poems, listen to stories, sing different songs and play games. Since this approach can be questioned by parents and people outside Waldorf community, Waldorf scholars explain it in a several ways. One of the reasons for doing so is the fact that at this stage an easy and effective way of learning for students is by imitating. According to Waldorf approach, children aged 6 to 14 learn most effectively when the teacher addresses their feelings. This means that in addition to focusing on imitation, the teacher should use pictorial presentation during the lesson and encourage the students to use their imagination (Kubeckova 2013: 18). These techniques help students to memorize new words and draw parallels between a notion and a real-life object. Jaffke (2005: 5) states that singing songs is also very important during the first years of learning a foreign language because the students absorb the language easily when it is in the form of a poem or a song. His opinion is also supported by Templeton (2007: 22), who writes that concentrating on the rhythm, which is what students do when they recite a poem or sing a song, helps them memorize the words. The main aim of focusing on oral work during the first years of education is to achieve good pronunciation and develop oral skills which lay a solid foundation for future development of speaking skills.

When talking about audio-oral way of learning the language that is used at Waldorf schools, it is important to discuss poems separately. Since learning poems by heart plays an important role in the language learning process, there are some important aspects to consider. First of all, some Waldorf scholars believe that already at an early age the students should be introduced to fine poetry, meaning that the poems can have sophisticated vocabulary and difficult language structures (Querido 1987: 1). Since translation, as a general rule, is to be avoided, it is argued that

such poems help students develop tolerance to ambiguity, enrich their vocabulary, improve their pronunciation as well as teach natural intonation patterns. However, Querido also points out that it is crucial for the teacher to memorize the poem before introducing it to the students and recite it with enthusiasm. Templeton (2007: 28) adds that prior to reciting the poem, it is also very important to arouse students' interest in it, or in other words conduct a preliminary activity. He recommends to start by retelling the poem to the students as if it was a story focusing on the scenes that take place, the description of the protagonists and so on. Next, he advises to initiate a discussion with the students by asking them what the subject of the poem is, who is "speaking" etc. Templeton points out that it is better to avoid asking the children whether they like the poem, instead the teacher should encourage the students to think about the plot. Jaffke (2005: 14) also indicates that when reciting a poem together with the class the teacher should not recite it in a very loud and energetic manner, because it quite often creates quite the opposite effect - students recite the poem very passively and do not pay attention to pronunciation. Instead, he argues, when reciting a poem together with the students the teacher should speak softly, while still maintaining clear pronunciation. This way, the students usually start participating more actively because they feel that they are now responsible for the flow of the lesson. All these recommendations considering using poems in the lesson are aimed to help the teacher find the right ones that meet the needs of particular students as well as ensure that they benefit as much as possible from using them.

Playing games is also an indispensable part of learning a foreign language at primary and lower-secondary school. Although some people might think that playing at this stage does not mean doing anything useful and is a waste of time, there are multiple reasons why playing should be incorporated into the lessons, as pointed out by Waldorf scholars. The main reason for using

games is the fact that the children are hardly aware that they use a foreign language when they are playing a game at the same time (Jaffke 2005: 7). This means that they absorb the language subconsciously while following the teacher's instructions and interacting with their classmates. Kellerova (2013: 47) also indicates that playing games during the lesson increases students' motivation and improves their language proficiency. This view is also shared by Ur (1996: 289) who states that children can greatly benefit from games, especially the shy ones, because it gives them an opportunity to learn the language in a stress-free environment. Templeton (2007: 168) also writes that while playing games children learn the target language similarly to the way they acquired their mother tongue - through activities and by imitating the speech models. He adds that children learn much more effectively when they are actively participating in the process rather than when they are simply listening to the teacher. Templeton also points out that games lay a foundation for the grammar work that starts to take place in grade 4. He adds that although the students are unaware of this, they build up a rich collection of grammatical forms and structures during the first three years of learning the language, which later serve as the basis for studying grammar and discovering rules in grade 4 and 5. Considering the manner in which the teacher should conduct games, Jaffke (2005: 14) states that the teacher's role should be limited to simply explaining the rules and choosing the first set of players. It is important that the teacher can use their mother tongue in case the students do not understand the rules of the game in English, because it is crucial that everybody understands how to play the game. Jaffke adds that in every class there is one or two children who are particularly talented and are able to take over teacher's role and instruct their classmates during the game if it is necessary. This way, the students who conduct the activity participate very actively in the game as well as set a model for other students who see that it is possible for them, too, to carry out tasks on their own. As a result, students quickly learn the

vocabulary that is practised during the games and the teacher can observe the students and help them if necessary.

When discussing the way oral skills are developed in the lessons of foreign language, it is important to mention warm-up exercises. Templeton (2007: 19) recommends starting the lesson with various oral warm-up exercises because it helps to activate the learning processes and helps students overcome their fear of speaking later in the lesson. For example, he suggests saying the alphabet quickly or asking students to name one after another one item of a certain group of words (days of the week, months, colors etc.) until all items of this group are named. He also recommends conducting warm-up activities that are aimed at revising irregular verbs and other basic vocabulary. Quite often warm-up exercises also involve performing various physical movements which also helps the students to focus on the lesson.

Another important aspect of developing students' oral skills during the lessons of foreign language is using tongue twisters. Kellerova (2013: 29) indicates that students feel inspired to play with the language through the use of various tongue twisters, which also helps to train correct pronunciation. This view is shared by Querido (1987: 1) who also stresses the importance of using tongue twisters and other pronunciation exercises because they help the students to learn how to cope with the tongue-twisting sounds as well as improve students' pronunciation over time. Templeton (2007: 22) also writes that tongue twisters and other speech exercises greatly benefit all young learners because they help students to articulate clearly, to use intonation correctly and to start feeling the rhythm of a phrase or a sentence. Using tongue twisters is somewhat similar to using poems and songs in the lesson, because their use can be questioned by some, but they all serve the same purpose - to develop a sensitive appreciation of the language in addition to

developing students' oral skills. The most representative examples of tongue twisters that are used at Waldorf schools can be found in Appendix 2.

Dialogue is also one of the most important tools to be used when teaching a foreign language, as pointed out by Jaffke (2015: 105). He also points out that it is easier for learners to start speaking if they are given certain formulaic expressions (or questions) because they enable the students to interact with each other even at the beginner's level. Jaffke also adds that these formulaic expressions do not have to be translated by the teacher, instead he or she should ensure that everybody simply understands the meaning with the help of the context. The teacher can also use body language, gestures or pictures to explain the meaning of these expressions. As a result, with the help of formulaic expressions the students immerse themselves in the target language and start using various phrases and sentences quite naturally (Jaffke 2015: 108). He also notes that although in the beginning formulaic expressions are not analyzed and the students simply learn them by heart, later on they are used in an increasing number of contexts, which helps the students to fully comprehend them. This view is also shared by Templeton (2007: 67), who recommends to practise dialogues in the form of a short sketch. He writes that simply asking and answering the question can be somewhat boring for the students, therefore if the students write a sketch during the lesson based on some dialogue topic, they might feel more enthusiastic about it. Templeton adds that the teacher should work on pronunciation, sentence stress and intonations while the students are acting out the sketch. Kellerova (2013: 48) also writes that introducing dialogues and small sketches is a good opportunity for the teacher to introduce artistic elements into the lesson, which is one of the aims of Waldorf education. Overall, it can be said that dialogues play a significant role in Waldorf approach to developing oral skills because they are introduced in the first grade and the teachers dedicate a significant amount of time to practising them.

Practising dialogues and sketches is closely linked to another element of developing oral skills during the lessons of foreign language at Waldorf school - staging plays. Templeton (2007: 72) writes that the plays should be introduced in grade 3 or grade 4 when the students have already acquired some basic vocabulary and have practised acting out various dialogues and sketches. The plays are usually staged at various school concerts, including the ones dedicated to Christmas, Mother's Day and so on. Templeton points out that when choosing a play the teacher should ensure that it is interesting to the students, is neither too difficult nor too simple for them, that it helps the students learn to differentiate between good and evil, and transmits some aspects of the foreign culture. Although staging plays can be very time-consuming and, therefore, some educators might say that it is not worth teacher's time and efforts, Waldorf scholars explain why the plays should be incorporated into the lessons of a foreign language. The main aim of the plays is giving the students an opportunity to immerse themselves in the language while also developing their artistic and creative side by enabling them to discover new means of self-expression. Templeton also writes that when staging plays with smaller children, it is better to use rhyme as much as possible because it is easier for them to memorize rhymed phrases. He also adds that ideally every student should get a part in order not to feel excluded. Jaffke (2005: 15) shares Templeton's opinion, saying that staging plays is a very effective teaching tool because it enables the students to create space for something new and unusual to happen. In other words, children step out of their comfort zone while interacting only in the target language. He also adds that the sense of achievement from being able to carry out the role is particularly beneficial for those students who are somewhat shy and lack self-confidence. Therefore, it can be seen that there are numerous reasons for staging plays starting from grade 3, while the most important of them is that students are surrounded by the target language which helps them to start expressing themselves in English.

Understanding simple commands and later giving them to other students is also considered to be important, especially during the first years of learning a foreign language. In one of his lectures Rudolf Steiner says that during foreign language lessons at primary school the teacher should “cultivate the element of reflex actions induced by the language” (Steiner 2004: 252). This means that the teacher should give short commands to the students in order for them to develop a reaction to these commands that is similar to a reflex. Jaffke (2005: 9) states that at first the teacher should give commands, whereas later some of the more talented students can take over so that eventually everybody can give commands and quickly react to them. It is argued that especially at the beginner’s level, it is extremely important for the students to feel that they understand what the teacher is asking them to do. This way they experience the feeling of success which increases their motivation to learn the language. Success, in turn, creates self-confidence which stimulates the students to engage in learning (Williams and Williams 2011: 9). Giving orders to students is characteristic not only of Waldorf approach, but also of the Total Physical Response method, elements of which are often used at mainstream schools (Kubeckova 2013: 14), especially with younger students. Templeton (2007: 178) also writes about the importance of giving short commands to the students saying that the students are actually capable of subconsciously memorizing the phrases and sentences that the teacher used when giving orders. He also recommends to incorporate commands into such unusual activities like cooking something with the students. The students first read the genuine recipe, and then they start cooking while the teacher instructs them by giving commands. This way the students are learning through doing, and the teacher can establish connections between the foreign language and the world around students.

Concerning the methods that the teacher can use to encourage students to speak, Waldorf scholars suggest letting students to speak in small groups first, and then in front of the whole class

(Templeton 2007: 31). This way the students feel less afraid of making a mistake or being criticized by their classmates. Another technique that can be used is to make the students feel that there is a real reason why they should say something. For example, when using dialogues, the teacher can tell the student A that he needs to ask student B what time it is, because his imaginative watch is broken. Younger learners feel inspired by such creative approach and enthusiastically participate in the dialogue. Finally, to encourage the students to speak the teacher must ensure that they actually have all the necessary phrases and are able to construct new sentences. It is also argued that giving young learners the choice as to what they say also helps them to start speaking. For example, the teacher can ask the students to name an animal they like, then describe it using an adjective and later on say what this animal is doing. Thus, gradually students learn how to construct sentences. All in all, in order to encourage the students to express themselves, in addition to using the techniques mentioned above the teacher should make it clear to the students that it is absolutely normal to make mistakes and that it is by making mistakes that a person can learn to speak English well.

Overall, it can be noticed that actually there is little completely new in the methodology used at Waldorf school for developing students' oral skills. When working with students at primary and lower-basic school at mainstream schools teachers often use the same techniques. It is interesting, however, how the system described above is actually used at a Waldorf school and that is the issue addressed in the empirical chapter of the thesis.

2. EMPIRICAL STUDY

In the following chapter the analysis of the lessons that were observed at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium is provided, and the parallels are drawn between methodological materials for Waldorf schools and what was observed during the lessons. This chapter also analyzes the interviews that were conducted with two teachers of English in order to acquire a better understanding of Waldorf approach. In the last part of the following chapter, there is a discussion of the lessons observed and the interviews conducted with the main principles of Waldorf education being pointed out.

2.1 Data and methodology

During November and December 2017 five lessons of English in grades 4 and 5 were observed at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium. The lessons lasted for 45 minutes and were conducted by four teachers of English. One of the lessons took place in a so-called “learning support class” (Est. *õpiabiklass*) that consisted of students who had difficulties learning English. The students in learning support class study according to a modified curriculum (Est. *jõukohastatud õppekava*), which makes it possible to cover approximately the same material as in the so-to-say mainstream classes at the same school, while taking into account the abilities and needs of those particular students. The number of students in the classroom varied from 13 to 18 students, whereas in the learning support class there were only 7 students. During lesson observation, the notes were taken regarding the activities that were used, the length of the activities and the students’ reaction. Based on the lesson observation, some of the main characteristics and principles were outlined in the section “Observing the lessons”. Also, in that section the constituent elements of the lesson were pointed out, and the reasons for using them were explained. The section “Observing the lessons” also includes references to various methodological sources, as it helps to explain why certain

activities and techniques were used. Detailed lesson plans of the lessons observed that also include the length of the activities can be found in Appendix 1. In addition to the description of the elements of the lessons, there are also some comments as to why certain activities and techniques were used. Since the teachers used similar activities during their lessons, recurring features were commented on only once in order to avoid unnecessary repetitions. Also, several representative examples of the poems and songs that were used during the lessons can be found in Appendix 2. In addition to that, after observing the lessons, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with two teachers of English who work at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium. Some excerpts from the interviews were included in the section “Observing the lessons”, and a more detailed summary can be found in the section “Interviews with the English language teachers”. The questions that were used during the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix 3.

2.2 Observing the lessons

The lessons observed tended to have a similar structure. First, there was a warm-up stage, which contained poems and songs that were usually accompanied with movements. This part usually took from 5 to 10 minutes, with the exception of one lesson (Lesson 3) that was dedicated almost entirely to speaking activities for reasons explained below. The next part of the lesson, which usually lasted for approximately 30 minutes, was dedicated either to reading, writing, revising material or learning new vocabulary. The students read texts, wrote new parts of the text in their textbooks or wrote short tests. The last stage of the lesson, which lasted usually for about 10 minutes, was quite often dedicated to working with handouts or drawing. Scholars recommend a similar structure of the lesson with Templeton (2007: 175) stating that, first of all, there must always be new material, even if it is just two new lines from a poem that the children have been practising. In addition to that, he points out that the class has to practise the existing repertoire

consisting of poems, songs and games. During the last part of the lesson, he recommends the teachers to tell a story to the class to help them practise comprehension and understanding the meaning of the story. Templeton also points out that storytelling does not have to be a part of every lesson; however, the teacher must tell stories to the class regularly. In comparison to the recommended structure of the lessons, none of the lessons observed included storytelling, which can be explained by the fact that the teachers do not necessarily use it every lesson and only a few lessons were observed within the project. The topic of the lessons observed included writing a story (Lesson 1), body parts (Lesson 2), various oral exercises (Lesson 3), answering the questions that start with “How many” (Lesson 4) and the difference between a private house and a block of flats (learning support class, Lesson 5). One of the lessons was dedicated almost entirely to speaking activities, which can be explained by the fact that the teacher was informed before the lesson of the topic of present MA thesis and kindly included as many speaking activities as possible in order for the author of this thesis to have a better understanding of the possible ways of developing oral skills in the lessons of foreign language at Waldorf schools.

At the beginning of the lesson, the teachers greeted the students, with one teacher greeting every student by hand. The reason why she chose to do so is probably connected to the fact that making each student feel special and conveying a sense of caring to the students can increase their motivation significantly (Williams and Williams 2011: 7). The lessons were usually started with a poem, often a spiritual one. As Kubeckova (2013: 26) points out, the poems that are connected to religion aim to touch the artistic side of children, which is one of the main principles of Waldorf education (Steiner 2000: 4). While some of the teachers read just one poem, others read more poems or sang various songs. In grade 4 the teachers used more poems and songs whereas in grade 5 they used less of them, which can be explained by the fact that the younger the students are the

easier it is for them to learn poetry, because it is based on rhythm and rhyme (Jaffke 2005: 6). While reciting these poems, children did a lot of different movements. Using movements and physical activity in the language lessons is also advocated by Total Physical Response method (Savic 2014: 447) which is often used at mainstream schools in lower grades. One of the English language teachers mentioned in the interview that it is very easy for the students to remember something when they do the movements along. She also added that using kinesthetic learning activities, when students learn by participating in physical activities (Sivilotti & Pike 2007: 1), is very efficient with younger students. The teacher said that she uses movement actively in her lessons up until grade 4 and in grade 5, 6 and 7 when explaining some words, especially verbs. Templeton (2007: 167) also states that using purposeful movement is very important when teaching a second language at primary school.

The second part of the lesson was usually dedicated either to reading or writing. Templeton (2007: 176) states that every lesson the teacher should present some new material, and the children have to make a conscious effort to grasp it. The teachers quite often asked the students to read the same text for three or four times in a row, and to make it more interesting they used different techniques. For example, during one of the lessons (Lesson 3), at first, the students read a poem all together and then everyone read a couple of lines one after another. Next, they read it in pairs so that the first student read the line without reading the last word, and another student had to finish it. Also, during another lesson (Lesson 5) the text was read in the following manner: the boys read one sentence and the girls read the next one. All these various techniques were used probably in order for the students to concentrate on the text and help them memorize it if it was a poem. Writing was also taught using very interesting techniques. For example, during one of the lessons (Lesson 1) the students had to write in their textbooks the next part of the text that they had been previously

working with. When writing the first sentence on the blackboard, the teacher wrote only the first letter of the words that the students learned while working with the previous parts of the text. At the same time, she wrote the new words in full form. Next, the teacher asked a student to come to the blackboard and finish the words that were written partially. It was noticeable that all students were eager to come to the blackboard. After that, the teacher asked students to translate the first sentence, and they proceeded writing the whole text in the same manner. This technique was probably used to help students memorize the way these words are spelled.

The last part of the lesson was usually dedicated either to working with worksheets or to drawing. For example, during one of the lessons (Lesson 1) the students received a worksheet that had different pictures on them. First, the teacher wrote an example sentence on the blackboard that read “The elephant is big, but the mouse is small”. Next, the students started saying similar sentences on the basis of the pictures they had on their worksheets. This exercise was probably used to practise different nouns and adjectives of opposite meaning. Templeton (2007: 148) also writes that finding an antonym to a word helps to memorize it. During another lesson (Lesson 2) the last 10 minutes were dedicated to drawing the body parts that they had been practising during the lesson. During Lesson 5, the teacher distributed handouts with an exercise from the textbook “I love English”. The students had to fill in the missing letters in the words that they had learnt during that lesson (*block of flats, private house* etc.). Therefore, it can be suggested that the main aim of working with handouts was to practise the new vocabulary that had been studied during the lesson.

Another interesting characteristic of the English language lessons at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium is the fact that the teachers incorporate the objects that are in the classroom into the learning process. The teachers asked the students what they could see in the classroom

(Lesson 3). They also asked the students to describe what their classmates were wearing (Lesson 3) and to point at different body parts while reciting a poem about them (Lesson 2). The teachers probably used these techniques because it is a good way to connect the language that is studied with the real world surrounding the students.

It was also observed that quite often the teachers included a poem about the month of the year during which the lesson took place. Kubeckova (2013: 25) also indicates that according to Waldorf principles, the circumstances of the world that is around us, such as the time of the year, should be taken into account when preparing the lessons as it gives the students an opportunity to draw parallels between the language that is studied and their surroundings. Similarly, Templeton (2007: 175) also writes that when planning a lesson, the teacher must sometimes change it completely if on that day it is some student's birthday, or someone got a new pet, or there is a new student in the class. This way, the realities of life are taken into account when preparing the lesson which can help to increase students' motivation (Williams & Williams 2011: 10).

Playing games is also a very important part of Waldorf education. The students played different games during the lessons observed, starting from spinning the rope and jumping over it while reciting a poem and finishing with throwing a ball around while revising irregular verbs (Lesson 2). Jaffke (2005: 7), for instance, also writes that playing games is an indispensable part of learning a foreign language because the children are hardly aware that they use a foreign language when they are playing a game at the same time. During the lessons observed, the students also played various circle games (Lesson 3). For example, they sang songs, recited poems and spoke to each other while standing in a circle. Templeton (2007: 31) points out that circle games are an important part of foreign language lessons in primary school because they give the students a chance to practise the language in an enjoyable way.

The lesson in learning support class differed from the other lessons in several ways. First of all, there were only 7 students and their tables were arranged in a semicircle, which could be considered to be a good table arrangement style as it helps the students to focus on the teacher. The pace of the lesson was slower and the teacher constantly attempted to ensure that all students are engaged in the lesson activities. During the lesson, the teacher started speaking about different types of houses: a private house and a block of flats. At first, the students did not understand these notions, so the teacher drew a picture of a private house and a block of flats on the blackboard. Kubeckova (2013: 30) writes that instead of translating a new word the teachers should explain it using pictures because it helps to make connections with real-life objects and is especially good for visual learners. The teacher was very patient with the students, even if it took them a significant amount of time to complete the task and they still did not manage to do it very well. During the interview, the teacher whose lesson was observed said that with weaker students it is especially important to praise them even for very small progress. One of the exercises that the students had to do was to form sentences using certain words. The students were given about 5 minutes, then they read their sentences and the teacher corrected the mistakes. It is important to point out that the teacher corrected the mistakes after the students finished reading their sentences without interrupting them. Carranza (2007: 85) writes that if teachers constantly interrupt students while they speak to correct the mistakes, the learners might become frustrated and develop a negative attitude towards language learning. When dealing with students who have problems learning English, it is especially important to be considerate when correcting their mistakes.

During the lesson, most of the teachers spoke primarily in English. However, one teacher used quite a lot of Estonian as well, with one teacher speaking almost half of the lesson in Estonian. Thus, it can be noticed that although one of the main Waldorf school principles is that the teacher

should use as much target language as possible (Kellerova 2013: 68), it is not always followed. During the interview, one of the teachers said that although it is necessary to use the target language as much as possible, when children demand a translation it is fair to give it to them. The teacher also added that the children are more interested in the material when they know what it is about. Similarly, Williams and Williams (2013: 9) write that providing simple and clear explanations significantly increases students' motivation. The teacher also advocated speaking in Estonian when dealing with discipline problems.

2.3 Interviews with the English language teachers

During December 2017, two semi-structured interviews with two English language teachers were conducted. The first teacher will be referred to hereafter as Teacher A, and the second teacher as Teacher B in order to maintain confidentiality. Teacher A has worked at Tartu Waldorgümnaasium for 10 years, whereas Teacher B for 20 years. Prior to that, Teacher A has worked at a mainstream school for three years as well as for two years at a school for children with special needs. Before starting to work at Tartu Waldorgümnaasium, Teacher B has worked for one year at Tartu Täiskasvanute Gümnaasium, a school for working adults wishing to obtain secondary education. In addition to that, Teacher B has also worked at a language school for two years. Besides working as a teacher of English, Teacher A also participates in the enrollment process whereas Teacher B teaches eurhythm, which is a system of harmonious body movement to the rhythm of spoken words. When asked why she chooses to work at a Waldorf school, Teacher A mentioned devoted colleagues, opportunities for self-development and a good parent-teacher partnership among the main reasons. She also added that she feels that if a student has some sort of problem, then it is taken seriously and the teachers together with parents try to find a solution to it. Teacher B, in turn, said that the main reason why she likes working at Tartu

Waldorfgymnasium is the opportunity to manage the learning process, meaning that she can herself choose the materials, make cross-curricular connections between English and other subjects and collaborate with other Waldorf schools. The interviews, which lasted for approximately 25 minutes each, were conducted separately. Eight questions were prepared for the interview, and the list of the questions can be found in Appendix 3. The interviews were conducted in English and were recorded with the permission of the respondents.

The first question was about the most important aspects of foreign language teaching at Waldorf schools. Teacher A said that, in her opinion, the most important aspect is to keep the sense of language living and artistic. She also added that children should learn chunks of vocabulary and grammar structures by heart before they start reading, writing and analysing them in a more intellectual way. In addition to that, she said that prose should be accompanied by poetry, singing and drama and that the themes should be age-appropriate and appeal to the soul of the children. Teacher B, however, pointed out that the most important aspect of foreign language teaching is ensuring that the students are active during the lesson and creating real life-like situations for the students. She also added that learning through doing and following the commands is an important aspect of Waldorf education.

The teachers assessed their students' oral skills to be quite good, while adding that they vary remarkably from student to student. When asked about the possible reasons of students' good oral skills, both teachers believed that one of the reasons could be the fact that during first four years the teaching is almost exclusively oral. During these years, the students learn poems by heart, sing songs and play games in the English lesson. Teacher B also said that the fact that there are no grades until the ninth grade may also be one of the reasons why children have good oral skills. She

pointed out that the children are therefore not afraid to speak, because they know that making a mistake will not be punished in any way.

When asked to comment on their students' strongest and weakest oral skills, both teachers said that reciting poems is one of the strongest oral skills, adding that it comes naturally for most students. When speaking about dialogues, both teachers said that their students are somewhat less good at them, mainly because they learn them by heart during the first five years, and unless they are in a verse form, it is quite difficult for the students. The reason why the students first learn them by heart, is to later practise them in class in various situations, which both teachers believed to be a good way of building students' confidence. The teachers pointed out that spontaneous speaking is also rather challenging for the students, although it also varies greatly from student to student. Teacher B also pointed out that quite often the reason why students find spontaneous speaking difficult is not because of their inefficient language proficiency, but rather because they cannot think of anything to say at that very moment. In order to improve students' oral skills, both teachers advised to create situations in the classroom for students to practise the same material over and over again, but with different partners. The teachers said that it builds students' confidence and helps them to feel comfortable using these phrases in the future. Both teachers also advocated using group work, saying that it gives the students a chance to practise certain phrases and dialogues in smaller groups and increases their motivation.

When asked how they combine the Waldorf language learning principles that were developed almost one hundred years ago with the changing educational landscape, the teachers said that the Waldorf method is not actually very different from the contemporary language learning methods because over the years, they have moved closer together. Teacher B also added that the basic principles that lie in the basis on Waldorf education have not changed since the time

when the method was developed. Teacher A also said that she occasionally uses texts and exercises from the textbooks that are used at mainstream schools. The reason why she chooses to do so is connected to the fact that using textbooks developed for ordinary schools gives her a chance to see what is being studied at mainstream schools as well as enrich the lessons with a different type of materials.

One of the characteristic features of Waldorf education is the fact that there are no textbooks until the fifth grade (in the fifth grade students start using readers). When asked whether they find it challenging working without a textbook, the teachers responded that on one hand, it is difficult because finding suitable materials can be time-consuming, but on the other hand they enjoy this process because this way they can use a text or an exercise that definitely suits a particular group of students. Teacher A also added that the fact that she knows the vocabulary that the students have learnt as well as the grammar structures that need practising, enables her to find the text that meets their particular needs. Teacher B also pointed out that compiling her own materials means that she does not have to do the same thing every year and, therefore, she finds it very interesting and considers to be a creative challenge. Both teachers said that they usually find their materials from internet resources and various textbooks, as well as with the help of their colleagues. Interestingly enough, both teachers also pointed out that they often write their own texts because sometimes it takes less time than finding a suitable text. When asked about how much time they usually dedicate to looking for new study materials, the teachers responded that it depends on the lesson but the time usually varies from half an hour to two hours. Teacher A also pointed out that the older the students are, the more time-consuming the process becomes.

Another important aspect of Waldorf education is the fact that the teachers do not use electronic media during their lessons at primary and lower-secondary school. When asked about

their stance regarding this question, Teacher A said that she does not see a place for electronic media in lower grades because it is not an authentic experience and children at that age enjoy learning through looking at real-life objects and pictures. She also added that there is hardly any time for using electronic media even in the fourth and fifth grade because at this stage they are learning to read and write which requires quite a lot of time. Teacher A also said that, in her opinion, it is easier to develop oral skills through direct contact with the students (talking to them, asking questions, giving commands, telling them stories etc.) rather than through the use of electronic media. She pointed out that instead of using recordings and videos for the development of oral skills, she thinks that the lesson should be built up in a way that every student gets a chance to speak. In order to do so, she suggested using teamwork during the lesson. She also mentioned that the teacher should be very attentive all the time and approach those students who are not participating in the lesson by asking them questions and drawing their attention to the topic that is being discussed. Teacher B, in turn, said that she thinks that it is too early to use electronic media at primary and lower-secondary school mainly because it inhibits the development of fantasy. She pointed out that electronic media has to be incorporated into the learning process at some point (she starts using recordings and videos in grade 7), however she also added that these skills can be learned quite quickly. When asked whether she considers listening exercises important, she said that rather than listening to the recordings, she would invite native speakers to attend the lesson, because, in her opinion, students learn more effectively this way. It is important to point out that inviting native speakers to participate in the lesson of foreign language is a common practice at Waldorf schools.

Although students would very often demand translation of certain words or phrases, Waldorf scholars state that the teacher should be able to explain the meaning in English or use

pictures and body language for that purpose. It is said that ideally only target language is spoken in the lessons. When asked what they think about translating certain words, phrases and sentences into Estonian or giving commands in Estonian, Teacher A said that she thinks that it is necessary to use target language as much as possible during the lesson. She added, however, that when students ask for translation it is fair, in her opinion, to give it to them. Although it contradicts the recommended approach, she said that students cannot practise a poem or a song for months without understanding the meaning behind it. She also added that students are more interested in the material when they know what it is about. Teacher A emphasized that she never gives the translation of a poem, for example, if the students do not ask for it. In addition to that, poems and songs are always accompanied with gestures and movements which help students to understand them. Considering giving commands in Estonian, she said that she often addresses discipline problems in Estonian, which is advised by Waldorf scholars as well (Jaffke 2005: 5). Teacher B, on the contrary, said that as a rule she does not translate poems or songs. Instead, she said that she usually asks the class whether anybody knows what a certain word or phrase mean. She pointed out that there is almost always somebody among the students who knows the meaning. She also said that she encourages the students to ask for translation at home, so that later they can share it with their classmates. Teacher B also underlined that it is very important to use Estonian when teaching grammar, because the teacher has to ensure that everybody understands the rule to be able to use it later on. She said that when teaching a certain grammar rule, usually she starts by providing a lot of examples in English and then the students deduce the rule themselves. When deducing the rule the students can use Estonian which makes the process easier for them and the teacher needs to simply check whether it is correct or not. Similarly to Teacher A, Teacher B said that she usually gives commands in English but addresses discipline problems in Estonian. Teacher

B also pointed out that when the student asks for translation, at first she always tries to explain the meaning in English or show a picture or explain it with the help of body language. After that somebody usually guesses the meaning and the teacher rarely needs to translate something into Estonian.

When asked how important they consider pronunciation to be, Teacher A said that she considers it to be of vital importance because, in her opinion, this is the key to understanding each other. She pointed out, however, that the correction of pronunciation must be done with great tact, as children get easily put off when someone is pointing out their mistakes all the time. She said that this is the reason why she usually corrects younger learners by repetition, i.e. they pronounce an utterance incorrectly and then she says the same thing again, but pronouncing it in a proper way. She pointed out that with older students it is easier because usually they do not get discouraged so she simply corrects any word or phrase that has been uttered incorrectly. Similarly to Teacher A, Teacher B also said that she thinks pronunciation to be very important. She added that Waldorf approach regards pronunciation to be of high importance, because when students start reading printed texts the teacher should, first of all, pay special attention to their pronunciation and then ensure that the students understand the text and so on. Teacher B also pointed out that one of the main aims of the first three years being dedicated entirely to oral work is for students to have good pronunciation. She added that when the students have good pronunciation, it is less difficult for them to learn spelling which is often very different from the way that these words sound. For practising pronunciation, Teacher A recommended using tongue twisters, short pronunciation exercises and other forms of oral work. In addition to pronunciation, Teacher A underlined the importance of paying attention to intonation because, in her opinion, learning the language is more

than simply a practical skill, it is also aimed at familiarizing yourself with the cultural heritage of this language, and intonation is a part of that.

2.4 Discussion

Based on the lessons observed and the interviews that were carried out with the teachers of English who work at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium, some of the main points can be pointed out.

First of all, it can be noticed that similarly to the first three years of learning English, in grade 4 and 5 quite a lot of time is dedicated to the development of oral skills. The warm-up stage of the lesson, which usually lasted for 10 to 15 minutes, was dedicated almost entirely to oral work that included reciting poems, singing songs, playing games and so on. During the interviews, the teachers also pointed out that intensive oral work during the first three years and continued attention to the development of these skills during consecutive years can be cited as some of the reasons for students' good oral skills.

It is also important to point out that accompanying songs and poems with physical movements is an important feature of foreign language lessons at Waldorf school. Almost all poems included doing some movements and the students seemed to enjoy doing them. During the interviews, Teacher A also said that it is easier for the students to memorize a poem or a song when they accompany it with purposeful movements. In addition to that, she pointed out that the younger the learners are, the more movement is used in the lesson, because younger learners like imitating the teacher. Both teachers said that with older students they keep using movements for explaining new vocabulary, if it is possible. Teacher A added that movements are especially useful for introducing new verbs during the lesson.

Another feature that also needs to be commented on is pronunciation, because it is a language aspect that is regarded to be of high importance at Waldorf schools. During the lesson,

the teachers paid attention to pronunciation mistakes and tried to pronounce the words very clearly so that it would be easier for the students to imitate them. It was also pointed out during the interviews that pronunciation is very important and when students start reading printed texts, the teacher should, first, focus on correcting pronunciation mistakes and ask the students whether they understand the meaning of the text. It was also indicated during the interviews that good pronunciation helps the students later on when they start studying spelling. The teachers also mentioned that they use tongue twisters and other pronunciation exercises, which is also recommended by Waldorf scholars (Templeton 2007: 22).

It was observed that the teachers used mostly English during the lesson, although there were some exceptions. Namely, the teachers quite often started speaking in Estonian when they needed to explain the meaning of a certain word, or when they gave instructions. In the interviews, however, both teachers pointed out that they try to use target language as much as possible. One of the teachers whose lesson was observed used Estonian for nearly half of the lesson. Therefore, it can be noticed that there is a difference between what the teachers try to do and what actually takes place during the lesson. Both teachers underlined that they do not give translations of poems or songs if the students do not ask for it. They also said that instead of translating a word or phrase into Estonian, at first they try to explain the meaning in English, use body language for that purpose or ask the class if there is anybody who knows the meaning. During the lessons, however, it was observed that the teachers do not always follow this rule. Both teachers indicated that as a rule they give short commands in English, but address discipline problems in Estonian to make sure that the students understand their message and act accordingly. It is important to underline that giving short commands in the target language is one of the features that can be considered characteristic of Waldorf approach to teaching foreign languages (Templeton 2007: 178).

During the lessons it was also observed that students usually learn material by heart before writing it down. Teacher A also indicated in the interview that it is very important that the students first learn by heart various poems and songs which, in turn, provide the students with some basic vocabulary and grammar structures. She said that only after doing that should students start reading, writing and analyzing the material in a more intellectual way. Late introduction of reading and writing skills is also one of the main characteristics of Waldorf approach (Jaffke 2005: 18).

Another important feature that needs to be commented on is that no electronic media was used during the lessons and the teachers had a rather negative opinion about using it. Namely, they said that they cannot see a place for electronic media in grades 4 and 5 because this experience is not authentic and can inhibit the development of imagination. Considering the development of oral skills, the teachers also said that it is easier to develop them by addressing the students directly (giving commands, talking to them, asking questions, telling them stories etc.) rather than with the help of video and audio recordings. When asked about their opinion considering listening exercises, Teacher B said that she prefers creating opportunities for students to interact with a native speaker because she feels that students learn more effectively in that manner. However, if there is no such opportunity she uses listening exercises because they are essential when preparing for state exams.

CONCLUSION

The issue of implementing the most effective methods and techniques of teaching foreign languages is discussed with particular interest and concern nowadays. The contemporary approach to teaching a foreign language, as recommended by the National Curriculum, is communicative language teaching, which means that the main aim of teaching process is developing the ability to interact in that language. Communicative language competence, in turn, is aimed, among other things, at the development of oral skills, which means that developing oral skills is an important part of foreign language teaching nowadays.

In Estonia, Waldorf schools can be regarded as an example of interesting approach to the development of oral skills. Waldorf schools, which are an example of alternative approach to education, are represented by over 1,000 schools worldwide which means that parents still find this environment beneficial and suitable for their children as they enroll them in these schools. One of the possible reasons why parents choose Waldorf schools is that foreign language teaching starts in the first grade with two languages being taught. During the first three years, the language learning process is exclusively oral and very playful which might be one of the reasons why Waldorf students have quite good oral skills and a creative approach to the language.

Having these facts in mind, the author of this thesis decided to investigate how Waldorf approach recommends to teach foreign languages in general, and oral skills in particular. In addition to studying and analyzing methodological sources, the author also chose one Waldorf school in Estonia, Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium, in order to observe how the principles and methods recommended by Waldorf approach are implemented on a day-to-day basis. To achieve this aim, the author observed five lessons of English and conducted two semi-structured interviews with the teachers of English to gain a better insight of the Waldorf approach to teaching oral skills.

The results of the thesis show that the main techniques that Waldorf scholars recommend using to develop students' oral skills at primary and lower-secondary school include reciting poems, singing songs, using tongue-twisters and playing games. As a result, the first three years of learning a foreign language should be dedicated entirely to oral work. In addition to that, Waldorf approach recommends conducting the lessons only in the target language, so that the students can immerse themselves in the foreign language which will help them to start using it quite naturally. Besides that, Waldorf scholars recommend giving short commands to the students to train their understanding skills. Last but not least, it is recommended to use plays during the lesson and help the students to rehearse their roles. All these techniques are claimed to develop students' skills which lay a foundation for future development of speaking skills.

As for the lessons observed, although the author attended only five lessons, it was nevertheless possible to see how the methods recommended by Waldorf approach are actually used in the lessons. As a result of lesson observation, it can be said that the teachers used most of the recommended techniques, the only difference being that some teachers used quite a lot of Estonian, which is the opposite of recommended approach. It was also observed that the students enjoyed playful activities and had quite good oral skills in general.

The interviews conducted with the teachers of English showed that they try to implement most of the techniques advocated by Waldorf approach for the development of oral skills. The interviews also showed that in addition to having a lot of practical skills, the teachers had a good theoretical understanding of the approach. However, there were some minor differences between what the teachers believed they did and what actually took place during the lessons observed.

As a result of the present case study, it can be said that numerous foreign language teaching techniques suggested within this approach are not unique to Waldorf method, but are nowadays

also widely used at mainstream schools at primary and lower-secondary level. Nevertheless, it is still interesting to consider how Waldorf education combines them and how their use is justified. The analysis of Waldorf pedagogy has demonstrated that the oral skills of foreign language learners tend to develop quite well because the first three years of foreign language learning are dedicated to oral work, and during consecutive years teachers still use the techniques recommended by Waldorf scholars for the development of oral skills (including singing songs, reciting poems, using tongue-twisters, communicating with students in the target language etc.). It was especially useful to observe ordinary lessons at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium and compare the techniques used at the actual lessons with the ones recommended by Waldorf scholars for the development of oral skills. It was also very beneficial to talk to the teachers of English who work at Tartu Waldorfgümnaasium and discover how they combine the techniques advocated by Waldorf scholars with everyday challenges, including tests, state exams and the requirements set in the National Curriculum.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Class observation forms

Lesson 1: grade 4, 22 November 2017

Length of the activity	Activity	Comments
1 min	First, everybody greeted the teacher by hand, saying “Good morning, teacher Kaia!”.	Williams and Williams (2011: 7) write that making each student feel special and conveying a sense of caring to the students can increase their motivation significantly.
2 min	The boys stayed outside a bit longer than the girls. While waiting for them to return, the teacher told the girls to revise their homework.	
2 min	When the boys arrived, the teacher asked everybody to stand up and they recited a poem about a mystical kingdom all together.	As Kubeckova (2013: 26) points out, the poems that are connected to religion aim to touch the artistic side of children which is one of the main principles of Waldorf education (Steiner 2000: 4).
2 min	After that, they sang a song about November.	Kubeckova (2013: 25) also indicates that according to Waldorf principles, the circumstances of the world that is around us, such as the time of the year, should be taken into account when preparing the lessons.

4 min	<p>Next, the students recited a poem the main aim of which was to revise antonyms.</p> <p>“This is left and this is right, this is big and very tall, this is short, and this is tall”</p> <p>When practicing this poem, at first the teacher said a line and then the class repeated after her. While reciting the poems, children did a lot of various movements.</p>	<p>Using movements and physical activity is also advocated by Total Physical Response method (Savic 2014: 447) which is often used at mainstream schools in lower grades. The English language teacher whose lesson I observed that day mentioned in the interview that it is very easy for the students to remember something when they do the movements along. She also added that using kinesthetic learning activities, when students learn by participating in physical activities (Sivilotti & Pike 2007: 1), is very efficient with younger students. The teacher said that she uses movement actively in her lessons up until grade 4 and in grade 5, 6 and 7 when explaining some words, especially verbs. Templeton (2007: 167) also states that using purposeful movement is very important when teaching a second language at primary school.</p>
3 min	<p>After that, the students who were on duty that day came to the blackboard and asked the rest of the class what the weather was and what day it was. Then they wrote the right answers on the board.</p>	<p>The students practised writing the name of the day, which was useful because at first they spelled it incorrectly. The teacher then told them the correct spelling of the word ‘Wednesday’ and pointed out that we spell it very differently from what we hear. The students then wrote the correct version on the blackboard.</p>
1 min	<p>Following that, the teacher distributed the tests that they wrote during the previous lesson, while commenting on the mistakes in Estonian to make sure the students understand her.</p>	<p>As the teacher herself pointed out in the interview, although she avoids using Estonian as much as possible, she uses it sometimes to make sure the students understand her.</p>

3 min	After that, the students opened their handmade textbook and started reading the text. Their homework for this lesson was to practice reading it. The first part of the text was read by two girls at the same time and the second part was read by one boy.	According to Kubeckova (2013: 26), students at Waldorf schools usually make textbooks themselves. Some teachers prefer to have one exercise book where students write down grammatical rules, poems, songs, vocabulary and texts, while others use more exercise books. The students pay attention to the layout and are encouraged to make effort to make their textbook look nice and neat. Quite often the students keep their textbook for years as an interview with Czech Waldorf school graduates indicates (Dvorakova 2016: 396).
1 min	The teacher let the first girl choose her partner.	This is considered to be an efficient way of increasing the student's motivation (Katz & Assor 2007: 1).
3 min	After that, the students started writing the next part of the text in their textbooks. First, the teacher read the text aloud and asked some questions about the text. The students responded mostly in Estonian, but the teacher commented on their answers in English. After that, the teacher translated the title of the text into Estonian.	During the interview she said that although it is necessary to use the target language as much as possible, when children demand a translation it is fair to give it to them. The teacher also added that the children are more interested in the material when they know what it is about. Similarly, Williams and Williams (2013: 9) write that providing simple and clear explanations significantly increases students' motivation.
10 min	Next, the teacher read aloud the first sentence and wrote it on the board in the following manner: she wrote only the first letter of the words that the students learned while working with the	Templeton (2007: 89) also suggests carrying out a similar exercise 'Helping the teacher'. The teacher is supposed to hand out short texts with certain words left out. Next, the teacher tells the class that he or she

	<p>previous parts of the text. At the same time, she wrote the new words in full form. Next, the teacher asked a student to come to the blackboard and finish the words that were written partially. It was noticeable that all students were eager to come to the blackboard. After that, the teacher asked students to translate the first sentence, and they proceeded writing the whole text in the same manner.</p>	<p>was not sure how to write the missing words and asks them to help him or her.</p>
1 min	<p>After they finished the text, the students read it all together.</p>	
5 min	<p>Next, the teacher asked the students what words she could erase from the blackboard. After each student picked a word to be erased, the teacher erased them and they read the text again all together inserting the missing words as they read it. The homework for the next lesson was to practise reading this text.</p>	<p>This activity was probably used to train students' memory and help them get to know the text that they later had to practise at home.</p>
6 min	<p>Next, the students who were on duty that day distributed worksheets that had different pictures on them. The students had already worked with these worksheets, and the teacher later explained that it was a revision exercise. First, the teacher wrote an example sentence on the blackboard that read "The elephant is big, but the mouse is small". Next, the students started saying similar sentences on the basis of the</p>	<p>This exercise was probably used to practise different nouns and adjectives of opposite meaning. Templeton (2007: 148) also writes that finding an antonym to a word helps to memorize it.</p>

	pictures they had on their worksheets.	
1 min	After that, the teacher asked students to stand up and they finished the lesson, saying “Goodbye, teacher Kaia! See you next week!”.	

Lesson 2: grade 5, 23 November 2017

Length of the activity	Activity	Comments
1 min	First, the teacher greeted the students.	
1 min	At the beginning of the lesson, the students read a spiritual poem that spoke about God which was also accompanied by different movements	
2 min	Next, the students read a poem the main aim of which was to revise antonyms.	Jaffke (2005: 6) points out that it is very important to use poetic language with primary school students because the children learn it more easily than prose language, as it is based on rhythm and rhyme.

4 min	After that, the students formed a circle at the back of the classroom with three students in the center of the circle. The students started reciting the same poem about antonyms while two students in the center of the circle were spinning the rope and one student was jumping over it.	Jaffke (2005: 7) also writes that playing games is an indispensable part of learning a foreign language because the children are hardly aware that they use a foreign language when they are playing a game at the same time.
4 min	Next, the students went back to their seats and started revising the irregular verbs that they had to learn for that lesson in the following manner. First, the students clicked their fingers and repeated the infinitive three times and then clapped their hands and said the simple past and past participle forms of the verb. After that, they repeated all the verbs in the same manner.	Templeton (2007: 22) writes that concentrating on the rhythm helps students memorize the words.
4 min	Next, the teacher said a verb in Estonian and threw a ball to one of the students who then said all three forms of that verb in English. After that, this student said another verb in Estonian and threw the ball to the next student. One girl did not know the three forms of a certain verb, and the teacher asked her to return the ball to the boy who threw her the ball. They then kept throwing the ball back and forth until she said all the three forms correctly.	Templeton (2007: 19) also suggests using a similar activity as a warm-up exercise because it is a good way to revise irregular verbs.

3 min	Next, the students wrote a short test on irregular verbs. The teacher said four verbs in Estonian and the students had to write the three forms of each verb. The teacher then collected the tests.	
7 min	After that, the teacher asked the children to take out their handmade textbooks and five students read aloud a story about themselves that they wrote during previous lessons. After a student finished reading the story, the teacher corrected the mistakes and asked additional questions about the text.	Akhter (2007: 10) writes that teachers should not correct all the mistakes right after they are made because it can undermine students' motivation. It is better to let the student finish reading or speaking, and then comment on what he or she has said.
7 min	Next, the students stood up, read a poem about different body parts, and pointed to the respective body parts as they read. After the students had finished reading it for the first time, they read it backwards, starting from head and finishing with the toes. After that, the students read the poem very quickly. Next, the teacher named different body parts and the students had to point at them. Lastly, one of the students named a body part and the rest of the class pointed at it, then another student did the same and so on.	Kubeckova (2013: 32) writes that reading a poem from the end to the beginning helps students to focus on the text. Also, Jaffke (2005: 6) points out that when learning body parts or objects in the classroom, the teacher should simply point at them because it makes the learning process easier for the students.

5 min	After that, the teacher wrote the body parts that they had encountered in the poem on the blackboard, and the students copied them into their handmade textbooks.	
5 min	Next, the teacher asked the students to draw a picture of a person to illustrate the vocabulary that they had practiced during the lesson and told them to finish it at home. Some of the children were reluctant to draw a picture saying that they were bad at drawing, but the teacher was very encouraging and said that she was sure they would do a very good job.	Kubeckova (2013: 24) points out that it is essential for Waldorf teachers to incorporate art into the lessons. Also, Templeton (2007: 165) indicates that the teacher of foreign languages is an artist because the teacher should appeal to imagination, heart and intellect.
2 min	At the end of the lesson, the students stood up, read a spiritual poem about God and accompanied it with movements.	Templeton (2007: 18) writes that finishing the lesson in the same manner, for example with a poem, helps conclude the lesson in a meaningful way.

Lesson 3: grade 4, 30 November 2017

Length of the activity	Activity	Comments
1 min	First, the teacher greeted the students.	

1 min	The teacher started the lesson with a verse “I wake up in the morning” that was accompanied with different movements.	
1 min	Next, the students sang a song “It’s early morning” and again accompanied it with movements. For example, when singing “goodbye” they waved their hands. Then, the teacher asked the students what was happening in the poem and the students answered her using Past Continuous.	Jaffke (2005: 5) writes that songs play a very important role during the first years of learning a foreign language because the students learn the language more easily when it is in the form of a poem or a song.
2 min	Next, the teacher asked the students to describe their morning up until the moment when they go to school. One student said that he wakes up at 7 o’clock; another student said that she brushes her teeth and so on.	Templeton (2007: 29) suggests asking questions that are related to the poem or song that was just practised. It helps the students to relate to the poem and see how it is connected to real-life situations.
2 min	After that, the teacher asked the students whether they had met anybody on their way to school and what they had seen.	
2 min	After a short discussion, the students stood up and read a poem twice: first, without performing any movements at the same time and after that accompanying it with movements.	

2 min	<p>Next, the students formed a circle in the back of the classroom and sang a song “This old man”. The lyrics of this song were quite repetitive, with only the numbers changing from one to ten. Before starting the song, the teacher explained to the students that they will sing the song up until number six all together, and then the students will sing in groups of three up until number ten. In addition to that, the children clapped their hands and stamped their feet. The song was performed with great enthusiasm.</p>	<p>Steiner (2004: 225) writes that songs are a very good means of education during early school years. He points out that the songs should be beautiful and rhythmical because it will help the students to remember them.</p>
2 min	<p>After that, the teacher asked the students how they go to school. The children started answering this question, often saying that they go to school by rocket or by elephant and the teacher laughed at it together with the students.</p>	<p>Dvorakova (2005: 198) writes about the significance of combining productive activity with moments of attentive listening. All previous activities were focusing on speaking, whereas this one involved attentive listening.</p>
1 min	<p>Next, the children formed an inner circle inside the big circle and started asking each other the same question in pairs.</p>	<p>Jaffke (2015: 105) points out that dialogue is one of the most important tools to be used when teaching a foreign language. He also points out that it is easier for learners to start speaking if they are given certain formulaic expressions (or questions). They enable the students to interact with each other even at the beginner’s level.</p>

2 min	After that, the teacher asked the students "What are you wearing today?" First of all, one student answered this question and then the students discussed this issue in pairs.	
2 min	Then, the teacher asked the children in the inner circle to make one step ahead, thus forming new pairs, and asked the children in the outer circle to describe what their previous partner was wearing to their new partner. During this activity, the teacher was walking around and helping the students who needed her assistance.	The teacher asked the students to describe their previous partner in order to revise the vocabulary connected with clothes. It is also very important to switch pairs, as it helps students to get used to communicating with different people.
4 min	Next, the students formed once again one big circle and read a poem about different kinds of movement. As they described different kinds of movement, the students also showed it moving in a circle. So, for example, when speaking about running they ran; when speaking about jumping they jumped and so on.	Templeton (2007: 74) writes that children learn extensively through acting and movement. He adds that students absorb the language subconsciously when accompanying words with movements.
2 min	Next, the teacher asked the students to think of one activity and ask another student who stands next to them whether he or she can do it. For example, one student said "I can swim. Can you swim?" and another student answered "No I can't" and said to the next student "I can run. Can you run?" and so on. This activity was also	Jaffke (2015: 107) also suggests playing different question and answer games, as it helps the students to memorize how certain questions (in this case a modal verb question) are asked.

	performed while standing in a circle.	
1 min	After that, the teacher asked everyone to go back to their seats while singing the ABC song.	
2 min	Once at their desks, the children opened their textbooks and read aloud a poem. At first, they read it all together and then everyone read a couple of lines one after another. Next, they read it in pairs so that the first student reads the line without reading the last word, and another student has to finish it. Even though the children were allowed to look into their textbook while doing this exercise, most of them said the last word in line without the help of the textbook.	All these various techniques were used probably in order for the students to concentrate on the poem and help them memorize it.
5 min	After that, four girls came to the front of the class and other students started describing what they were wearing. The children were eager to describe their classmates' clothes and participated eagerly in the activity. In that manner, all students had a chance to come to the front of the class, in groups of four to five people. The teacher also asked specifying questions, such as "Can you spot any animals on Marta's T-shirt?" and the students answered "Yes, there is a rabbit on Marta's T-shirt".	Templeton (2007: 41) also suggests a similar activity 'Guess by the description'. One student describes one of his or her classmates and the student who comes up with the right answer first gets the next turn. Describing each other is a good way of practising vocabulary related to clothes.

2 min	Next, the teacher asked the children to look around the classroom and tell what they can see. The students described the items in the classroom as well as their location. For example, they said "The painting is on the wall", "The pencil case in on the table" and so on.	The teacher incorporated objects in the classroom in the learning process probably because it is a good way to connect the language that is studied with the real world surrounding the students.
2 min	After that, the teacher asked the students to open their textbook and describe a picture of a room. The sentences that the students used during this activity were very similar to the ones they used during the previous activity. For example, they said "The pencil is on the table", "The book is on the floor" and so on.	The teacher used the previous activity as a basis for the present activity. This way, the students felt more confident describing the picture and the teacher spent less time explaining the task than she probably would have spent.
1 min	Next, the teacher asked the students to correct her and said "The little mouse is in the mug". The children then corrected her saying "The little mouse is on the carpet".	The teacher used this technique probably so that the students would listen carefully to what she says and focus on the sentences.
2 min	After that, the students did the same in pairs; one student said a false sentence and another student corrected it. The teacher was walking around the classroom during this activity, helping the students.	Templeton (2007: 106) writes that the process of correcting each other's work in class helps students to develop independent learning skills.

2 min	Next, the student who was sitting in the front row said a false sentence and the student sitting next to him had to correct it. Then, the student sitting next the second student said a false sentence and the student sitting next to him had to correct it and so on.	
1 min	Next, two girls came to the front of the classroom and read a poem “Cinderella” together with the teacher while accompanying it with movements.	
1 min	After that, the students formed groups of three and recited the same poem also accompanying it with movements.	
2 min	At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked the students to come to the sink and wash their hands as they were going to eat lunch after the lesson. During the lesson, the teacher spoke almost exclusively in English.	

Lesson 4: grade 5, 30 November 2017

Length of the activity	Activity	Comments
1 min	First, the teacher greeted the students.	
2 min	At the beginning of the lesson, the students stood up and read a rather long poem which was accompanied with movements.	
4 min	Next, they read two tongue twisters, "Sally sells seashells" and "I put a copper penny".	Kellerova (2013: 29) writes that tongue twisters help to train correct articulation and inspire students to play with the language.
2 min	After that, the students read a poem "If I were a mouse who lived in a house".	
5 min	Next, the teacher handed out small sheets of paper and the students started writing the test on numbers. The teacher said a phone number in English and the students had to write it down. When the students finished writing, the teacher collected the tests.	Templeton (2007: 106) writes that there are many reasons why teachers still use dictation as a teaching method. First of all, all students are active during dictation and the teacher can reach all of them, even in a big class. He also points out that dictation is a calming activity and if the subject of the dictation is interesting to the students, they will listen carefully and concentrate on what they are writing.

1 min	After that, the teacher distributed handouts which consisted of twenty different questions that started with the words “How many ...?”. For example, “How many days are there in a week?”, “How many colors does a rainbow have?” and so on.	
2 min	Next, the teacher asked the students to read out the questions together.	
13 min	Having done that, the students started writing the answers to the questions asking the teacher for help if they needed any. The teacher also specified that the numbers have to be written out in words. When the children had a question, they asked it in Estonian and the teacher often responded in Estonian as well. Some of the questions were quite difficult for the students, such as “How many legs are there in a football team?” and the children complained about it.	This exercise seemed to be rather difficult and very monotonous, as there were around twenty very similar questions. Whether or not the students benefited from this activity is rather unclear. Also, the fact that the teacher responded in Estonian raises certain questions. It should be pointed out that this teacher seemed to be the least qualified of the four teachers whose lessons were observed.
5 min	After that, the students practiced asking these questions and answering to them in pairs.	
9 min	Next, the teacher distributed handouts with a chapter from a book they had been reading and the students started reading it. Each student read a couple of lines and the teacher corrected the pronunciation mistakes along the way. The teacher also asked whether the students	The teacher asked the students to explain certain words probably to make sure they understand their meaning. It is also very useful for students to explain the word in English instead of simply translating it into their mother tongue, as it expands their vocabulary and develops strategic

	understand everything in the text and asked the students to explain certain words.	competence (an ability to deal with communicative problems).
1 min	After that, the teacher thanked the students and finished the lesson.	

Lesson 5: grade 5, 7 December 2017 (learning support class)

Length of the activity	Activity	Comments
1 min	First, the teacher greeted the class.	
3 min	Next, the teacher asked the students when the autumn actually starts and whether they had any news. The children answered briefly to these questions.	
3 min	After that, the teacher asked the students whether they live in a private house or in a block of flats. At first, the children did not understand what these words mean, so the teacher drew a picture of a private house and a block of flats on the blackboard.	Kubeckova (2013: 30) writes that instead of translating a new word the teachers should explain it using pictures because it helps to make connections with real-life objects and is especially good for visual learners.

4 min	After that, the teacher pointed at one of the flats in the block of flats that she had drawn and asked “What is this flat's number?” It took some time for the students to count and answer correctly, but the teacher was very patient with them.	The teacher used elements of mathematics during English lesson which can be considered to be an example of interdisciplinary teaching method. Kukovec (2014: 140) states that by using interdisciplinary approach, the teachers can encourage and challenge students to think creatively.
1 min	The teacher also asked the students to translate into Estonian the notion “block of flats”.	
2 min	Next, the teacher reminded the students that last time they read a text and wrote out some new words. She then asked everybody to come to her desk where there were several cards with words written on them and choose two cards.	
5 min	Next, the teacher asked the students to form sentences using these words. This exercise was rather difficult for some students and one girl did not manage to come up with a sentence even after consulting the textbook.	The teacher probably asked the students to form sentences using new words because it helps to memorize the words and also practise existing vocabulary.
4 min	After that, the students read their sentences and the teacher corrected the mistakes.	The teacher corrected mistakes after the students finished reading their sentences without interrupting them. Carranza (2007: 85) writes that if teachers constantly interrupt students while they speak to correct the mistakes, the learners might become frustrated and develop a

		negative attitude towards language learning.
6 min	Next, the teacher asked the children to take out their textbooks and read a story that they had been reading during previous lessons. Each student read two sentences and then the teacher asked the students to read the text again from the beginning, as they had problems reading it.	
1 min	After that, they read the text again all together.	
4 min	Then one student read one sentence and the teacher asked other students what that sentence meant. The students responded mainly in Estonian, but were encouraged to speak in English. When the students read a sentence, the teacher did not interrupt and corrected pronunciation mistakes later.	If there was a word that the students did not know, the teacher did not translate it into Estonian right away, but rather tried to show the meaning of the word first or explained it in English. Kubeckova (2013: 30) writes that although children quite often demand the translation, the teacher should explain the meaning of the word by using real life objects, pictures, body language, movements and so on.
1 min	Next, the text was read in the following manner: the boys read one sentence and the girls read the next one.	The teacher used this technique probably to make reading the text more interesting, as the students had to read it for about five times in a row.

2 min	Finally, all the students read the text once again. Their homework for the next lesson was to practice reading this text.	
4 min	After that, the teacher distributed handouts with an exercise from the textbook “I love English”. The students had to fill in the missing letters in the words that they had learnt during that lesson (<i>block of flats, private house</i> etc.).	The teacher probably used this activity in order to practise the new vocabulary once again.
4 min	At the end of the lesson, the students did another exercise from the handouts. They had to read a sentence and say whether it was true or false.	

Appendix 2: Examples of poems, songs and tongue-twisters used in the lessons***A song about November***

Blow, blow, the wind blows cold

Leaves grow old and turn to gold.

Fires glow for those indoors,

Outside it rains and pours.

November, November!

Button up your coat and put your mittens on.

This is the Key of the Kingdom

This is the key of the kingdom.

In that kingdom there is a city.

In that city there is a town.

In that town there is a street.

In that street there is a lane.

In that lane there is a yard.

In that yard there is a house.

In that house there is a room.

In that room there is a bed.

On that bed there is a basket.

In that basket there are some flowers.

Flowers in a basket,

Basket on the bed,

Bed in the room,

Room in the house,

House in the yard,

Yard in the lane,

Lane in the street,

Street in the town,

Town in the city,

City in the kingdom.

Of that kingdom this is the key.

This is left and this is right

This is left and this is right,

This is dark and this is light,

This is far and this is near,

You are there and I am here.

This is big and very tall,

This is tiny - really small.

This is short and this is long,

Now I'm weak and now I'm strong.

This is high and this is low,

This is fast and this is slow.

This is thick and this is thin,

This is my cheek and this is my chin.

This is soft and this is loud,

In the sky there is a cloud.

This is straight and this is round,

Now I cannot hear a sound.

This is high and this is deep,

Now I'm awake and now asleep.

These are my eyes and these are my toes

These are my eyes

And these are my toes,

These are my fingers

And this is my nose.

These are my knees

And this is my head,

And when I sleep

I am in bed.

My arms and legs

I use to play –

A happy child

The whole long day.

Betty Botter bought some butter

Betty Botter bought some butter

But she said the butter's bitter

If I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter

But a bit of better butter will make my batter better

So 'twas better Betty Botter bought a bit of better butter

Appendix 3: Interview questions

1. What do you think are the most important aspects of foreign language teaching at Waldorf schools?
2. What do you think about your students' oral skills? Are they good in your opinion? What do you think are the main reasons for your students' good oral skills?
3. If we focus on different aspects of oral skills (speaking from notes, acting out a rehearsed role, speaking spontaneously, participating in interpersonal dialogues and conversations) then in what aspects are students better and in which worse?

(Waldorf method was developed nearly one hundred years ago. Since then, educational principles have changed significantly.)

4. How do you combine (yourself and as a school) the principles defined by Rudolf Steiner almost one hundred years ago with the changing educational landscape?
5. How important do you consider pronunciation to be? Do you pay special attention to improving your students' pronunciation?

(At Waldorf schools there are no textbooks till the sixth grade)

6. Do you find it difficult working without a textbook? What are the pros and cons of not having a textbook in your opinion? Where do you take the materials from? Do you have some kind of collections of study resources that the teachers of English would share with one another? How much time do the teachers dedicate to looking for or creating new study materials?

(The question of using the electronic media, like CDs and DVDs, is debatable at Waldorf schools. Teachers are searching for the ways to incorporate their use into the lessons. It is

stressed that a) sense experiences that are mediated are reduced in comparison to authentic experience b) mediated reality is deformed c) students are passive when exposed to the media, and it prevents the development of fantasy)

7. What is your stance regarding this question? Do you think that using the electronic media is a great way to develop oral skills? What can be used instead of the electronic media (that would guarantee the same results)?

(Children at Waldorf schools would very often demand translation of the poem, a song etc., but the teacher should use other forms of explaining the context. Ideally only English is spoken in the lessons, at least with the beginners. The native language may be reserved only for “emergency situations”)

8. What is your stance regarding translating certain words, phrases, sentences into Estonian? Giving commands in Estonian?

(Another principle that lies in the basis of Waldorf education is taking into consideration child development stages. It is believed that up to the age of six to seven the children’s will must be addressed. At this stage teachers do it by using rhythm and imitation in the lessons. Up to the age of 14, the teachers address the students’ feelings by pictorial and imaginative presentation. Finally, from the age of 14 the teachers address thinking).

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Maria Sibul

THE APPLICATION OF WALDORF PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING ORAL SKILLS IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY

WALDORF PRINTSIIPIDE RAKENDAMINE INGLISE KEELE ÕPETAMISES SUULISTE OSKUSTE ARENDAMISEKS: JUHTUMIANALÜÜS

Magistritöö

2018

74 lk

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Märksõnad: Waldorf meetod, suulised oskused, inglise keel võõrkeelena, inglise keele õpetamine

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